
Universal Acceptance

Session #15 - Universal Acceptance

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Session Goal

During this session, the GAC will receive an update on the work of the Universal Acceptance Steering Group (UASG) and consider the formation of a new GAC Working Group to address international domain names and universal acceptance matters of relevance to governments.

Background

Universal Acceptance is a foundational requirement for a truly multilingual Internet, one in which users around the world can navigate entirely in local languages. It is also the key to unlocking the potential of new generic top-level domains (gTLDs) to foster competition, consumer choice and innovation in the domain name industry. To achieve Universal Acceptance (UA), Internet applications and systems must treat all TLDs in a consistent manner, including new gTLDs and internationalized TLDs. Specifically, they must accept, validate, store, process and display all domain names.

The Universal Acceptance Steering Group (UASG) is a community-based initiative that was formed to guide the identification of top-line issues and proposed solutions, as well as the creation and dissemination of best practices and general outreach information about UA.

The group's primary objective is to help software developers and website owners understand how to update their systems to keep pace with an evolving Domain Name System. It's primary message is that UA will enable the next billion users to build their own spaces and identities online.

ICANN supports the work of the group by playing the role of coordinator, catalyst, supporter, advocate and manager of the UASG work streams. This includes providing budget support and a Secretariat of the UASG.

Relevant Developments

The UASG developed an action plan for FY20 and at ICANN65 in Marrakech informed GAC members on the motivation, scope and focus of that plan. During the session, UASG members highlighted the importance of the role of governments in achieving UA Readiness. The UASG sought input on how the GAC could help to reach out to governments for raising and addressing UA issues and to also share a relevant case study with GAC members.

The discussion prompted some consideration about how the GAC may need to form a working group on the topic of universal acceptance. It was determined that the GAC Leadership would further consider the need and practicality of forming a new working group to address universal acceptance matters.

Over the course of the next 6 to 9 months, the UASG plans a very active agenda.

Software Development

- The UASG will continue to reach out to developers to hasten the development of the tools and software that are required to make systems UA-ready. UASG members are narrowing their focus and concentrating on software and email administrator developers. This is because as general UA awareness has increased, people are now actively asking for solutions. Messaging is being developed for this software segment and the UASG will share materials as they are completed. Looking ahead, once good progress is made in terms of software development, the next likely target audience for the UASG will be governments.
- ICANN is working in conjunction with the UASG and the community to reach out to the relevant stakeholders.

Training

- Training material for software developers and email administrators is in development by ICANN organization. The plan is to make this material available on ICANN Learn.
- ICANN is working in conjunction with the UASG and the community to reach out to the relevant stakeholders.

Local Initiatives

- A high priority is establishing local initiatives, particularly in the five regions identified in the UASG Action Plan: China, European Union, India, Russia, and the United States/Canada (chosen as they are large software developers and/or exporters). While these are the priorities due to the amount of software work that is done in these areas, the UASG will support work in other regions that have expressed interest in participating. For example, ICANN org staff on the Global Stakeholders Engagement team are working locally with groups in Brazil, Eastern Europe, Middle East and more.

Notable UASG Events

- ICANN has secured a slot to talk about UA at the upcoming Internet Governance Forum (IGF) meeting in Berlin, Germany. Also, in addition to several UA sessions at ICANN66 in Montreal (in addition to this session with the GAC), the UASG will have a table in the exhibits area that will be staffed by UASG Ambassadors.

Leadership Proposal for GAC Action

After further consideration of this matter since the ICANN65 meeting, the GAC Leadership recommends that the GAC establish a formal working group regarding IDNs and Universal acceptance.

Key Reference Documents

- Action Plan for Universal Acceptance of Domain Names and Email Addresses (FY20) - <https://uasg.tech/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/UASG-FY20-Action-Plan.pdf>

Further Information

- ICANN Universal Acceptance web page - <https://www.icann.org/resources/pages/universal-acceptance-2012-02-25-en>
- UASG website - <https://uasg.tech/>
- Session transcript and materials from UASG session with the GAC at ICANN65 - Marrakech - <https://65.schedule.icann.org/meetings/1058193>

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