



EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON THE USE OF ARABIC SCRIPT IN DOMAIN NAMES

28-29 May 2008, Dubai, UAE

Preliminary Information Note

Background

During its inception phase, the Internet evolved predominantly as an English-only medium where content and information were handled and presented mainly in English in addition to few other Latin languages. However, with the rapid increase in Internet users over the years, languages on the Internet multiplied and diversified to include other Latin-based languages (such as Spanish and Italian) as well as non-Latin languages (such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Arabic). Nevertheless, Arabic users of the Internet are faced with the limited availability of Arabic content which represents a major obstacle towards wider dissemination. Furthermore, they are still faced with another obstacle in naming, locating and accessing content in their native language, by having to use Latin character-based addressing schemes.

Efforts commenced in 1998 for using non-Latin script in domain names and were revived in 2003 into several standardization activities in line with the global move towards Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs). UN-ESCWA developed the first Internet-Draft on "Guidelines for an Arabic Domain Name System" and supported the League of Arab States (LAS) in their pilot project on the ADNS through several activities such as publications, workshops and meetings.

Recently in 2008, following feedback and discussions made with involved stakeholders, and building on the evolution of the pilot project, the published Internet-Draft was refined and republished by UN-ESCWA awaiting the next meeting of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) to be moved into Standard Track.

During the first quarter of 2008, standardization efforts stepped into a more global dimension as collaboration was initiated with communities using languages based on the Arabic script such as Persian and Urdu. Accordingly, the first meeting on Arabic script was held in Dubai during 29-30 March 2008, co-organized by UN-ESCWA, PIR, and Afilias, which set the scene for the envisioned cooperation, defined issues and worked on providing solutions. This resulted in the formation of the "Arabic Script in Internationalized Domain Names - Working Group" (ASIWG) to collaborate on the use of Arabic script in domain names. ASIWG includes experts from the Arab countries, Iran, Pakistan and international organizations. Thus, the Expert Group Meeting scheduled for 28-29 May 2008 is the second meeting of ASIWG following eight weeks of continued deliberations on various technical issues such as the use of delimiters, character joiners and special character attributes.

Objectives

The overall objective of the Expert Group Meeting is to develop better understanding on the use of Arabic script in IDNs. The immediate objectives, however, are:

- (1) To review progress in resolving issues related to the use of Arabic script in domain names;
- (2) To define guidelines on the policy and the technical aspects of Arabic script in domain names in cooperation with concerned international organizations.

Outcomes

The Meeting's expected outcomes are:

- (1) Increased understanding of issues and potential solutions to use Arabic script in domain names;
- (2) Consensus on a roadmap and guidelines for the use of Arabic script in domain names.

Organization

The Meeting is organized by the Information and Communication Technology Division (ICTD) of UN-ESCWA in collaboration with the Telecommunications Regulator Authority (TRA) of the United Arab Emirates as a local partner and in cooperation with other co-organizers; namely:

- The Public Interest Registry (PIR): the organization globally managing *.org* Top Level Domain (TLD);
- Afilias: the global registry service managing *.info* Top Level Domain in addition to providing technical solutions in this field;
- Asia Pacific Top Level Domain Association (APTLD): an organization for ccTLD registries in the Asia Pacific region working as a forum of information exchange on technological and operational issues.

The Meeting will be held during 28-29 May 2008 at **The Palace/The Old Town Hotel** near TRA Dubai Office as per the details below:

Meeting room: The Regal
The Palace/The Old Town
P.O. Box 9770, Dubai, UAE
Tel: 971-4-4287888
Fax: 971-4-428 7999
Web: http://www.sofitel.com/sofitel/fichehotel/gb/sof/6230/fiche_hotel.shtml

A shuttle services bus is arranged between Al-Murooj Rotana Hotel and the meeting venue.

Participation and Registration

Participants in the meeting will include experts from a number of countries and several international organizations in addition to UN-ESCWA in addition to key representatives from the Internet Corporation for Assigned names and Numbers (ICANN), the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), different TLD

administrations in the Arab, Persian, and Urdu speaking countries in addition to some registries/registrars involved in this business.

Participants are requested to register for the meeting by filling the registration form and returning it by email, to dimassi@un.org.

Language

English will be the working language of the Meeting, noting that simultaneous interpretation to other languages will not be provided.

Travel and Accommodation

Arrangements for accommodation have been made with Al-Murooj Rotana Hotel in Dubai of which the details are listed below. All participants have been requested to secure their room booking directly with the Hotel before 14 May 2008.

Al Murooj Rotana Dubai
P.O. Box 117546
Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Tel: +971 4 321 1111 extension 2236
Fax: +971 4 321 5555
Email: groups1.almurooj@rotana.com
Web: <http://www.rotana.com/property-10.htm>

Participants are expected to inquire on their visa requirements to the UAE and secure one ahead of the anticipated travel date. In this regard, Al-Murooj Rotana Hotel has indicated willingness to assist with the visa application procedure with necessary documents communicated to participants by email.

UN-ESCWA will be covering the travel and Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA) of selected participants and will accordingly issue them pre-paid air tickets.

Additional information

Further information and documentation is available at the following URL:
<http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNum=781E>

Submissions, inquiries and requests for additional information should be addressed to:

Mr. Ayman El-Sherbiny, First IT Officer
ICT Division, ESCWA
PO Box 11-8575, Beirut, Lebanon
Tel: +961-1-981301 ext. 1555
Fax: +961-1-981510
Email: el-sherbiny@un.org

and **Ms. Hania Dimassi**, Research Assistant
ICT Division, ESCWA
PO Box 11-8575, Beirut, Lebanon
Tel: +961-1-981301 ext. 1542
Fax: +961-1-981510
Email: dimassi@un.org