ICANN 85 | COMMUNITY FORUM

GAC Universal Acceptance Discussion

7 March 2026

Agenda Items

- Welcome (Christine Arida, GAC Vice-Chair - SO caretaker / Abdalmonem Galila,Working Group Chair)
- Updates on UA
  - UNESCO - ICANN Policy Brief on Advancing Universal Acceptance for a Multilingual Internet (Guilherme Canela - UNESCO)
  - UA Day 2026 Highlights (Seda Akbulut - ICANN Org)
  - Exploring the Government Role: UA Expert Group Perspective and Updates (Edmon Chung - DotAsia)
  - ccNSO UAC Updates (Regina Fuchsova - EURid)
- Advancing Universal Acceptance: The Indian Government Experience
- Panel Discussion
- AOB/Closing (Christine Arida, GAC Vice-Chair - SO caretaker / Abdalmonem Galila,Working Group Chair)

ADVANCING UNIVERSAL ACCEPTANCE
UNESCO's Work on Building an Inclusive Digital Future Through Multilingualism

Guilherme Canela, Director for Division for Digital Inclusion and Policies and Digital Transformation, UNESCO

7 March 2026

Global Context:
bridging digital divide for inclusive digital future

- ## Human population: 8.2 billion

  - Persons in extreme poverty: **~690 million (462 million 15-24 years)** => they can't afford to be connected!

  - Persons with disabilities: **1.2 billion** => can they **access** content?

  - Indigenous peoples: **~370 million** => can they **understand** content?

  - **+7000 languag**e in the world, a few hundreds online

  - Population aged 0-15 years: ~1.9 billion (15-24 years: 1.2 billion) => how can they be **safe and empowered** online?

  - Workers: **56%** say they don't have needed digital skills! (only 25% women in "higher" ICT jobs)

  - **Gender divide:** 70 per cent of men are using the Internet, compared with 65 per cent of women.

  - **AI work force**: less than 30% women
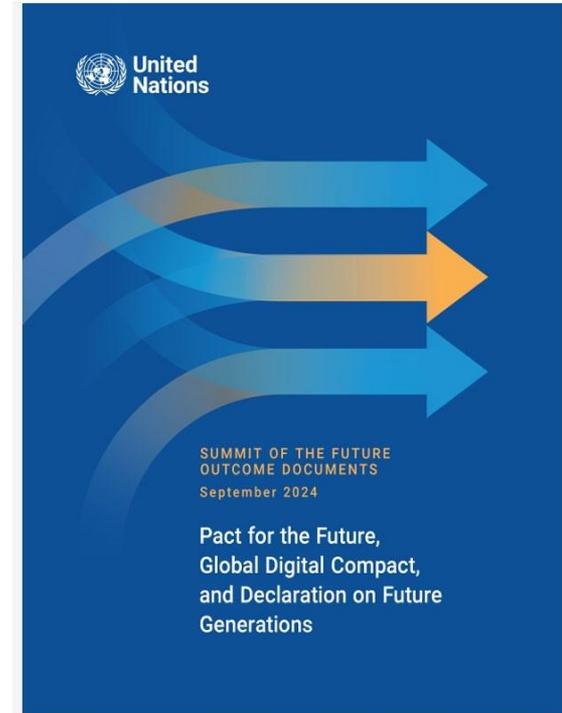
Individuals using the Internet
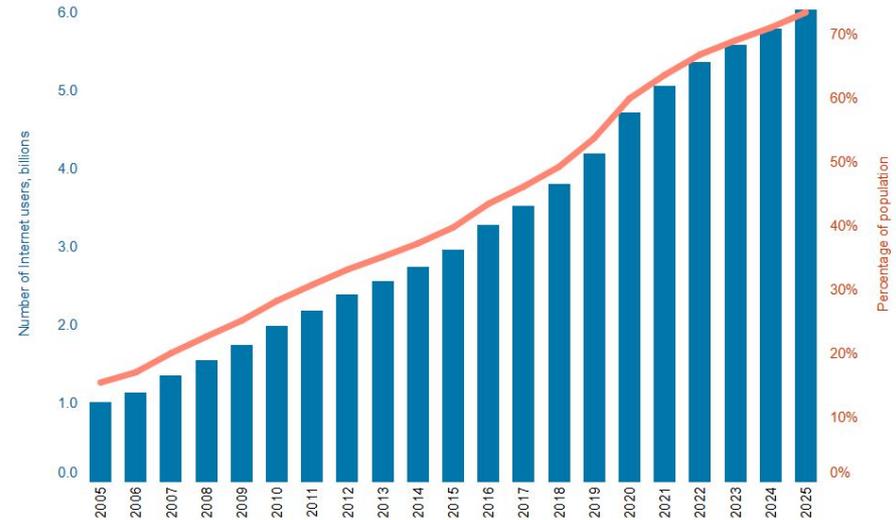
Source: ITU

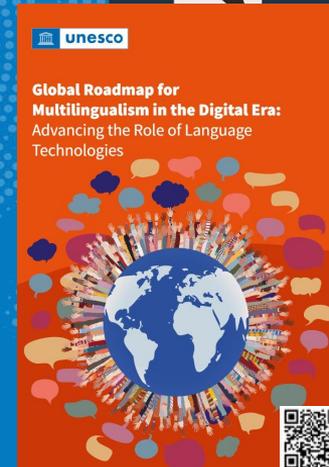**Online: 6 billion / Offline: 2.2 billion**

Global Response: Global Digital Compact

1. Close **all digital divides** and accelerate progress across the Sustainable Development Goals;

2. Expand **inclusion** in, and benefits from the digital economy for all;

3. Foster an inclusive, open, safe and secure digital space that respects, protects and promote **human rights**;

4. Advance responsible, equitable and interoperable **data governance** approaches;

5. Enhance international **governance of artificial intelligence** for the benefit of humanity taking into account **multilingualism** throughout the life cycle of these systems.

United Nations

SUMMARY OF THE FUTURE
OUTCOME DOCUMENTS
September 2024

Pact for the Future,
Global Digital Compact,
and Declaration on Future
Generations

UNESCO's Commitment to Multilingualism

- UNESCO's Recommendation concerning the **Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace** (2003)

- **International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL 2022-2032)**

- **Language Technologies: Global Roadmap for Multilingualism in the Digital Era: Advancing the Role of Language Technologies**

- **Collaboration with ICANN**

Global Roadmap for Multilingualism in the Digital Era: Advancing the Role of Language Technologies

2022-2032 | INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF **Indigenous Languages**

UNESCO and ICANN Collaboration 2025-2026

January 2025

May 2025

June-July 2025

October 2025

November 2026

January 2026

MoU between UNESCO and ICANN

Universal Acceptance Day in Viet Nam + regional and national events

IGF and **WSIS Policy Brief**

ICANN 84 Dublin Annual General Meeting

WSSD 2025 Doha Launch of the Roadmap on Multilingualism

Call for event proposals UA Day 2026 + Involvement of 18 UNESCO FOs and HQ

unesco

Advancing Universal Acceptance of All Domain Names and Email Addresses for a Multilingual Internet.

UNESCO Series on Advancing Multilingualism in the Digital Age

Consultation with GAC: Your inputs by 20 March

Table of Contents

Advancing Universal Acceptance of All Domain Names and Email Addresses for a Multilingual Internet – Policy Brief

Importance of Universal Acceptance

Challenges of Universal Acceptance

- Economic Growth
- Preservation of Languages and Culture
- Educational Benefits

- Awareness and Engagement
- Technical Barriers
- Capacity Challenges
- Policy and Regulatory Challenges

An Evolving Internet

TLDs and Email Addresses

No longer just 2 or 3 characters

.москва

.asia

.公益

.ファッション

.photography

.مصر

More TLDs available

.ভারত

Use of non-ASCII scripts and characters

Advancing Universal Acceptance of All Domain Names and Email Addresses for a Multilingual Internet – Policy Brief

Policy Recommendations for Internet Stakeholders

- Adopt and implement UA-readiness as a norm
- Promote alignment with international technical standards
- Integrate IDN and UA awareness and training
- Foster collaboration across stakeholder groups
- Embed UA into digital inclusion strategies

Advancing Universal Acceptance of All Domain Names and Email Addresses for a Multilingual Internet – Policy Brief

Governments

- Develop national strategies and action plans
- Align national standards with global protocols
- Update policy and regulatory frameworks
- Enable e-government UA-readiness
- Build institutional capacity,
- Lead by example
- Engage national DNS and IT industries

Advancing Universal Acceptance of All Domain Names and Email Addresses for a Multilingual Internet – Policy Brief
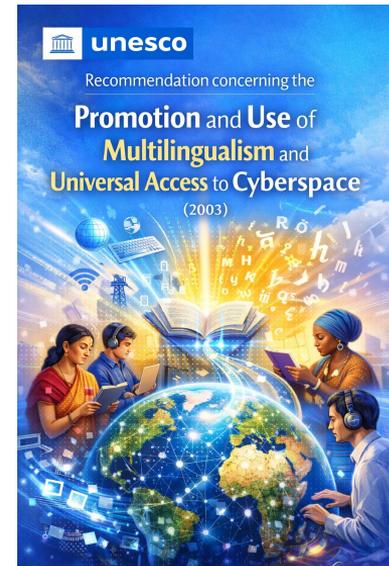
Suggested Measurements of UA

- **Potential question 1:** Are the stakeholders promoting Universal Acceptance of all domain names and email addresses?

- **Potential question 2:** Does the government have a policy framework to enable the Universal Acceptance of all domain names and email addresses for providing access to a multilingual Internet? If so, is it being effectively implemented?

- **Potential question 3:** Is there a substantial and growing use of domain names in diverse local languages signifying increasing multilingual use of the Internet?

- **Potential question 4:** Is there sufficient capacity development to technically implement Universal Acceptance of all domain names and email addresses in diverse local languages for a multilingual Internet?

UNESCO's monitoring process – Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace

Sixth monitoring process – June 2026

2.5.	Does your country have a policy or regulatory framework to support Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs), Emal Adress Internationalization (EAI) and ensure Universal Acceptance[2] of all domain names and email addresses, including those in local languages and scripts, as part of efforts to enable access to multilingual Internet? If so, how is this framework being implemented in practice? Are there any capacity building efforts for this purpose?	• Yes • No • If yes, please provide examples (e.g. Relevant Policy and regulatory frameworks supporting IDNs, EAI and their Universal Acceptance, implementing technical standards for IDNs and EAI for UA adoption in public and private sectors, integrating UA in technical and internet governance curricula of universities, measures enabling the use of local and Indigenous languages in domain names and email addresses) (Max 800 characters):

Universal Acceptance (UA) Day 2026 Engagement with UNESCO Field Offices

- 30 events shortlisted among 70 submissions from Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America

- 18 UNESCO Field Offices + UNESCO HQ engaged in joining national and regional events

Thank you!

Guilherme Canela
Director for Division for Digital
Inclusion and Policies and
Digital Transformation,
UNESCO
g.godoi@unesco.org

Help us shape this collaborative effort toward a truly multilingual Internet!

Universal Acceptance (UA) Day 2026

7 March 2026

UA Day Overview

UA Day aims to rally local, regional, and global stakeholders to spread awareness and encourage UA adoption through various types of events around the world.

The inaugural UA Day was held on 28 March 2023.
The keystone UA Day events were held in India (2023), Serbia (2024), and Viet Nam (2025).

Organized by ICANN in collaboration with UNESCO and the community.

Since October 2024, ICANN and UNESCO have been collaborating on UA Day. This collaboration will continue for UA Day 2026.

UA Day 2026: Fourth Annual UA Day

Focusing on UA adoption and demonstration events.

A community-based team was formed to review all proposals and to shortlist them.

Received 70 proposals from 45 countries and territories.
30 events from 30 countries and territories were shortlisted.
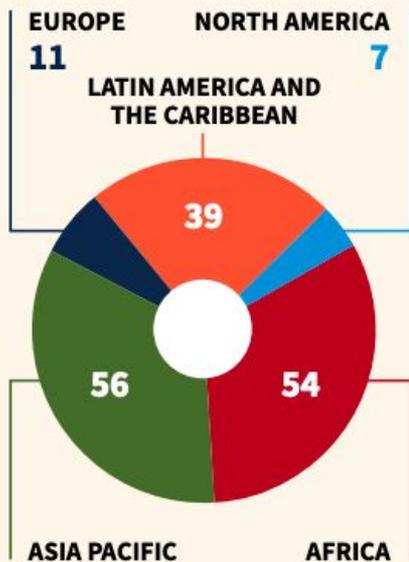
https://www.icann.org/ua-day-en

UA Days 2023-2025: At a Glance

167 UA Day Events
- 3 years
- 82 countries
- 39 languages

EUROPE 11
NORTH AMERICA 7
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN 39

39
56
54

ASIA PACIFIC 56
AFRICA 54

23,663 Participants Total Across All Regions

PARTICIPANTS

2023	9,424
2024	6,544
2025	7,695

EUR 763
LAC 6,988
NA 286
AF 5,657
APAC 9,969
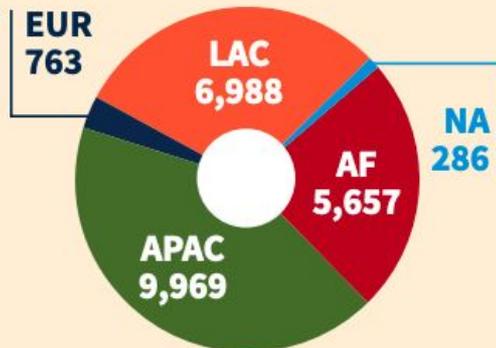
UA Day Event Dates

Organized on or around **28 March annually**, with events between **1 March and 30 May**.

167 UA Day Events by Type

UA Awareness Event 37%
UA Academic Curricula Event 5%
UA (Multi) Regional Strategy Event 5%
UA Adoption Event 21%
UA Technical Training Event 32%
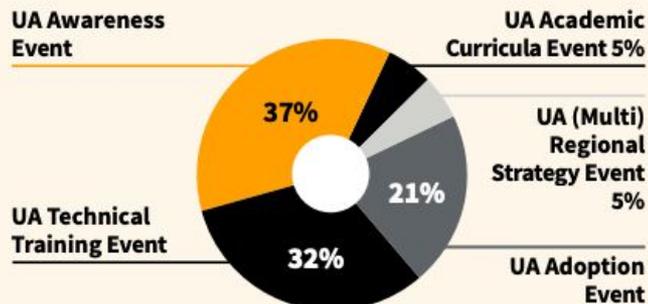
UA Day 2026 Shortlisted Events

Region	Awareness	Curriculum	Adoption/ Demonstration	Regional Strategy	Total
Africa	1	1	10	1	13
Asia Pacific			6	1	7
Europe	1		1	1	3
Latin America and Caribbean		2	2	1	5
North America		1		1	2
Total	**2**	**4**	**19**	**5**	**30**

Events to be held between 25 March 2026 and 30 May 2026.
Majority of events in April and May.

Participate in or Contribute to UA Day 2026

Collaboration is encouraged with UA Day organizers in your region or country. See details of the shortlisted events at: **https://www.icann.org/ua-day-2026-events-en**.

Regional Events	National Events
1. Armenia (EUR) 2. Africa countries (AF) 3. United States of America (NA) 4. Uruguay (LAC) 5. Viet Nam (APAC)	Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, China, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Lesotho, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Republic of Moldova, Republic of Türkiye, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Guidelines for Advancing UA Adoption
by Universal Acceptance Expert Working Group (UA EWG)

7 March 2026

What is Universal Acceptance?

Universal Acceptance (UA) ensures that all valid domain names and related email addresses, regardless of length, language, or script, can be used in all Internet-enabled applications, devices, and systems.

- UA allows Internet users to choose an online identity in the language or script of their choice and ensures that their chosen domain names and email addresses work seamlessly on the Internet.
- Achieving UA-readiness is essential to enabling a more linguistically diverse Internet.
- For more information on UA, please visit https://www.icann.org/ua.

Background

The UA Expert Working Group formed to focus on UA adoption

Focusing on UA Adoption

- March 2025: ICANN Board <u>resolved</u> for ICANN org to evaluate and evolve strategies to support UA adoption work by ICANN org and the community, aligning with ICANN's <u>Strategic Plan</u> for fiscal years 2026-2030.
- In response, the ICANN President and CEO <u>announced</u> the establishment of a **Universal Acceptance Expert Working Group** (UA EWG), which will provide guidelines for ICANN's future work on UA adoption.
- Proposed timeline for UA EWG:
  - August 2025: Commence work
  - February 2026: Publish draft guidelines for public comment
  - March 2026: Finalize and publish guidelines

Formation of UA Expert Working Group

- Following a <u>Call for Nominations</u>, ICANN's Supporting Organizations and Advisory Committees nominated the following members:
  - Abdalmonem Tharwat Galila Governmental Advisory Committee
  - Edmon Chung   At-large Advisory Committee
  - Nabil Benamar   Security and Stability Advisory Committee
  - Nitin Walia   Generic Names Supporting Organization
  - Sami Mohamed Ali   Country Code Names Supporting Organization

- ICANN Board nominated its liaison to UA EWG:
  - James Galvin   ICANN Board

Formation of UA Expert Working Group

- ICANN President and CEO appointed the following additional representatives:
  - Cathy Wissink   Unicode Consortium
  - Guilherme Canela   UNESCO
  - Jiankang Yao   China Internet Network Information Center
  - Richard Ishida   Worldwide Web Consortium
  - Sean Bedford   Meta
  - Thomas Mullaney   Stanford University

- ICANN President and CEO appointed the following co-Chairs:
  - Edmon Chung
  - Sarmad Hussain (ICANN org)

Scope of Work

The UA Expert Working Group tasked to develop guidelines to address multiple topics

Guidelines

- UA EWG started weekly meetings in August 2025 discussing the 10 topics in its charter, developing and reviewing guidelines for these topics.
  - Details of its deliberations are posted at the community wiki page.
- UA EWG has developed a total of 45 guidelines covering these topics.
- ICANN org published these guidelines for public comment on 23 Feb. 2026.
- ICANN org invites the community on behalf of the UA EWG to review the detailed guidelines and provide their feedback.

Stakeholders Discussed

#	Topic	Gs
	General	2
1	Encourage big tech organizations	5
2	Encourage open-source communities	5
3	Contribute to specific standards	3
4	Reach out to software development professionals	4
5	Reach out to system administrators	2

#	Topic	Gs
6	Encourage the DNS industry, including gTLD and ccTLD registry, registrars and resellers	5
7	Encourage hosting providers and internet service providers	4
8	Reach out to the public sector, in collaboration from intergovernmental organizations	5
9	Reach out to academia	6
10	Measure aspects of UA adoption	4

Summary of Proposed Guidelines

Guiding ICANN org's work to enable UA adoption

Guidelines

Generally applicable across multiple charter questions.

- Define what is meant to be UA-ready for a variety of stakeholders in the context of multilingual internet and how it is dependent on internationalization of the technology stack.

- Maintain dedicated webpages for stakeholders with relevant materials.

1. **Strategies to encourage big tech organizations to adopt UA in their applications and systems.**

- Showcase the economic, business, social, linguistic and cultural value of this work in tailored messaging, while also arguing for technical aspects, including interoperability, security and trust aspects achieved by supporting UA.

- Prioritize engagement based on technology stack, focusing on underlying systems and applications used by higher layers.

Guidelines

2. Strategies to encourage open-source communities to adopt UA in their applications and systems

- Prioritize fixing issues both from the way the technology stack is set up vertically, the category and the usage of the software applications.

- Develop messaging to engage with the maintainers of the software coming from different perspectives.

- Plan to also develop their capacity in relevant areas.

3. Specific standards to contribute toward

- Work with standards organizations to update relevant core and ancillary standards. A coordinated approach is necessary to avoid "chicken-and-egg" barriers between underlying platform providers and higher-level application and service providers.

- Participate in internationalization standards groups to help integrate the UA concepts when consulted by other standards groups.

Guidelines

4. Platforms and mechanisms to reach out to software development professionals

- Develop the right messaging and identify the strategies to reach out to them by collaborating with relevant organizations, presented at conferences and events, using learning platforms for professionals, and conducting targeted campaigns.

- Given the limited number of experts who understand these concepts, especially internationalization, train the trainers, develop materials using the existing resources, and find mechanisms to build capacity.

- Showcase adoption to motivate others.

5. Platforms and mechanisms to reach out to system administrators

- Develop capacity development materials using existing resources, and strategy to create awareness using relevant platforms and conferences.

- Develop effective messaging to engage and then build capacity, reaching out at the right forums.

Guidelines

6. Engagement with the DNS industry, including gTLD and ccTLD registries, registrars, and resellers

- The DNS industry also has a crucial role. Encourage to adopt UA using the right messaging and reaching out to the stakeholders.

- Consider developing an issue report to address UA support by registries and registrars, as well as explore policy to incentivize adoption.

- Work with IGOs to make UA adoption part of the global digital agenda, encouraging Member States to include UA adoption by the DNS industry and the broader digital industry in their national action plans.

Guidelines

7. **Mechanisms to encourage hosting providers and internet service providers to provide IDN and EAI hosting services to the registrants**

- Determine the extent and reasons for gaps in UA adoption by the hosting providers.

- Develop out-of-the box technical solutions and build awareness and capacity to deploy them.

- Build capacity of hosting providers and encourage them to adopt UA through relevant messaging.

8. **Mechanisms to reach out to the public sector to promote UA adoption. Collaboration from intergovernmental organizations to achieve the goals**

- Engage with multiple relevant ministries and departments in the public sector with a policy-oriented messaging strategy which highlights the value of UA adoption.

- Engage with GAC representatives.

- Collaborate with intergovernmental organizations to reach out to public sector organizations.

Guidelines

9. **Mechanisms to reach out to academia**

- Academic engagement is a long-term strategy. Publish articles in academic conferences and journals for awareness. Integrate UA into multiple disciplines, including IT, internet governance and linguistics.

- Develop curricular materials and engage with regional and global curricular bodies to promote curricular integration.

- Create hub and network model for universities in different regions to collaborate on integration.

- Utilize other channels available, e.g., by involving intergovernmental organizations.

10. **Aspects of UA adoption to be measured**

- Implement a framework to measure effort and outcome in the areas of:

  - Awareness / Policy support / Implementation / Capacity development

- Promote collaboration to gather, process and publish data, and encourage mechanisms which promote self-reporting.

Next Steps

Planning and implementing the guidelines

Next Steps

- UA Expert Working Group to review the feedback from the Public Comment, finalize the guidelines and publish them in May 2026.

- ICANN org to review and prioritize the guidelines.

- ICANN org to implement the guidelines prioritized, providing update to the community at ICANN meetings.

ccNSO Universal Acceptance Committee (UAC) Update
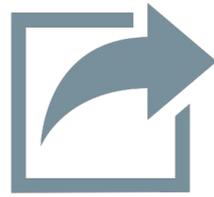
Abdalmonem Galila, UAC Chair | مصر.

Regina Filipová Fuchsová, UAC Vice-chair | .eu, .ею and .ευ

7 March 2026

Purpose ccNSO UA Committee (UAC)

Focus on topics related to UA and IDNs

Share information by and for ccTLDs

Liaise with other groups under the ICANN umbrella

Looking Back at 2025 ccNSO UAC Sessions (1/2)

Report: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SIZ2t8B5KDuNarQb9Uw3fgzU1O-PlGEIuCMtY3FJ3gk/edit?usp=sharing

ICANN82	ICANN83
Drivers for UA-Readiness	Breaking Barriers

Consultation on key drivers for UA readiness
Wednesday, 12 March 2025 | 16:30-17:30 local (UTC -7)

Session Chair: Abdalmonem Galila (مصر)

- Coalition for Digital Inclusion, Ram Mohan (CODI)
- Keynote presentation, Jaco Du Toit (UNESCO)
- What is the role of ccTLDs in supporting local language communities?
  - Andrew Lewela (.ke)
  - Maria Kolesnikova (.RU/.РФ)

Breaking Barriers: how governments and ccTLDs advance UA
Tuesday, 10 June 2025 (13:45-15:00 local, UTC +2)

Session chair: Abdalmomen Galila | ccNSO UAC Chair, .مصر
- Looking back at ICANN82: drivers for UA Acceptance
  Regina Fuchsová, ccNSO UAC Vice Chair, .eu, .ею and .ευ
- Barriers to UA Readiness | Bart Boswinkel, ccNSO
- Breaking barriers
  - Sami Mohamed Ali (.bh)
  - Guðrun Poulsen (.fo)

We will use Mentimeter for live audience input during the session, so keep your phone or laptop handy to take part.

Looking Back at 2025 ccNSO UAC Sessions (2/2)

ICANN84

Working session with GAC UA-IDN Working Group

UA is no longer a technical problem: Solutions already exist.

The challenge is coordination and motivation:

- Incentives through policy
- Capacity building at scale
- Action at key leverage points

ccNSO UAC at ICANN85

7
MARCH

SATURDAY
UAC working session
15:00-16:00 (UTC+05:30)

9
MARCH

MONDAY
Tech Day & UAC
13:15-14:30 (UTC+05:30)

UAC After ICANN85

→ Liaise with ICANN UA Expert Group

→ UA Day Events: assist, promote, contribute

→ Complete work plan 2026-2027

Interested in UA and/or UAC?

1

Become a UAC member

Join the ccNSO Universal Acceptance Committee and be an active part of this effort. The committee is open to ccTLD representatives globally.

ccnsosecretariat@icann.org

2

Use the UAC library

Consult the library and/or suggest content to be included.

https://www.icann.org/en/ccnso/resources/libraries

3

Stay informed

Subscribe to the dedicated ccNSO UA email list.

https://community.icann.org/x/gYFREw

Panel Discussion

- 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?

Become a GAC UA IDN member

Membership is open for all GAC members.

join-gac@icann.org

What Is Next?

Provide Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) inputs to the draft guidelines developed by UNESCO by 20 March 2026.

Review and respond to public comments from the ICANN UA Expert Working Group (EWG) by 13 April 2026.

Liaise and coordinate with other stakeholder communities to ensure alignment and collaboration.

Develop and plan future activities for the Universal Acceptance (UA) IDN Working Group, including priorities, timelines, and outreach efforts.

ICANN Webpage and Social Media Links

icann.org

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facebook.com/icannorg

youtube.com/icannnews

flickr.com/icann

linkedin.com/company/icann

instagram.com/icannorg