



ICANN's Submission to the ITU World Telecommunication Development Conference 2025

Introduction

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) is pleased to submit this information paper to the ITU World Telecommunication Development Conference 2025 (WTDC-25). Our submission directly addresses the Conference's theme on "*Universal, meaningful, and affordable connectivity for an inclusive and sustainable digital future.*"

ICANN coordinates the Internet's unique identifier systems, which enable people all over the world to connect from any digital device connected to the Internet. The Internet serves as a vital platform for businesses and underpins the digital economy. ICANN supports the principle that everyone, regardless of their background, culture, language, or location should be able to use the Internet. This paper outlines the role of Universal Acceptance (UA) and Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) in realizing a truly multilingual and inclusive digital future for all.

IDNs and UA as the foundation for digital inclusion

The ability to use one's own language online, and thus linguistic diversity, is vital for the development of a knowledge-based society. It is a key principle recognized in the United Nations' [Geneva Summit for the World Summit on Information Society \(WSIS\)](#) in 2003, leading to commitments in the [Tunis agenda](#) in 2005 to advance multilingualization of the Internet.

The Tunis agenda identified the need to introduce multilingualism in domain names and e-mail addresses. By implementing programs that allow for the use of multilingual domain names, broader participation in the information society can be achieved. Such initiatives also strengthen cooperation in developing and deploying technical standards globally.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has [emphasized](#) the importance of reducing language barriers to promote human interaction on the Internet. The [WSIS+10 Outcome Document](#) urged stakeholders to collaborate on multilingualization of ICTs, including email addresses and domain names in local languages known as Email Address Internationalized (EAI) and IDNs, to ensure inclusive online participation.

More recently, [Global Digital Compact](#) has also called for making digital technologies accessible in diverse languages.

Progress and Challenges

ICANN and its community have developed and implemented policies and procedures to allow for multilingual domain names since 2003, resulting in more than 150 top-level domains (TLDs) in 37 languages across 23 scripts now available globally. This progress enables domain names like <https://ยูเอชดีสอบ.ไทย> (Thai) and email addresses like [めーるてすと @どこでもつかえる.みんな](#) (Japanese).

Despite these advances, UA of all domain names and email addresses, regardless of script or language, by all Internet-enabled applications, devices, and systems remains a challenge. For true multilingual access and communication online, users must be able to use these domain names and email addresses seamlessly across relevant software and applications.

Studies supported by ICANN, and published in 2025, show that only about 12.5% of popular [national or global websites](#) (out of 2000 tested) and 26.3% of deployed [email servers](#), (out of more than 26 million tested) are configured to accept email addresses in local languages.

ICANN and its community have worked to raise awareness of IDNs and associated UA challenges, while also building capacity to address them. Since 2023, ICANN has been working with the community to organize [UA Day](#) events to raise awareness of the need, challenges and solutions for UA. ICANN is engaging with universities to implement UA academic curricula and has convened a UA Expert Working Group of technical experts from diverse industries to provide implementation guidelines on how to ensure greater UA adoption.

Exploring indicators that assess progress in UA adoption and IDN implementation would serve as an important benchmark in evaluating meaningful connectivity. ICANN aims to collaborate with the ITU Development Bureau to achieve the following objectives:

- Increase global awareness of IDNs and their UA.
- Build capacity to implement IDNs and support UA adoption.
- Develop indicators to assess progress on IDN implementation and UA adoption.

Best Practices for UA and IDNs implementation

All stakeholders, including governments, have a role to play in creating greater awareness about the availability of IDNs and EAI.

- **Governments:**

Member states can promote the use of IDNs and EAI by ensuring their e-government services are UA-ready. They can also update procurement policies to include UA-readiness of software as a requirement for future information IT systems.

To measure progress, member states may track metrics such as the number of IDNs registered under their IDN ccTLDs, the number of e-services that are UA-ready, and the level of IDN support in private sector systems.

UA adoption by member states can encourage broader usage of IDNs and EAI across software applications and services.

As part of the ITU's Demystifying Series, ICANN and the ITU held a joint briefing session for U.N. diplomats in New York and Geneva in January 2024, focused on IDNs and bridging the digital divide. ICANN collaborates annually with the global community to organize a UA Day to promote UA awareness and build capacity. In 2025, ICANN supported 59 UA Day events across more than 50 countries. Member states are encouraged to participate and contribute to these efforts.

- **International and regional organizations:**

Collaboration between the ITU, its member states, other regional and international organizations, and the technical community is crucial to promote the use and acceptance of IDNs, EAI, and a multilingual Internet.

For example, UNESCO and ICANN are collaborating on IDNs and promoting UA through the UA Day. This work continues a series of joint panels and discussions at events such as [IGF2025](#) (WS#226), [WSIS+20](#).

ICANN has also contributed to the ITU's Girls in ICT program, organized by ITU's regional office in Thailand, by promoting the use of Thai domain names and email addresses among young women and girls. The ITU's Europe office participated in the 2024 UA Day keystone event in Serbia.

Conclusion

UA and IDNs are foundational to achieving meaningful connectivity by ensuring a truly inclusive and multilingual Internet.

Despite the significant progress in making IDNs available in many languages, the UA of these domain names and EAI remains a challenge.

ICANN welcomes collaboration with ITU members to raise awareness, build capacity, and develop indicators to assess the adoption of UA and IDNs, which is critical for bridging the digital divide and realizing a truly global and multilingual information society.