Final Draft

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Excellency Mr. Mohammed Nasser Al Ghanim, Director General of the Telecommunication Regulatory Authority of the United Arab Emirates;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It's always a pleasure to visit Dubai, and it's my great pleasure to speak to you today. Before I start, I'd like to extend special gratitude to the Government of the United Arab Emirates and to the Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA) for hosting this meeting.

I would also like to express my great pleasure at being with you today to talk about strategic issues facing ICANN, especially with regard to our continuous efforts to —

- Strengthen ICANN as an international, multi-stakeholder, and open-participation model

- Complete the transition of coordination of the Internet's system of unique identifiers to the private sector

- Meet the needs of Internet users around the world in making multilingual domain names available

- And continue to stimulate choice and competition in the domain name industry through the introduction of new generic top level domains — or new gTLDs.

ICANN's Multi-stakeholder environment

Internet users around the world have come to rely increasingly on the Internet's global system of unique identifiers, including the domain name space, to communicate, transact business, share information, and gather together in virtual communities.

This Internet will become even more dynamic with the deployment of top level internationalized domain names — or IDNs — and the transition from Internet Protocol version 4 — or IPv4 —to Internet Protocol version 6 — or IPv6. These and other initiatives that are intended to improve openness, accessibility, diversity, and security demonstrate that the Internet stakeholders — including stakeholders in this region — are working hard to make the Internet truly global.

Since the domain name system's beginnings in the early 1980s, cooperation and consensus-building through a multi-stakeholder model have successfully guided the Internet's rapid evolution and innovation while maintaining its global interoperability, security and stability.

A continuation of this global approach — based on the 35 years of the experience and values of technologists that created the Internet of today so as to ensure redundancy and resiliency — would, in my opinion, deliver the most satisfactory results for the interests of all users of the Internet.

As an internationally organized, multi-stakeholder non-profit organization, ICANN seeks to reflect these values of coordination, cooperation and collaboration.

Joint Project Agreement and Way Forward

In February of this year, the U.S. Government conducted a midterm review of the Joint Project Agreement — or JPA — between ICANN and the U.S. Department of Commerce. The review was to determine whether ICANN was meeting its responsibilities under the JPA. Meeting them will bring ICANN closer to transitioning coordination of the Internet's system of unique identifiers to the private sector. This private sector-led multi-stakeholder model was the goal envisioned by the U.S. Government nearly ten years ago — and is the reason ICANN was formed.

ICANN's Board certainly believes that ICANN is meeting its responsibilities. More could and should always be done — but our responsibilities are being met.

Before holding that midterm review, the Department of Commerce invited the global Internet community to offer its views of ICANN's stewardship under the JPA. More than 170 comments were received from the community, and the vast majority agree with ICANN's Board.

Comments came from all across the international Internet community — the technical community, the country-code top-level domain community, many governments, businesses and business associations, the registry/registrar community, and from civil society and Internet users — telling us that what ICANN does next is of keen interest to the entire community. I would like in particular to thank Emirates Internet Group — the Internet Society Chapter of UAE — for its positive and valuable input to this process.

The midterm review of the JPA has made it very clear that not only the ICANN Board but also the many, many stakeholders who have invested time and energy in the original promise of private sector-led management want to see not just the JPA concluded, but also the entire transition discussed and implemented. The entire community has indicated that it wants to proceed and complete that early vision.

Internationalized Domain Names

Maintaining a stable interoperable Internet is essential, as is a global multilingual Internet. A multilingual Internet involves very importantly multilingual content as well as, in relation to Internet domain name system, the Internationalized Domain Names — or IDNs. It is worth noting that there is already considerable content in the World Wide Web that is written in a large number of scripts drawn from the Unicode system. Domain names are the next area for expansion.

As you know, the issue of IDNs is itself complex — and involves many technical and policy issues that must be resolved along the way. Also, there are many scripts and associated languages around the world that must be accommodated in the implementation of IDNs. Not the least of these is

the Arabic script I know many of you have worked on in the few days before this meeting, as well as in the months prior to this meeting, for example, in relation with the IETF processes.

This has been a practical illustration of governments, country code operators, technical and linguistic experts and others working together in a spirit of enhanced cooperation to address a complex but important technical challenge for the global Internet.

ICANN's work is progressing rapidly in this area, and the increased input and participation from this region — by both governments and country code operators — continues to be critical to this process. All of our work together for IDN deployment is intended to maintain global uniqueness together with continued interoperability of the domain name system — unique domain names with the same functionality regardless of the geographic point of access.

I would like in particular to highlight a couple of developments in relation to IDN technical and policy work:

First, the protocol revision effort is ongoing by technical domain name system experts with the support of linguists around the world. They are attempting to make a protocol available that will function for any new scripts added to Unicode without requiring updates, and will work for all right-to-left scripts. It also will function in a more stable and secure manner from an end-user perspective, thus improving the way the protocol is implemented by application developers.

Second, on the policy side, ICANN's supporting organizations and advisory committees have been working to develop processes for the application and delegation of IDN TLDs in relation to the new gTLD

process. They are also exploring a fast-track approach intended to streamline the launch of IDN country code top level domains where they are most needed.

This work and much more will eventually lead us to having IDN TLDs available live in the root for production purposes. The initial implementation must be done carefully to make sure that the outcomes are fed back into the community. This will ensure that even after initial deployment we can continue to work together to enhance what is ultimately the most important aspect of this work — the end-user experience and the usability of these new addresses in the DNS.

New gTLDs

In fulfilling its mission, ICANN is guided by four founding principles:

- To preserve the operational stability and security of the Internet, particularly the domain name system;

- To promote competition and choice for registrants, especially in the generic top-level domain arena;

- To achieve broad representation of global Internet communities;

- And to develop policy appropriate to its mission through bottom-up, consensus-based processes.

These principles guide ICANN in introducing competition in the domain name market — and new generic top-level domains — or gTLDs — have been the key tool in doing this. The year 2000 saw the introduction of

.biz, .info, .name, .pro, .aero, .coop, .museum. Another round of gTLDs in 2004 led to the introduction of .jobs, .mobi, .cat, .travel, .asia and .tel.

So right now, there are about 20 generic top-level domains and 252 country-code TLDs supporting more than 153 million registered names in the domain name space.

Internet users are demanding more. When the global Internet community talks about the next billion users coming on line, they are talking about Asia and the Middle East region. India has a population of 1.13 billion and penetration of 5.3%. China has a population of 1.3 billion, and penetration of 12.3%. Compare that to Europe and to Australia, both around 70% penetration.

Similarly, in the Middle East countries, with a population of about 195 million, there are now 33.5 million Internet users. According to the International Telecommunication Union, the United Arab Emirates have slightly more than 1.7 million people connected to the Internet, a 42.9% penetration. Saudi Arabia's 4.7 million Internet users amount to a 19.5% penetration. Iran has 18 million users, a 25.6% penetration. And Syria has 1.5 million users for a 7.7% penetration.

New Internet users — especially with ICANN's work to introduce IDNs and new gTLDs — will overwhelmingly be using the languages of the Middle East region and Asia. They will change the face of the Internet. You might want to think of this phenomenon as the "Internet for the next generation."

The Generic Names Supporting Organization — or GNSO Council — as well as others spent nearly two years to develop the policy that serves as foundation for the implementation development under way. The GNSO approved the policy on 6 September 2007 and sent it to the ICANN Board for approval — which is expected in the coming months. Considerable implementation work continues to be done, and ICANN expects to publish the draft request for proposals — which consist of guidelines and instructions for applicants — in a few months. This is a terrific opportunity for the global Internet community to get involved by voicing their opinion about the process. This draft request for proposals gives applicants an excellent starting point.

What does all this work mean to you? I don't claim to be able to predict the future, but here's what we expect — at the very least —

- Local users will be able to reach global markets with their own domain names in the languages and scripts most familiar to them. The wonderful cultural diversity of this planet can be expressed — and even reinforced — through the introduction of IDN TLDs.

- These same users will be able to have and share experiences that are more meaningful to their local needs. The new registries that are expected to handle these new top-level domains will increase the probability of those TLDs being tailored specifically for local communities having specific needs. Some of this can be achieved with IDNs, some by using geographic indicators as TLDs. We are seeing early indicators of such a dynamic with sponsored TLDs having a cultural, linguistic, and regional focus.

- Imagine the power of information reaching out to new places — think of the how people around the world will be exposed for the first time to first-hand information about the rest of the world.

- We are already seeing new business models — offering different services and products. The variety of new ways of doing business will only expand as these new TLDs reach their potential.

- Along with new business models, we see new ways of protecting intellectual property on the Internet — and new ways of branding. For example, instead of Brand X followed by dot-com, dot-biz, dot-net, and all the other registrations that are now required to protect intellectual property and trademarks, you will see dot-brand x. The brand effectively becomes the domain name.

With the time coming near for the launch of these new TLDs, it seems only fitting that — at ICANN's international meeting in Paris this June — the question to be answered is, What kind of Internet do you want?

I suggest that, if you want your answer heard, you must get involved. That's what this outreach meeting is about — getting involved, having your say, and having the ICANN community listen.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Internet is the most powerful and pervasive means of empowering individuals in recent human history. It requires the continuing efforts of all stakeholders, from governments, the private sector, civil society, academia, and the technical community to preserve and strengthen this model. By doing so, we can ensure the resiliency and utility of the Internet — and

guarantee the rapid and successful development of a secure, stable and globally interoperable Internet.

I would like to conclude with my strong recognition and continued welcoming of the participation of yourselves and this region in the work of ICANN and its processes. I am confident that your effective participation will greatly and positively contribute to the ICANN process, and will bring valuable and novel views to the dialogue from which the global community can benefit.

Finally, allow me once again to express my personal delight at being here with you, and my sincere appreciation to the TRA for hosting this meeting. I'm looking forward to the results of your discussions and wish you all the success in your deliberations.

Thank you…