ICANN87 Bali | AGM – GAC Discussion on Universal Acceptance
Saturday, October 17, 2026 – 16:30 to 17:30 WITA

STAFF

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ABDALMONEM GALILA

Thank you very much. This is Abdalmonem Galila. Good morning, good afternoon, good evening, and welcome to our discussion on universal acceptance. Our work today builds upon a longstanding international commitment to an inclusive and multilingual digital environment. From the UNESCO 2003 recommendation on

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multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace, to ITU Resolution 133 on the role of administration in IDNs, and most recently, the WSIS+20 outcome document. This commitment reminds us that digital inclusion is not only about connectivity. It is also about ensuring that people can access and participate in the digital world in their own local languages and scripts. Universal acceptance brings this principle into practice. For governments, this means ensuring that our public digital services, websites, applications, and email systems are ready to support all valid domain names and email addresses. Today's discussion provides an opportunity to take stock of where we stand, share experiences, and consider how governments and the wider internet community can work together to move from these international commitments to practical implementation. With that, I would like to turn to our universal acceptance keynote. It's my pleasure to have Mr. Nicolas, the GAC chair, to share his key observations and help to set the scene for our discussion on universal acceptance. Mr. Nicolas, the floor is yours.

NICOLAS CABALLERO Thank you so much, Abdalmonem. Thank you for this. Good morning. I mean, good afternoon, everyone. My coffee is not working well. So it's a pleasure to welcome you to this session of the GAC Universal Acceptance and IDN Working Group. I want to start by thanking again Abdalmonem for his leadership and for the tireless work he and others have put into shaping our agenda. But

more importantly, I want to thank you, government representatives in this room, for being there.

So we often speak about, excuse me, about UA, universal acceptance, in technical terms, protocols, validation, and infrastructure. Those things, of course, matter. But as we open this session, I want us to take a step back and look at the bigger picture. UA is not just a technical necessity. It is basically, I would say, a fundamental pillar of inclusive digital transformation. Of course, I'm not going to repeat everything Abdalmonem has already mentioned. Just wanted to make the point, mention that we are living in an era where governments are digitizing public services at an unprecedented pace. The goal is, of course, to serve citizens better, faster, more efficiently. But if a citizen cannot use their own language, their own script, their own domain name to access these services, I would say we have basically failed in our mission of inclusion.

This session is particularly important because it is aimed at you, policymakers and government leaders who set the national agendas. We want to move beyond the technical details and focus on the why. Why should UA be part of our national digital strategy? That's a very good question we should ask ourselves and our administrations. Because the benefits are tangible. By integrating UA into your procurement processes, just as an example, your digital services, and your technical requirements from the outset, you aren't just fixing a bug. You are expanding access to public services for diverse language communities. You're building trust in

digital platforms by ensuring systems recognize the identifiers citizens actually use. And number three, future-proofing your digital economy for the next, I would say, billion users.

So in closing, I would say that universal acceptance does not need to be a separate agenda item. It should be the bedrock for digital transformation. It is all about connecting the unconnected, and I think there's an institution around the world, I think it's the Internet Society, that uses that phrase, "Connecting the unconnected." And I stand to be corrected here, but I think that's their motto. Connecting the unconnected and ensuring that the Internet remains a truly global resource. So I look forward to these discussions today, and to hearing how we can work together to bring these messages back to your capitals. So thank you so much. Thank you for inviting me to this session. Abdalmonem, thank you again for your fantastic job there. And at this point, I will pass the floor to Zeina. Floor is yours. Thank you so much.

ZEINA BOU HARB: Thank you, Nico, and allow me now to introduce our host, who will share some updates. Mr. Himam, please, the floor is yours.

HIMAM: Thank you, Zeina. Thank you for the opportunity to share Indonesia's experience in addressing local script domain names and universal acceptance. This is drawing on the work of PANDI and its partners. Today, I would like to emphasize the important

principle that we must start with the needs of people and creators, not with the URL itself. Domain names are important, but technology alone does not create meaningful digital participation. We must first understand what people want to read, create, share, and access online. This is where content, cultural identity, and universal acceptance come together.

People come online because they are looking for something meaningful, stories, learning materials, knowledge, creative products, and useful services in languages they understand. Content creates interest. That interest builds communities and audiences. As community grows, they create demands for relevant digital identities. Internationalized domain names, or IDNs, can provide that identity through domain names using local writing systems. Universal acceptance helps ensure that these identities work across digital applications and services. Therefore, we should look at the relationship between content, demand, digital identity, and everyday use as a connected process. Our objective is not simply to introduce more domain names. It is to make local script digital identities relevant, useful, and accessible to the people who need them.

Like Nico said this morning, Indonesia has a strong foundation for this approach because of its extraordinary linguistic diversity. Unity in diversity, bhinneka tunggal ika. We have around 718 mapped regional languages, and more than 80 million people in Indonesia, estimated, speak Javanese, and around 40 million speak Sundanese, for example. We can also see that local language digital

content already exists. For example, Javanese, Sundanese, and Balinese editions of Wikipedia are examples of communities creating and sharing knowledge in their own languages. These figures indicate potential audiences for more inclusive digital services. However, we should distinguish the number of language speakers from actual demand for IDN registration. They are not the same. The opportunity is to connect existing linguistic communities with relevant content and digital services while recognizing that language, content, and content written in the corresponding local script are not always identical. Our linguistic diversity is a foundation for more inclusive digital participation.

Language and culture remain alive when people actively use them and create new knowledge, stories, learning materials, and digital archives. At the same time, this cultural content can create opportunities for the creative economy. Creators, artisans, publishers, cultural tourism businesses, and local brands can use digital platforms to present their works, reach more audiences, and establish distinctive identities. This creates a mutually reinforcing relationship. Cultural preservation encourages the creation of local content, while digital distribution can help that content reach wider audiences and potentially generate commercial values. We should recognize these opportunities without assuming that the economic impact of local script domains has already been measured. The important point is that cultural preservation and creative value can grow together, particularly when communities

have meaningful ways to create, publish, and share their work online.

This brings us to another important point. The website itself should use the local script where relevant, not merely its web addresses. Imagine a website featuring local stories, educational resources, and creative products. A local script domain can give that website a recognizable identity, but the content is what gives people a reason to visit and return. If users cannot find meaningful content in their language or access information relevant to their community, the domain alone will have limited practical value. Japan and Thailand provide useful comparisons for how native script digital experiences can form part of everyday online life. Indonesia's communities should also have the opportunity to access and create digital experiences that reflect their own languages and writing systems. The principle is straightforward. The content gives people a reason to visit. The domain gives the experience an identity.

Indonesia's experience with the Balinese script domain provides a practical example. In December 2025, PANDI introduced the Balinese script second-level domain space in collaboration with local partners. Udayana University became a special registrar while the Bali provincial government supported the initiative. Community engagement activity reached 300 workshop participants. This illustrates that introducing a local script domain requires more than the technical preparation. It also requires institutional partnership, community awareness, and participation

from people who may benefit from it. However, launching a domain space is only the beginning. The next challenge is to encourage meaningful local script content, support actual usage, and improve compatibility across digital services. We need websites and platforms that people can use in their daily activities, whether for education, cultural expression, creative products, or businesses. Launching a domain space is an important first step. Building everyday use is the next.

Indonesia's efforts also extend beyond Balinese script. On 5 October 2026, ICANN published the second-level reference label generation rules for Javanese script and updated the Arabic script reference label generation rules, including characters used in Pegon. These developments are relevant to Indonesia's wider linguistic and cultural heritage, which includes Arabic-based writing traditions such as Pegon, Jawi, Arab Melayu, Serang, and Buri Wolio. At the same time, we must distinguish between different stages of implementation. The publication of script rules is not the same as the operational launch of a domain space, and neither automatically guarantees end-to-end universal acceptance across digital applications. Other proposals involving Nusantara scripts continue through review. Our priority should therefore be to maintain progress in standardization while working toward operational readiness and practical usability. Standards enable progress, but people benefit only when services and applications work.

Looking ahead, we see three practical priorities for government and other stakeholders. First, invest in content. We should work with cultural institutions, schools, local communities, and language creators to develop stories, educational resources, archives, and other useful digital materials. Second, enable creative values. We can support pilot websites and businesses that publish content, showcase creative products, tell local stories, and serve their customers through local script digital identities. Third, remove digital barriers. Public services and digital platforms should be encouraged to accept and correctly handle valid local script domain names and digital addresses. These priorities are interconnected. Content creates reasons for people to participate. Creative activities help turn that participation into practical value. Universal acceptance helps ensure that the technical barriers do not prevent people from accessing and sharing these experiences. Government registries, technology providers, academic institutions, and creative communities all have a role to play. The objective is to build an ecosystem in which IDNs are not merely available but generally useful.

Distinguished colleagues, Indonesia welcomes continued collaboration among government registries, technology providers, and creative communities to translate the potential of local script domains into practical use. Our message is simple. Content creates demands, IDNs provide identity, and universal acceptance makes participation possible. Together, we can advance a more inclusive digital environment that respects linguistic diversity and creates

opportunities for communities around the world. Thank you so much.

ZEINA BOU HARB: Thank you, Mr. Himam, for sharing the information. Let me now introduce our next speaker, Mr. Guilherme Canela, who will be presenting about the collaboration and policy brief between UNESCO and ICANN on advancing UA. Please, Mr. Canela, the floor is yours.

GUILHERME CANELA: Hello, everyone. Good morning, good afternoon, good evening. I hope you can hear me well. Greetings from Paris. Sorry I couldn't join you in person this time. It would have been a pleasure, but we are in the middle of our executive board here in UNESCO, so we can't leave the headquarters in this moment.

So very briefly, a bit of the foundations that were already mentioned even by the previous speakers in this session. Why UNESCO is in this particular work of multilingualism overall and universal acceptance in particular. It's because we are the UN agency in charge of promoting the free flow of ideas and hence protecting and promoting the right that is enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to freedom of expression and access to information. This right, which was already noted by the previous speakers without mentioning it explicitly, it's one of these fundamental freedoms in the Universal Declaration

that has a double logic. Freedom of expression and access to information is a right in itself, but it is also a right that is essential to guarantee the other rights. So, for example, when the previous speaker was speaking about the content and communities and how these impact different areas of our lives, or the keynote speaker speaking about impacting on business and so on, this is the double function of freedom of expression, access to information, or the free flow of ideas.

But this right does not operate in a vacuum. It needs a series of elements to actually guarantee that freedom of expression, access to information exists. And one of these series of elements is precisely multilingualism. We can't speak of a meaningful engagement in the public sphere or in the digital ecosystem if every individual is not available or is not allowed to express his or her ideas, interests, business, whatever it is, in their own language of preference. So that's why UNESCO has developed throughout its history a series of different documents that are relevant for these legal documents, like this 2003 recommendation that was already mentioned this morning, or why we are the Global Secretariat of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, and why we provide a series of tools that I will be now very shortly, in a bird's overview, showing to you. Next slide, please.

So one invitation to all the members of the GAC, either they are governmental members or members of the other stakeholders. We are currently in this formal process of UNESCO in consulting and monitoring what is actually happening with the implementation of

the 2003 recommendation on multilingualism in cyberspace. So please do stimulate, if you are a governmental official, that your governments report back to this process, because we are very much interested not only in learning the challenges and the things that we still need to do, but also the good practices that are out there. If you are not a government, you also can participate in this process. There is another avenue for the other stakeholders to also report back to UNESCO in this. You can see there in the QR codes that you have an avenue for governmental actors and an avenue for the other actors. Next one, please.

So now, very briefly, our very key and important longstanding partnership with ICANN, in this moment based in three key elements, the Universal Acceptance Day as a key moment in the year, and the day is actually several days around the March milestone. This is an essential moment for awareness raising on everything we are talking here. It has been growing year after year. This year, as you can see the numbers, there was lots of interest, all the regions. We hope next year will be the same. There is already a call out there for receiving proposals. The other important element with ICANN is this activity of knowledge production and knowledge sharing. So we launched recently this policy brief on universal acceptance, which has been quite successful. We have lots of demands of our own member states, the diplomats in Paris, very much interested in understanding more about this. And we are now in the process of translating this issue brief in several languages, the six UN official languages plus Portuguese, but also Swahili, and

very soon we are going to also have this in Quechua, an indigenous language, to show really that we also need to walk the talk. When we produce things, we also need to be sure that these resources are in a multilingual format. And then finally, also in a relationship with ICANN, we are trying to find ways of doing what the keynote speaker said earlier in this session, how we actually make sure that this is transforming policies by the governments, how universal acceptance is embedded in procurement, as he said, or other elements. And so this will be part of our regional conversations with the support of ICANN. Next one, please.

So here you have, I won't dig into that because my time is limited, but you have a series of tools again that are developed under this multilingualism series of UNESCO. So we have from a global roadmap that was produced in a multi-stakeholder format with governments and other stakeholders from more than 100 countries, a bit of what we want to further develop in this digital era. Then again, this one with ICANN, more specifically on universal acceptance. But then we are also looking into a very pragmatic approach. So this green one that you are seeing is based on a very interesting policy that the Welsh government has developed, and we produced them based on their experience, something that can be useful for other countries to take advantage of these lessons learned and these good practices and learn from that, and then, of course, adapt to their own contexts. Next one, please.

So again, with the UNESCO-ICANN collaboration, the work plan for the next two years is very much about bringing this discussion to

the regions in a very structured manner. As you probably know, UNESCO has a network of more than 53 regional offices all over the world, and together with this network, we are going to really expand the conversation in a much more detailed way using obviously the issue brief and all the resources we have related to this. Next one.

So I will stop here just to say, as a last message, that next year, aside from this milestone I already mentioned to you, that is the year that we are doing the quadrennial monitoring of the 2003 recommendation that we strongly invite you to participate in, is also the midterm of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. So we also invite all of you to contribute. In this QR code, you can find even ways of participating in this midterm process of the decade, which again is very much related to the discussion of universal acceptance and multilingualism. I will stop here, but obviously open for questions, if any. Thank you so much. Back to you.

ZEINA BOU HARB Thank you. Let me also stop and see if there are any questions at this stage. Okay. So now let me welcome Mr. Edmon Chung, who is the UA Expert Working Group co-chair, to provide some updates on the working group and the role of governments in UA.

EDMON CHUNG

Thank you. And thank you for having me here. And very glad to be updating on the work from the UA-EWG. We've provided update in February in, well, was it February? March, in Mumbai and then in Seville. We're glad that here now in Bali, we can say that the working group is done with its work. But of course, the topic of UA is a marathon, not a sprint. So we'll give you a little bit of an update on some of the work that has been completed between Seville and here. Next slide, please. Yeah, this one is good. Sorry, going back. Go back one, yeah.

So I won't go into the details of what UA is. I suspect you already know a little bit about it, but it's about internationalization, it's about utilizing domain names. But before I go into the report, I do want to share with you personally a couple of things that relates to and build on what Nico and Guilherme from UNESCO were saying, that the topic of UA, the topic of universal acceptance, is not just a technical issue. It is about building trust, and it is about a matter of right for users to be able to use the Internet in their own native local language. So it is a matter really of language justice. And I want to use one particular example to hopefully make you understand that it is also related to some of the DNS abuse things that we talk about here at ICANN. My dad, for example, if the domain name or email address is in Chinese, he will be able to spot suspicious domain names and suspicious phishing email addresses much easier than in English. And that is why it's a matter of language justice. That's why a multilingual Internet makes for a safer Internet. And this is a very important part of UA and IDN. Of course, it's a technical

implementation, but it has a dimension that is much more than just a technical upgrade. So next slide, please.

To give you an update, just a little background, if you were not around in the last couple of ICANN meetings. Way back about a year, a little bit two years ago now, the ICANN board resolved to create this working group, which aligns with the ICANN strategic plan. So the part of the UA-EWG output feeds right into the implementation of the strategic plan. And the next slide, please. So the working group itself was formed by the different stakeholders in the group, of course, Abdalmonem from GAC, but also from ALAC, from the SSAC, from the GNSO, from the ccNSO. And we also had James Galvin from the ICANN board as a liaison to us. Next slide, please. And on top of that, a number of experts from the Unicode Consortium, from UNESCO, we just heard from Guilherme. From China, Jiankang Yao, who also served on the IAB, the Internet Architecture Board, and different organizations, including the W3C, Meta, academia, and so on. Very proud to be serving as a co-chair together with Sarmad. Next slide, please.

So the working group itself started its work last year in August. We worked through almost about a year, and highlighting a number of topics in the charter. I won't go into details of this particular slide, but overall, out of the 10 topics, which I'll come to next, there were 45 guidelines that were published. And in fact, we issued the document for public comment just before the Mumbai ICANN meeting in February. And then just before the Seville meeting, a report on the comments received was published, and then through

the Seville meeting and also afterwards, next slide, please. The working group worked through the public comments, and I'd like to highlight that there were two additional guidelines that were added based on the public comments, including some consideration on AI. This is really interesting because AI could either reinforce the non-UA or non-IDN world, or it could really bring in a new IDN-enabled and universally accepted world. So, this is really interesting. And the other part that the community gave feedback was that we added is not only to look at the big guys, but to also look at the small and medium-sized organizations and have some priority for them as well. So ultimately, 47 guidelines were included in the finalized published guidelines, which were published on 9 September, and that's what Sarmad and his team will be using to implement the strategic plan part on universal acceptance. Next slide, please.

And one thing that I did want to particularly highlight out of the 10 topics, 10 aspects, the working group worked on a prioritization, because when you say everything is a priority, of course, we know everything is a priority. It means that nothing really is a priority. So we worked through a process. Next slide, please. And very interestingly, and it's relevant to this room, I believe, is that the working group came to quite an agreement that working with public sector, working with governments will be the most important and probably the biggest bang for the buck for UA to happen. And that's why we're very excited to have UNESCO work together with us, because that is really where a difference could be

made, and this room is going to be really important. Then, of course, second and third, next slide, please, include out of the 10 areas the public sector and intergovernmental organizations, but also prioritization of big tech and open source communities, because that is where I think the group really believes difference can be best made. So next slide, please.

I wanted to highlight a few things that the working group worked on in terms of specific guidelines that are related to the GAC. And you can see here that one of the first things in number 36 is to engage GAC representatives, and this is what we are doing now. And we believe, as I mentioned earlier, this is not just a simple matter of policy and technology. It is also about language justice, and therefore, involving the civil society within your countries is going to be important, because that creates a groundswell of support so that the technology and the systems could be updated. The other few things is, of course, one of the things that we will, and Sarmad's team will be reaching out to all of you. Hopefully, you will help him, not only to your own ministry, but there are other ministries, perhaps the language side of things, perhaps even welfare side of things, because they are working with people who use the native local languages, are much more comfortable to use the local languages than English, for example, with their email address and dealing with domain names. So that is another aspect. And then finally, working with you to reach out to the IGOs, the international intergovernmental organizations as well, and to work with you to work with the relevant organizations that could create

policies and could create implementations that make a difference for UA.

So with that, next slide, please. I really want to thank you for having us all three meetings this year, to give you the update on the work from the UA-EWG. We sort of have agreement that this is the room to start with in terms of priority, and we hope that Sarmad's team will be able to work with you closely on this topic. And I also thank all the members of the UA Expert Working Group for working through the process and for all of you who provided comments into the public comment process to make these guidelines much more robust and meaningful. Thank you.

ZEINA BOU HARB Thank you, Edmon. So now we will move to activities in 2027 with Ms. Seda Akbulut from ICANN Org to provide some community-related activities in 2027. Please.

SEDA AKBULUT Thank you. Thank you, first of all, for organizing this event. Obviously, the governments are one of the key stakeholder groups in promoting the UA readiness, so having this session is really important to us. The technical standards were implemented to enable the creation of the IDNs and internationalized email addresses. However, still many of the systems have not been upgraded yet to fully support them. Achieving UA cannot be done by one organization alone. It takes a village, and it requires

collaboration, joint efforts from different stakeholder groups, including governments, DNS industry, technology providers, academia, and other stakeholders.

So this is exactly where UA Day plays an important role. UA Day provides an opportunity to rally local, regional, and global stakeholders to spread awareness and encourage UA adoption through various types of events around the world. And it's a series of events held annually between March and May, and organized by ICANN in collaboration with UNESCO. And since October 2024, ICANN and UNESCO have been collaborating on UA Day and sharing the goal on multilingualism. The events promote not only the IDNs, but also ASCII-based new gTLDs and email addresses in local scripts. And so it's all about these events on our website, on universalacceptance. Day. And can move on to the next slide, please.

Yeah. So glancing at the last four years, over the past years, UA Day has brought together more than 29, 000 participants through 200 events in 86 countries and in 42 languages. In 2026 alone, we held 33 events in 30 countries, reaching more than 5, 000 participants in 15 languages. The UA Day report is available and has been published recently. It's now in seven languages. So now we are preparing for the next, and the fifth, UA Day. The plans for UA Day, the next slide, please, for 2027. We are aiming to have 25, 30 events focusing on solely, not solely, but mostly on UA adoption, and the events will be in four categories. UA academic curricula is one of them, which aims to have the faculty members and experts discuss

a roadmap to integrate IDN and UA-related matters and topics in existing technical curricula. And in the UA adoption and demonstration type of events, we aim to have the real practical adoption and hands-on learning by the organizations who are hosting the events and collaborating with the stakeholders.

And as I said, we are increasingly shifting our focus from awareness to the UA adoption. And the regional strategy events will be happening in each region. There will be one event per region, focusing on developing and reviewing the UA regional strategy with the relevant stakeholders and the countries in that region. And UA awareness events will still continue, with the aim of raising awareness on UA, talking about what UA is, what each stakeholder group can do based on the UA policy brief that was jointly developed by UNESCO and ICANN, and how they can support the other stakeholders in overcoming the implementation challenges. And this is a timeline for the next UA Day. So the call for proposals for UA Day 2027 was announced on 8 October, and we will be receiving the proposals by 20 November. And so the events will be held again between 25 March through 30 May. Next slide, please.

So ICANN and UNESCO are also collaborating on UA Day events, and we are actively participating in many, almost all of the UA Day events as much as possible. I'd like to conclude by inviting the GAC representatives to participate in or contribute to UA Day events in your countries and region. The shortlisted events will be announced by 23 December on universalacceptance. Day, and you don't necessarily need to host a new event. You can also join an

existing UA Day event that is listed on our page in December, and you can contribute to the discussions and share your government's roles and experience and plans, or encourage the relevant local stakeholders to submit proposals and then join the work and to strengthen the local collaboration. So feel free to reach out to us after this session about how we can explore further collaboration, and together we can build an Internet where everyone can enjoy the experience, equal experience, actually, without compromising their languages, script, and cultural identity. Thank you.

ZEINA BOU HARB Thank you, Seda. So we have Abdalmonem. You have your hand raised?

ABDALMONEM GALILA Yes, thank you. Actually, I have one question in regard to UA Day 2027. How can governments make the most effective use of Universal Acceptance Day 2027 to build awareness, mobilize stakeholders, and turn awareness into concrete universal acceptance implementation? As you know, Seda, most of our discussion today is into the implementation and the adoption of universal acceptance in regard to the government. Thank you.

ZEINA BOU HARB Would you like to take this question?

SEDA AKBULUT

Yes, I can take that. So, as I mentioned, there will be regional events, first of all, in each region. I think one of the key parts where GAC representatives or governments can act is to participate in the regional events where the regional UA strategies are discussed with the countries in that same region, and to be part of the strategy and then follow up on it. And there will be also local, national type of events that are happening in many countries. We had 30 countries host the events. So if there is any organization hosting the UA Day event in your country, one of the other options is to support them and encourage the participation, maybe from the ccTLD, the DNS industry, and academia, to just bring all the relevant stakeholders to the events and start a discussion on how they can collaborate and what each of them can actually support on overcoming any challenges that they may be facing, and also looking into the strategy locally and nationally as well. I guess it may be a good start. And there are also some recommended actions in the UA policy brief. So those are the good points to start with by the governments as well, I guess. Thank you.

ZEINA BOU HARB

Thank you. I think in the next section, we will also listen to some success stories with Dr. Sarmad.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Thank you. So, this is Sarmad Hussain from ICANN. I'll be hosting a short showcase and case study section where the GAC UA and IDN Working Group invited, I guess, volunteers from the GAC members

to share what is being done in different countries. This is part of this initiative. I have a flyer here. You may actually have a copy, but if you don't, the copy's available with Gülten at the back, which is an initiative by the GAC UA IDN Working Group where they're inviting GAC members to become a champion to take UA awareness and adoption activities back, and try to promote them locally, in their own specific countries and regions.

So, I think Abdalmonem's question gives us a good segue into this particular section, where we have six countries which are going to be presenting or showcasing some of the work which they are doing in their regions or in their countries locally, to promote universal acceptance, awareness, and adoption. I'll just take a name of all the presenters first, and then we'll go to them individually. We have, from Armenia, Kristina Hakobyan; from India, T. Santhosh; from Georgia, Mzia Gogilashvili; and from Bahrain, Sami Mohamed Ali; from China, Wang Lang; and Libya, Abdalmonem. The nominee from Libya is not present here, but Abdalmonem said he will actually come online and convey the message. So we'll go to Libya towards the end. So let me pass on the floor to Kristina to share more about what Armenia has been doing in this area.

ZEINA BOU HARB If I may, please, can we limit the intervention to two minutes for each intervention?

SARMAD HUSSAIN Yes. Thank you. Yes.

KRISTINA HAKOBYAN Thank you, Dr. Sarmad. Kristina speaking for the record. Armenia's experience shows how UA Day can help build cooperation that continues behind the event itself. This year, we held our fourth UA Day regional conference, bringing together all stakeholders. Our work builds on the Armenian script, the. Հայ domain, and the goal of making Armenian domain names and email addresses work reliably in everyday services. ICANN, UNESCO, and the ITU bring complementary perspectives to this work. ICANN contributes technical expertise and support for UA education. UNESCO connects UA with linguistic diversity and digital inclusion. At our conference, our ITU representative emphasized the importance of adapting global goals to local needs and developing practical country-level solutions. We, as a registry, also have longstanding cooperation with Wikimedia on creating Armenian language content in different subject areas. At UA Day this year, Yerevan State University presented another example, its ongoing collaboration with the Language Committee and the National Library on digitizing Armenian periodicals. These activities contribute to a broader Armenian language digital environment. UA has a specific role within it, ensuring that applications support valid domain names and email addresses, including those in Armenian scripts. Next slide, please.

An important step has been ICANN's direct outreach to both the Ministry of High-Tech Industry and Artificial Intelligence and the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport of Armenia. The letters seek support of UA adoption across state and educational institutions, drawing on the UNESCO-ICANN UA policy brief, as was mentioned before. The outreach to the High-Tech Ministry also built on the cooperation agreement signed in 2017. ICANN so far includes free technical training, university curriculum materials, and consulting support. ISOC AM registry is ready to help with local coordination and technical briefings. Our immediate focus is university education. American University of Armenia's Computer Science Program Chair has expressed his interest in discussing curriculum integration so we can explore UA modules within existing courses or a separate elective, depending on the university needs.

To help take this work forward, I applied for and joined the Internet Society Community Advocacy Fellowship with UA integration in university education as the focus of my advocacy plan. The fellowship is helping me structure the next step, engage the right partners, and track progress toward our planned targets. Our next milestone is to secure at least one university's commitment to include UA in IT education by the end of 2026. This is still work in progress, but the combination of institutional outreach, technical support, and direct university engagement gives us concrete next steps. The lesson I would share is that bringing people together is a useful beginning, but continued contact and the clear next step are

essential. As a UA champion, I hope to help maintain those partnerships, support implementation, and share our experience with the GAC community. Thank you very much for this opportunity to be here.

SARMAD HUSSAIN Thank you. We'll go to India.

T. SANTHOSH Thank you. Can we go to the next slide, please? Yeah. So Government of India has come out with various guidelines. So the major guideline is on coming out with the digital brand identity manual, which mentions that Government of India websites should be UA compatible and also should have IDN domain names. And subsequent to that, we had RPWD rules, which are basically on accessibility standards, and they also enforce internationalization, localization, globalization, as well as the localizability of the content. Now, subsequent to this, we had a mandatory IDN policy wherein the registry of gov. In is providing an IDN domain name along with the English domain name. And we are in the progress of implementing the universal acceptance as well as the multilingual roadmap along with the National Internet Exchange of India. As of date, we have two lakh active IDN domains, of which 269 are of gov. In, and we have the 2015 country code top-level domain. And for the information of the colleagues here, we have 22 languages to cover all the IDNs. Next slide, please.

So, there is an initiative which Government of India has come up with, which is called BhashaNet. It is a national portal on universal acceptance, wherein it is a repository by which any organization or any users in India can utilize the resources and make their website IDN compatible. And we had certain schemes in which Mera Gaon, which means my village, my community, there is a specific portal. It is available in different languages. We have the MSME sites, which are also IDN compatible. Through the National Internet Exchange of India, we are conducting various capacity-building programs and creating awareness across various states and the union territory of India. And along with the IDN registration, which is being done by the registry of the Government of India, they provide free email also. And as you may be aware, the first Universal Acceptance Day was conducted in India at New Delhi. It was during 2023. We conduct the Universal Acceptance Day annually. Thank you.

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Thank you. Let's move right ahead. We'll have a discussion session after this session, so if you can hold your questions. We go to Georgia. Can we get the sound? I think Mzia is online.

STAFF: We can't hear. She's on mute, but her mic doesn't work.

Mzia, we cannot hear you here in the GAC room.

MZIA GOGILASHVILI Can you hear me now?

STAFF Yes. Thank you.

MZIA GOGILASHVILI Oh. Thank you very much. This is Mzia Gogilashvili for the record. And greetings from Georgia. Unfortunately, I couldn't join you in beautiful Bali, but thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to contribute to this session, at least online. Well, I'd like to briefly share Georgia's experience with our IDN ccTLD. ▯ჟ, and some of the challenges we are facing.. ▯ჟ IDN ccTLD has been functioning since early 2016. It is managed by the Information Technologies Development Center, ITDC, a company specializing in IT services and web development. Initially,. ▯ჟ attracted a lot of interest. Government bodies, businesses, NGOs, and individuals welcomed the opportunity to use Georgian script in their domain names. Unfortunately, this enthusiasm gradually faded. Today, many people are not even aware that Georgia has its own internationalized domain name. Next slide, please.

Since 2016, a total of 6, 197 domains have been registered within the zone of. ▯ჟ, but only 558 remain active. We currently have four registrars, and the annual registration fee is relatively low, 30 lari. It is around 13 to 14 US dollars. Nevertheless, registrations continue to decline. Next slide, please.

At the Georgian National Communications Commission, this is the regulatory authority for electronic communications and media. This is my NRA, my organization. So at ComCom, and through my involvement in the GAC, I have been discussing with the sponsoring organization, ITDC, ways to raise awareness and encourage wider use of. ⊠ე. One idea was to offer free domain names to the dioceses of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Unfortunately, this initiative did not succeed, as many preferred to establish their online presence through social media. So what can we do next? First, we could explore opportunities to promote our IDNs through existing programs supporting the Georgian language. Second, we could raise awareness among public institutions and encourage them to use. ⊠ე alongside their existing. Ge ccTLDs. And third, we should learn from one another. Countries that have successfully promoted their IDNs could share their experiences and best practices, helping others overcome similar challenges. This is why I am very pleased to be part of this working group. I believe that by working together, we can develop practical solutions to make our national IDNs more visible, more widely used, and ultimately, more successful. Thank you very much.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Thank you. We're almost on time. We have five more minutes to conclude the rest of the presentations. So I'll request the remaining speakers to maybe take one to two minutes each.

STAFF

Yes, and please, the translator, can you stay with us only five more minutes?

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Yeah. Thank you. So we move on to our next speaker from Bahrain, Sami.

SAMI MOHAMED ALI

Hello. Hi, this is Sami, for the record, from Bahrain. Can we go to the next slide so we can expedite the process of concluding this presentation? So Bahrain ccTLD is. Bh, and. البحرين is the Arabic IDN used for Bahrain in Arabic language. The organization that manages the ccTLD is the Telecom Regulatory Authority Bahrain, which is a government organization. Can we go to the next slide, please?

So how we are collaborating with our stakeholders is mainly as being part of the government. We do align with the digital transformation and Digital Kingdom vision that the government has to develop all necessary services within the kingdom to be online and available to all. And part of this, making it available to all, we have to ensure that it is available in the local language for everyone to be able to use it. And that's why first thing what we did was to make sure the policies and the procedures and regulations are all supporting this initiative of Arabic language used on the Internet. Academia, we are lucky enough to be the first country to utilize ICANN's UA curriculum and integrate it with the American

University of Bahrain in Bahrain. And that has proved very well in terms of promoting it with other five universities within the Kingdom of Bahrain. Technical community. Sorry, if we can go back, I'll just go through the stakeholders quickly. So technical community, we are working with the local registrars, mainly focusing on developing their capacity so they can be the champion when it comes to promoting UA and promoting Arabic language Internet for the local as well as the regional community when it comes to the Arabic-speaking world. Businesses, it's still work in progress, so there has not been much when it comes to business development, but it's more of a social development currently that we are focusing on and promoting Arabic language. Can we go to the next slide, please?

So programs, what we have right now is the ICANN UA workshop, which we conduct as part of a hackathon every year. We have been doing it for three consecutive years, and I'll quickly show you a summary video at the end of how we have had six universities and 60 students participating. But the reach has been more than a few thousand students knowing about universal acceptance and doing their research and trying to register their own names. And university engagement and student awareness is what has helped us in promoting it among the community, which follows through to the wider community. Can we go to the next slide, please?

So what these programs have helped us with is achieving greater awareness, building practical capability when it comes to teaching the students or the next generation of technical development or

software developers coming into the public and having the understanding of what universal acceptance is and adopting and being willing to use it. And stronger collaboration with the industry, ICANN, TRA, government. So it has been a very positive impact in terms of developing an ecosystem to support this adoption. Next slide, please. So how we are measuring it is by ensuring that people around Bahrain are aware of this universal acceptance availability in different languages being available online. Adoption, the slow growth of understanding and using Arabic email addresses and Arabic websites, and developer capacity. I've been told I have only one minute. Can we go to the video, if you don't mind?

SARMAD HUSSAIN Can we play the video?

I think they want to play the video at the end. So can we hold on to that? Thank you. I think we'll go forward. Can we go to China for an update? Thank you. I guess we'll have that video. Thank you very much. So, we have somebody from China online or here?

ZEINA BOU HARB So in one minute, can China present something in one minute?

WANG LANG Okay, I'll try. Thank you, Zeina. Universal acceptance is not just a technical compatibility issue, but a public policy issue. If a domain name and email address in a national language cannot be used normally, what is affected is not the functionality of a technical

system, but the right of a citizen to use public digital services. From our point of view, government takes on three roles in UA, the rule maker, the largest user, and the provider of public digital services. China's policy support has three layers. The first is law and regulation, the second is promotion and guidance, and the third is standards. And there are two major observations in our work. First, the government plays a key role in coordinating resources across regulators, industry organizations, and the private sectors. Second, education and talent development are the most promising starting point. Next slide, please.

Up to now, there are 32 Han-script top-level domains approved for operation. The adoption of Chinese domain names depends on a process. Standards provide feasibility, policy states direction, demonstration builds confidence. Promotion widens usage, deployment provides support, and the market incentivizes sustainable investment. We have built the earlier stages, but frankly, the process is not sufficient. The weak point is market incentives. That is why we believe international cooperation is important. We hope every Internet user can take part in the digital world in their own language. Thank you very much.

ZEINA BOU HARB Thank you, China.

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Thank you. Abdalmonem, if you're still online, you had a quick message from Libya. If you can share it within a minute, then we'll go back to Zeina.

ABDALMONEM GALILA: Yes, Doctor, thank you very much. On behalf of Libyan delegates, in recognition of the importance of universal acceptance and from the basis that it's very important to have success of the digital transformation project, the Libya government is interested in the UA initiative held by the GAC UA IDN Working Group, and they are on their way to finalize the IANA delegation for the IDN ccTLD of Libya, and they all agree that universal acceptance is not only for IDN or EAI, but also for the new generic top-level domain names. Thank you.

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Thank you, Abdalmonem. Back to you, Zeina.

ZEINA BOU HARB: Thank you, everyone, for staying with us nine minutes over the time. So with this, I would like to conclude. If you have any questions tomorrow, I think Abdalmonem will be with us, so you can discuss with him. Thank you.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]