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Ms Heather Dryden
Chair
Governmental Advisory Committee
Senior Adviser to the Government of Canada
ICANN Governmental Advisory Committee
1016 Electronics Niketan
6 CGO Complex, Lodi Road
New Delhi 110-003
India

11 April 2012

Dear Ms Dryden,

Re: Comments of the World Health Organization to the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) on the Top Level Domain Names for Health

In June 2011, the ICANN Board of Directors approved a New Generic Top Level Domain Programme that allows the implementation of additional gTLDs. Under this programme, a “.health” gTLD (including in any language) may be proposed by an established corporation, organization or institution. The application period will close on 12 April 2012. We understand that each application will be made public on ICANN’s website and that comments and objections can be submitted to ICANN. We further understand that such comments and objections will be considered by ICANN in the assignment of the proposed gTLD.

The World Health Organization (WHO) is a Specialized Agency of the United Nations and has the mandate to act as the directing and coordinating authority on international health work. WHO consists of 194 Member States and is, *inter alia*, responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends.

WHO recognizes the value of a top-level domain “.health”, provided that it is operated in the interest of global public health and there is no risk of misuse. In other words, WHO wishes to ensure that “.health” is created as a trusted place for health information and health care practice, bearing in mind that recent history shows that the illegal promotion and sale of medicines on the Internet (including spurious/falsely-labelled/falsified/counterfeit, adulterated and unapproved medicines) pose a serious risk to patients and consumers, and undermine legitimate trade.

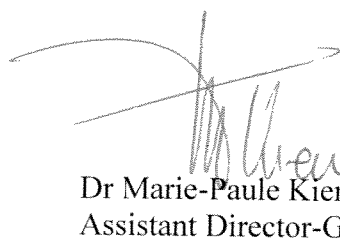
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WHO considers that the public should be able to rely on the operator of “.health” being a trusted entity which operates the gTLD in the interest of global public health and is capable of ensuring that the attribution of any sub “.health” domain meets certain baseline conditions, including but not necessarily limited to the following:

- Total ban of the illegal promotion and sale of medicines and other health related products including spurious/falsely-labelled/falsified/counterfeit and unapproved medicines), and implementation of measures against identity theft;
- Regulation of commercial practices targeted at consumers, in particular children and people with low health literacy;
- Assurance of quality of information posted on .health, through verification schemes;
- Preservation of the confidentiality of patient information and enforcement of consumer protection during the collection, storage, use and exchange of data online, through the adoption of standardized global policies; and
- Creation of a trusted online environment which advances health on a societal scale, promotes consumer empowerment, and protects public health.

For the above reasons, WHO requests the support of the GAC to postpone the assignment of “.health” (including its language variants) until such time as following broad-based consultation of the health community, including the public and private sectors, all baseline conditions for the operation of “.health” are duly elaborated and their implementation and observance is ensured.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Marie-Paule Kieny
Assistant Director-General
Innovation, Information, Evidence
and Research