ICANN | GAC
Governmental Advisory Committee

ICANN 87 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

ICANN87 GAC Session Briefing – Universal Acceptance Discussions

Session 5

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Background

Established during the ICANN66 Public Meeting in Montreal, the GAC's Universal Acceptance and Internationalized Domain Names Working Group (UA-IDN WG) helps the Committee track, consider, and address matters and topics relevant to governments in these areas. The GAC Leadership looks to the Working Group to provide perspectives, information, and expertise on Universal Acceptance (UA) and IDN matters when they arise in various contexts.

IDNs enable domain names to be used in languages and scripts beyond the basic Latin alphabet. UA, while closely related, is a broader technical requirement: it helps ensure that all valid domain names and email addresses, including internationalized ones, are accepted, validated, stored, processed, and displayed correctly by Internet-enabled applications and systems.

Over recent years, ICANN org and the community have undertaken significant awareness-raising and technical work on UA. The focus is increasingly shifting from awareness and guidance toward adoption and practical implementation. For governments, this raises an important question: how can public policy, procurement, national digital strategies, and digital government services help accelerate UA adoption.

Recent developments include WSIS+20 Outcome document (item 28) calling for IDN and UA support, UNESCO delineating the role of stakeholders in promoting UA adoption in its UA Policy Brief, and the publication of the Guidelines for Advancing UA Adoption, developed by the UA Expert Working Group organized by ICANN. These resources identify the public sector and governments among the key stakeholder groups for implementation, alongside large technology organizations and open-source communities. ICANN org is now reviewing and prioritizing the resulting actions and coordinating implementation across relevant functions.

The GAC UA-IDN WG is also calling on governments to express their interest in becoming UA Champions and to contribute to advancing UA adoption within their respective national contexts. The initiative provides an opportunity for interested governments to share their experiences, initiatives, and challenges, raise awareness of UA, and encourage its consideration in relevant

government policies, digital services, procurement, and digital transformation efforts. The call for governments to express their interest remains open, providing an opportunity for broader government participation and engagement.

Session Objective

The primary objective of the ICANN87 session on Saturday 17 October is to begin a practical GAC discussion on why UA adoption matters for governments and how governments can help advance it domestically.

The session will consider how governments can use policy, procurement, digital strategies, and public-sector services to support adoption, while also identifying areas where additional guidance, resources, or coordination may be useful.

The session will also provide an opportunity for governments to **express their interest in becoming UA Champions**, supporting the initiative by raising awareness of UA and encouraging its consideration within relevant national policies, digital services, procurement practices, and digital transformation efforts. The call for governments to join the UA Champion initiative will remain open to encourage broader government participation and engagement.

The session will also highlight opportunities for governments to demonstrate leadership on UA implementation, including through the GAC UA-IDN Working Group's UA Champion initiative, which encourages governments to promote UA within their jurisdictions and support practical implementation through national digital strategies, policies, public procurement, and digital government services.

To support the discussions, the session will provide targeted updates on recent UA developments, including UA Day activities, ICANN's collaboration with UNESCO and the UNESCO-ICANN Policy Brief, and the work of the UA Expert Working Group. A government case study will offer a practical example of implementation. Relevant IDN developments will be addressed where they directly relate to UA adoption and government implementation.

- Updates on UA:
    - UA-Day 2026 and related community activities
    - UNESCO-ICANN Collaboration and Policy Brief on Advancing Universal Acceptance for a Multilingual Internet.

- UA Expert Working Group Updates and Government Role
    - Guidelines for Advancing UA Adoption
    - Prioritization of public sector and government implementation
    - Transition from guideline development to implementation planning

- Government Showcase / Case Study on Advancing Universal Acceptance
    - Practical government experience in advancing UA and/or IDN readiness
    - Lessons learned and opportunities for broader application

    - UA Champion initiative and call for interested governments to express their interest in becoming UA Champions

- Interactive GAC Discussion:
    - What experiences, challenges, and implementation opportunities have governments identified in advancing Universal Acceptance?
    - In what areas would further guidance, resources, or coordination be most useful to support government UA implementation?
    - Why should Universal Acceptance be considered a policy priority for governments, and what are the risks of delaying UA adoption at the national level?
    - How can governments integrate UA requirements into national digital strategies, e-government platforms, and procurement policies?
    - What role should GAC play in ensuring UA considerations are reflected in ICANN policy development and advice?

- Priorities and Next Steps
    - Possible priorities for the GAC UA-IDN Working Group, with a focus on supporting government UA adoption
    - Opportunities for continued government engagement, implementation support, and collaboration
    - Supporting the UA Champion initiative, including continued communication and coordination with the ICANN UA team, UNESCO, and governments that have expressed or may express interest in becoming UA Champions
    - Identifying practical next steps and mechanisms for ongoing engagement among interested governments, the GAC UA-IDN WG, ICANN, and UNESCO

Key Reference Documents

- UA Champion Call
- GAC UA-IDN Working Group Web Page
- GAC Annual Plan 2025/2026
- Guidelines for Advancing UA Adoption
- UA IDN Implementation / Adoption Report - 2026
- UA Day 2026 Report
- UNESCO UA Policy Brief

- WSIS+20 Outcome Document (item 28)
- ITU PP Resolution 133

Document Administration

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