12 November 2026

Alejandra Reynoso
Chair, Country Code Names Supporting Organization

cc: ccNSO Council

RE: CCNSO PDP4 - IDN Board Statement

Dear Alejandra,

On behalf of the ICANN Board of Directors, I am writing to formally transmit the attached Board Statement pursuant to Annex B, Section 15 of the ICANN Bylaws, concerning the ccNSO Policy Development Process 4 (ccPDP4) recommendations on the (de-)selection of Internationalized Domain Name country code top-level domains (IDN ccTLDs) and related variants.

At ICANN87, the Board adopted the majority of the ccPDP4 policy recommendations and recognized the significant work undertaken by the ccNSO community to establish a permanent policy framework for IDN ccTLDs. However, the Board determined that Recommendations 7.8.1–7.8.6 concerning the Risk Treatment Appraisal Procedure, and related references, are not in the best interests of the ICANN community or ICANN. The attached Board Statement sets out the reasons for this.

The Board appreciates the considerable time and effort the ccNSO community has devoted to this important policy work and remains committed to engaging constructively with the Council to seek a mutually acceptable resolution of the outstanding recommendations.

We look forward to the discussion with the Council scheduled for **4 December 2026**, which we anticipate will be led on the Board's behalf by members of the Board Caucus on IDN ccTLDs. We welcome this opportunity to discuss the Board's concerns and explore a mutually acceptable way forward.

Sincerely,

Tripti Sinha
Chair, ICANN Board of Directors

ICANN Board Statement pursuant to Bylaws Annex B, Section 15: ccPDP4 Recommendations That the Board Does Not Adopt at This Time

The Board does not adopt Recommendations 7.8.1 - 7.8.6 of the Final Report ccNSO PDP4 (de-)selection of IDNccTLDs pursuant to Resolutions (2026.x.x). The Issue Synopsis and Rationale provide the basis for Board's action.

Recommendations

7.8.1 The Objective of the Review of Risk Treatment Appraisal. The objective is to determine if the risk will be effectively mitigated i.e., that If the Similarity Evaluation or Similarity Review has determined that the requested string is confusingly similar in uppercase only (and not in lowercase), the proposed mitigation measures reduce the risks associated with the confusing similarity to an acceptable level or threshold.

7.8.2 Base for Appraisal. The proposed mitigation measures should be evaluated in relation to the strings identified by the relevant panel (SEP or SRP) as confusingly similar to the requested string(s).

7.8.3 Standard of Appraisal. The RTAP Panel should consider the likelihood of confusing similarity with specific consideration of confusability from the perspective that any domain name may be displayed in either upper- or lower-case, depending on the software application and regardless of the user's familiarity with the language or script. The proposed mitigation measures meet the objective of Risk Treatment Appraisal if:

- The requester has made clear how the risk management process and proposed mitigation measures meet the objective and criteria of the Risk Treatment. This should be evaluated together with the confusability findings.
- The residual level of risk, if any, due to the confusability of domain names is expected to be in the same range as which would occur by adding another IDNccTLD which has not been found similar to existing or reserved TLD.

7.8.4 Criteria to appraise the Risk Treatment proposals. To appraise whether the proposed risk mitigation meet the objective of the RTA, the proposed risk mitigation measures should be:

- Proportionate. The mitigation measures will be in proportion to risks identified. The higher the risks, the greater the mitigation measures will be required; conversely, lower mitigation measures will be a proportionate response to risks that are identified as low severity or low likelihood,
- Adequate. For each of the case(s), the measures should reduce the risk of user confusion arising from the potential use of the applied-for TLD to an acceptable

level. The residual level of risk, if any, due to the confusability of domain names is expected to be in the same range as which would occur by adding another IDNccTLD which has not been found similar to existing or reserved TLD.
- Self-contained. The proposed mitigation measures can only apply to the registration policies of the applied-for TLD and do not assume any restrictions on the availability or registration policies of other current or future TLD labels.
- Global Impact. The proposed mitigation measures must have global applicability, and not apply to confusability within the intended user community only.

7.8.5 Conditions for Eligibility of the RTA. Only under the following set of conditions, a request for the RTA is eligible:

I. The SEP evaluation and - if reviewed by the SRP – the SRP review has determined that the requested string is confusingly similar in uppercase only.
II. The requester has filed a request for a review of its proposed mitigation measures within three months from the date the results from the SEP and/or SRP have been communicated to the requester.
III. In the request for the appraisal of proposed mitigation measures, the requester has included - at a minimum – a reference to the proposed, internationally recognized, and appropriate risk management and mitigation process the requester intends to use, and the related, proposed mitigation measures (hereafter the Risk Mitigation Plan or RMP).
IV. The IDNccTLD Manager, and if so, required the relevant public authority, commits to implement the proposed and agreed upon mitigation measures as of the moment the IDNccTLD becomes operational.

If the above conditions are met, the review and evaluation of the proposed methodology and related mitigation measures shall be undertaken by an independent panel (the 'RTAP Panel'), appointed by ICANN.

7.8.6 Result of Risk Treatment Appraisal. The result of the RTA procedure is either:

A documented and consolidated recommendation from the RTAP, following consultations with the requester, confirming that:

a. The requester has adopted an appropriate risk management methodology and framework;
b. The mitigation measures are proportionate and adequate to treat the risk(s) identified by the SEP or SRP (as the case may be);
c. The requester/ IDNccTLD manager has committed to implement the mitigation

measures prior to or on launch of the IDNccTLD string(s);
d. The requested IDNccTLD string(s) is/are considered valid.

Or

A documented recommendation confirming the risk is not adequately treated, given the list of mitigation measures being proposed by the requester or IDNccTLD Manager and the requested IDNccTLD string(s) is/are considered invalid.

The RTAP's recommendation will be made public.

Issue Synopsis

IDN ccPDP4 policy recommendations on (De-)Selection of IDN ccTLDs require string similarity review of requested IDN ccTLD strings to ensure that these are not confusingly similar to reserved names, existing gTLDs, ccTLDs or all two character ASCII strings. This is to prevent end user confusion due to visual similarity of top-level domains.

If a requested IDN ccTLD string is considered confusingly similar to an existing ccTLD, the requested string can only proceed if the intended manager for the requested IDN ccTLD is the same as the similar existing ccTLD. In all other cases, if a requested string is determined to be confusingly similar to existing strings, then the requested string cannot proceed.

The ccPDP4 policy recommends one exception to this rule, which is outlined in the Risk Treatment Appraisal case discussed in Recommendations 7.8.1 - 7.8.6.

Board Action and Rationale

The policy recommendations 7.8.1 - 7.8.6 call for establishment of a Risk Treatment Appraisal Procedure as part of the recommended procedures for requesting and consideration of IDN ccTLD strings.

The Board's concern is with the risk that two independently managed but confusingly similar TLDs will be included in the root zone. This challenges the rationale for conducting string similarity assessments to prevent user confusion, as well as the same-entity principle which has been used as mitigation for user confusion for variants or visually similar ccTLDs. The likelihood of such cases increases with the IDN ccPDP4

policy as it allows requests for IDN ccTLDs in Latin script, which were previously not allowed through the IDN ccTLD Fast Track Process.

In such a case, even if mitigation measures could be identified and agreed upon by the RTAP, the “self-contained” criteria would prohibit any agreements with the managers of other confusingly similar TLDs, severely limiting the extent of possible mitigations. Even if such agreements could exist, they would likely include complex technical and administrative registration coordination methods (e.g. bundling). Further, if either TLD manager failed to adhere to the agreed mitigation mechanisms, the confusingly similar TLDs would remain, compounding the security and stability risks for end users.

Given that an IDN ccTLD string can be requested at any time, a requester has the opportunity to request an alternate string, instead of requesting a string that introduces two confusingly similar strings in the root zone.

For these reasons, the Board determines that Recommendations 7.8.1 - 7.8.6 are not in the best interests of the ICANN community or ICANN.

Board comment on possible Supplemental Recommendations, per Bylaws Annex B, Section 15

As per Bylaws Annex B, Section 15, “...The Council shall discuss the Board Statement with the Board within thirty days after the Board Statement is submitted to the Council. The Board shall determine the method (e.g., by teleconference, e-mail, or otherwise) by which the Council and Board shall discuss the Board Statement. The discussions shall be held in good faith and in a timely and efficient manner, to find a mutually acceptable solution.

At the conclusion of the Council and Board discussions, the Council shall meet to affirm or modify its Council Recommendation. A recommendation supported by 14 or more of the Council members shall be deemed to reflect the view of the Council (the Council's "**Supplemental Recommendation**"). That Supplemental Recommendation shall be conveyed to the Members in a Supplemental Members Report, including an explanation for the Supplemental Recommendation. Members shall be given an opportunity to vote on the Supplemental Recommendation under the same conditions outlined in Item 13.

In the event that more than 66% of the votes cast by ccNSO Members during the voting period are in favor of the Supplemental Recommendation then that recommendation shall be conveyed to Board as the ccNSO Supplemental Recommendation and the Board shall adopt the recommendation unless by a vote of more than 66% of the Board

determines that acceptance of such policy would constitute a breach of the fiduciary duties of the Board to the Company.