



GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

AFTLD CAIRO MEETING

Introduction

African Top Level Domains (AfTLD) held its first ccTLD workshop and meeting in Cairo (Egypt) between 28 and 30 May at Movenpick Resorts Cairo-Pyramids. The workshop was attended by 34 delegates the majority of whom were from 13 African ccTLDs. It was also attended by the General Manager of APTLD, Don Hollander, .cz registry's Pavel Tuma, AfriNIC's Adiel Akplogan, and ICANN's Anne-Rachel Inne (Africa Liaison) and Baher Esmat (Middle East Liaison).

The workshop was generously hosted by Egypt's National Telecoms Regulatory Authority (NTRA), and was sponsored by ICANN, ISOC and AfriNIC. The sponsorships were spent largely on ccTLD delegates' travel and accommodation costs, and those of the AfTLD Executive Committee. NTRA's organization was very impressive and certainly gave a much desired integrity and stature to the event.

AfTLD presentation

The meeting began with a presentation by myself on behalf of the AfTLD Excom. The presentation looked at what AfTLD's objectives and strategies were, and what it sought to achieve in the next few years. Of particular importance was the need for African ccTLDs to work with AfTLD and to appreciate its potential in helping to improve their state.

DNS Presentation

Michuki Mwangi (AfTLD President) gave a detailed presentation on the Domain Name System, which was positively received by the delegates.

African ccTLD Presentations

There were also a number of presentations given by the attending ccTLDs, including a presentation by .za DNA. ccTLDs which presented included .gh (Ghana), .ci (Burundi), .ke (Kenya), .sd (Sudan), .eg (Egypt), .ml (Mali) and .ly (Libya). The presentations not only highlighted developments within these ccTLDs, but also brought to light the kind of challenges faced by African ccTLDs.

The challenges ranged from poor governmental support to lack of DNS and ICT technical skills and infrastructure, and poor business development plans. Most of the ccTLDs reported domain name registration totals of less than 1500. The presentations served to give a clearer direction which should be taken by AfTLD in helping to improve and sustain African ccTLDs.

Automated Registry System

Pavel Tuma of .cz made a well-received presentation of an automated open source registry system used by his registry. It was encouraging to hear that .cz was keen to distribute the system to African ccTLDs and to find various ways of helping them. Souleymane Oumtanaga of .ci (Cote d'Ivoire) also presented his registry's automated system which had been co-developed with NIC-MG (Madagascar) and AfNIC (France).

DNSSec

There was also a fairly detailed presentation on DNS Security by Alain Aina Patrick. This allowed technically-skilled delegates to understand not only the importance of DNSSec, but also the manner in which it could be deployed.

Internationalized Domain Names

Mohamet Diop (Senegal) gave a detailed presentation on Unicode and IDNs, outlining inherent DNS programming issues. Another presentation was made by Mohamed EL Bashir (.sd) on IDN implementations.

APTLD Presentation

Don Hollander gave a presentation outlining the plans of Asia-Pacific Top Level Domains, and what had been achieved to date. He noted that AfTLD was beginning to make good strides and pledged APTLD's support and willingness to work closely with AfTLD.

AfTLD AGM

An annual general meeting of AfTLD was held on 30 May. The AfTLD President presented a report detailing the work that had been done by the Excom to date (since its election at ICANN Marrakesh in June 2006). This covered such areas as fundraising (\$30,000 was received from ISOC and Neustar), communications and outreach, capacity building, financial management, administration, and the recently signed MOU with AfriNIC.

The meeting was made aware of plans to employ a full-time manager and to hold another workshop in 2008.

After some discussion particularly concerning the need for a full-time manager and the ongoing constitutional amendments, the meeting unanimously voted to extend the tenure of the current Excom for another year.

Overall Impression

The inaugural event was a success in many ways. It was pleasing to see organizations such as NTRA, ISOC and ICANN willing to help AfTLD succeed in its work. These pledged further support in terms of capacity building, funding, research and collaboration.

Most ccTLDs expressed their gratefulness at the well-organized event, and the work carried out by the current Excom since ICANN Marrakesh.

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Monday, 11 June 2007*