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Date: 29 September 2015

**Attention: Geographic Names Panel (GNP)**

**ICANN, New gTLD Application Program**

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**Subject: Clarification of the position of the African Union Commission (AUC) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) on the matter concerning the application of the dotAFRICA (.AFRICA) Top Level Domain and how this relates to support from relevant governments in terms of the new gTLD Applicant Guidebook.**

Dear Sirs,

The African Heads of States, through the Oliver Tambo Declaration of 5<sup>th</sup> November 2009, expressed the need to prioritise the delegation of a new continental geographic Top Level Domain Name, dotAFRICA (.Africa).

In addition, African ICT Ministers issued a directive to the African Union Commission (AUC), contained in the Third Ordinary Session Abuja Declaration 2010, to '*set up the structures and modalities for the implementation of the DotAfrica (.AFRICA) Project*'.

In order to fulfil this mandate by African governments, the AUC in an open and transparent process, on 12 May 2011, called for all interested parties to submit 'Expression(s) of Interest' (EOI) to manage the .Africa TLD. This process was then followed by a call for proposals (RFP), which culminated in the appointment of UniForum SA (now referred to as the ZA Central Registry 'ZACR') as the successful applicant to carry the endorsement and support of the AUC during the new gTLD process to apply for the dotAFRICA (.Africa) TLD.

To be clear, the application submitted by ZA Central Registry (ZACR) trading as Registry. Africa [1-1243-89583] is the only application officially endorsed and supported by the AUC and hence African member states. The AUC officially endorsed the ZACR application in our letter dated 4 April 2012, which was followed by our letter of support dated 2 July 2013.

We have also written to ICANN on numerous occasions confirming our official position on this matter. Our position has also regularly been communicated to our colleagues within the Government Advisory Committee (GAC), which ultimately resulted in 17 (seventeen) Early Warning notices and Consensus GAC Advice being issued against a competing application submitted by DotConnectAfrica Trust (DCA) [application ID: 1-1165-42560].

As you are aware, according to the Applicant Guidebook, the process of submitting applications to ICANN for geographic TLDs requires written support from over 60% of the relevant governments and/or governmental authorities. The purpose of this letter is to clarify the issue of government support for the dotAFRICA (.Africa) TLD application in terms of ICANN new gTLD application process. This is particularly relevant in your evaluation of the DCA application and whether it meets the minimum requirements for government support.

1. Any reliance by DCA in its application [application ID: 1-1165-42560], proclaiming support or endorsement by the AUC, must be dismissed. The AUC does not support the DCA application and, if any such support was initially provided, it has subsequently been withdrawn with the full knowledge of DCA even prior to the commencement of ICANN's new gTLD application process. My office stands ready to engage with the GNP to clarify and affirm this position if this is required.
2. Any reliance by DCA in its application [application ID: 1-1165-42560], proclaiming support or endorsement by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), must be dismissed. The UNECA, by its own acknowledgement, does not have the mandate or authority to represent the support of African governments on this matter. Please refer to the attached letter from the UNECA, signed by Ms. Sandra Baffoe-Bonnie (Secretary of the Commission and Legal Advisor) confirming this position.
3. Any reliance by DCA in its application [application ID: 1-1165-42560], proclaiming support or endorsement from any individual African member state, must be treated with utmost caution and sensitivity. Member states are signatories to the Oliver Tambo Declaration and the ICTs Ministers Abuja Declaration and as such they support the position of the AUC on this matter as outlined above. We urge the GNP to carefully test the veracity and relevance of any such letter of support from an African member state before placing reliance thereon. My office stands ready to assist the GNP to clarify and affirm the validity and relevance of any such letter with the applicable member state.
4. To further amplify the position of African member states, as represented by the AUC, on the matter of the dotAFRICA (.Africa) TLD, I attach the latest Declaration issued by African ICT Ministers in Addis Ababa during September 2015.

Please accept, Dear Sirs, the assurance of my highest consideration

  
**Dr. Elham M.A. IBRAHIM (Mrs)**  
Commissioner for  
Infrastructure and Energy

