
GAC Brief on Universal Acceptance Strategies

Session # 6

Session Objective

The objective of this session is for GAC Members to learn about the latest strategies and best practices being employed by key stakeholders to effect universal acceptance (UA) of domain names and, potentially, how they can become more involved.

Session Agenda

Attendees will be briefed about evolving UA strategies, with information and insights offered by representatives of ICANN staff, the Universal Acceptance Steering Group (UASG) and the ccNSO UA Committee.

Background

Universal Acceptance (UA) is the concept that all domain names should be treated equally. UA ensures that all domain names and email addresses can be used by all Internet-enabled applications, devices and systems and is essential for the continued expansion of the Internet as it provides a gateway to the next billion Internet users. UA enables the private sector, government and societies to better serve their communities through the use of an increasing number of new domains, including non-Latin based, language-specific domain names (IDNs) in Arabic, Chinese and many other scripts.

The Domain Name System (DNS) has expanded dramatically in recent years with the addition of generic top-level domains, including those in different languages and scripts (IDNs). Domain names, including IDNs, play a crucial role in providing choice and making the Internet more accessible and multilingual for global users around the world. Being able to use a domain name and email address in the script and language of one's choice, gives users the ability to experience the full social and economic power of the Internet.

But while the DNS has changed, the checks used by many software applications to validate and process domain names and email addresses have not been updated. Many Internet-enabled systems don't recognize or appropriately process new domain names or internationalized email addresses. That is why ICANN org and members of the multistakeholder community are committed to supporting and achieving UA. UA is a technical necessity that ensures all valid domain names and email addresses, regardless of script, language, or character length, can be equally used by all Internet-enabled applications, devices, and systems.

At the ICANN66 Public Meeting in Montreal, the GAC formally established a Universal Acceptance and IDN Working Group (the “UA-IDN WG”) to help the committee track, consider and address matters and topics relevant to governments in those areas.

The decision was the result of several previous discussions among GAC members and with members of the Universal Acceptance Steering Group (UASG) about the importance of these matters to governments. Interested group members met briefly in Montreal to establish some initial collaborative connections with the UASG.

Recent Developments

The GAC has regularly provided briefings to Members and Observers on UA matters at ICANN Public Meetings and intersessionally. In light of recent evolutionary steps in the community strategy to pursue the goal of UA, this session has been scheduled to familiarize GAC representatives on the latest developments.

Key Reference Documents

- UA-IDN WG web page - <https://gac.icann.org/working-group/gac-universal-acceptance-and-internationalized-domain-names-working-group-ua-idn-wg>
- Universal Acceptance Steering Group web page - <https://uasg.tech/>
- ICANN UA web page - <https://www.icann.org/uasg-en>
- IDNs - EPDP Outreach to GAC Webinar (15 Sep 2023) - <https://gac.icann.org/sessions/idnsepdp-outreach-to-gac-webinar>
- GAC Basics Webinar - Internationalized Domain Names and Universal Acceptance (1 Sep 2022) - <https://gac.icann.org/sessions/gac-basics-webinar-internationalized-domain-names-and-universal-acceptance>

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