

2023 Annual Report to UNCTAD

ICANN Contribution

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Part 1. Executive Summary

Over the past year, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) has continued to demonstrate its commitment to the multistakeholder model, which encourages the active participation of a diverse range of stakeholders in shaping Internet governance decisions and policies. This inclusive approach has led to several notable successes pertaining to policy development, digital inclusion, and Domain Name System (DNS) security, among others.

With the successes also comes challenges for ICANN. The technical complexities of adapting digital systems to accommodate Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) via Universal Acceptance (UA) is an obstacle that ICANN and its global community have prioritized. ICANN is addressing these challenges through partnerships within the technical community as well as raising awareness and providing information resources.

- The first global **Universal Acceptance Day** took place on March 28, 2023. This event was significant in that it brought together various technical and language communities as well as companies, governments, and other stakeholders from the DNS industry. Their collective efforts aimed to champion UA and create a more multilingual global Internet.¹
- ICANN continues to hold regional DNS Forums, which provide a place for individuals, researchers, technology developers, and registry operators to discuss technical topics related to the DNS (e.g., the Middle East DNS Forum in Istanbul (May), the APAC DNS Forum in Hong Kong (July), and the ICANN DNS Symposium in Da Nang (September)).

¹ See, Universal Acceptance Day Report, June 2023, <https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/files/universal-acceptance-day-01jun23-en.pdf>

Part 2. Analytical Overview

Universal Acceptance (UA) in 2023

This section provides an overview of ICANN's work in advancing Universal Acceptance (UA) of domain names and email addresses during the year 2023, taking into account the review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals. The focal point is ICANN's collaboration with the Universal Acceptance Steering Group (UASG) and the establishment of UA Day, a global initiative to promote UA adoption.

ICANN and UASG have collaborated to conduct extensive analysis to determine the current gaps in technology for supporting UA. ICANN also has developed and conducted detailed training on addressing these challenges for developers, system and email administrators, and hosting providers globally. ICANN also is reaching out to technology developers, including proprietary application providers and open source communities, to update their products to make them UA-ready. See the [UA Readiness Report for FY23](#) for more details.

In 2023, ICANN played a pivotal role in establishing UA Day, a milestone event organized by the community-led UASG in partnership with ICANN. UA Day was designed as a global platform to bring together local and regional stakeholders from diverse backgrounds. The primary objective of UA Day was to raise awareness and encourage the adoption of UA through a combination of virtual, in-person, and hybrid informational and training sessions.

Held for the first time on 28 March 2023, UA Day saw unprecedented collaboration among various stakeholders, including technical and language communities, businesses, governments, and other Internet community stakeholders. This inclusivity marked a significant step forward in the collective efforts to champion UA and promote a multilingual Internet on a global scale.

UA Day events were open to a broad spectrum of relevant organizations and professionals, demonstrating ICANN's commitment to fostering an all-inclusive dialogue. Participants included Regional At-Large Organizations, At-Large Structures, ICANN Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees, government officials, international organizations, technology experts, open-source communities, standards bodies, email service providers, software and technology developers, web hosting platforms, academics, DNS industry professionals, and language communities. The event announcement received approximately one hundred proposals and eventually fifty events were organized across forty countries to commemorate UA Day. A detailed report on the first UA Day is available here: [English](#) | [العربية](#) | [Español](#) | [Français](#) | [Português](#) | [Русский](#) | [中文](#)).

ICANN recognizes the pivotal role that UA plays in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals. By promoting a globally accessible and multilingual Internet, ICANN's efforts in UA directly contribute to the broader goals of fostering innovation, enabling equitable access to information, and building partnerships for a

sustainable digital future. ICANN's collaboration with UASG, its work toward achieving UA, and the successful launch of UA Day in 2023 reinforce ICANN's commitment. The global outreach efforts underscore ICANN's dedication to advancing the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, by making the Internet more accessible and inclusive for all.

Part 3. A Brief Description of Innovative Policies, Programs, and Projects

Digital Inclusivity

In advancing ICANN's mission to connect the next billion people to the Internet, it is critical that we create innovative ways to service the world's different languages, systems, and cultures. Language accessibility is crucial for a truly inclusive Internet.

Through Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs), we tackle the existing disparity in access, which hinders the involvement of non-English speakers, creating a digital divide. To bridge this gap, ICANN and the Internet community must strive for linguistic inclusivity and true interoperability. Every individual, regardless of their language or location, should be able to access the Internet using their preferred language and keyboard.

Another critical aspect that needs to be addressed is Universal Acceptance, or UA. This is a technical requirement that ensures that all valid domain names and email addresses can be used in all Internet-enabled applications, devices, and systems. This includes websites and email addresses in languages other than English and those that are more than three characters long. Most importantly, UA provides a gateway to bringing online the next billion Internet users worldwide.

The New Generic Top-Level Domains (gTLD) Program: Next Round is a community-driven initiative enabling the continued expansion of the DNS through the introduction of new gTLDs. The next wave of new domains will provide users with the opportunity to create a space on the Internet for their communities, businesses, and interests, in their native, local languages. The Internet will continue to evolve to be multilingual and inclusive, finally achieving the goal of closing the digital divide.



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