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Dr. Paul Twomey
President and Chief Executive Officer
Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
(ICANN)

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Toward the New Era of Internet
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Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, honoured guests, Chairman Feipei Lai and KC. I want to thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you on this important occasion.

In the brief time I have with you this morning, I want to focus on two critical issues ICANN has been keen to bring to fruition — internationalized domains names, and new top-level domains. I'd like to share with you where we are on them and why they should be of interest you. Then of course I'll be happy to take any questions you have in the Q&A session later this morning.

Plan for internationalized domain names

I have some really exciting news about internationalized domain names, or IDNs as they are perhaps better known. Last Tuesday, 9 October 2007, IDN top-level domains were inserted in the root zone for the first time — ever. This represents one of the biggest changes to the Internet since its

creation, and ICANN's most important step so far towards the full implementation of IDNs.

Then, on Monday of this week, we opened an evaluation environment to the public. Internet users can access wiki pages with the domain name "example.test" translated in all 11 languages — Arabic, Persian, simplified and traditional Chinese, Russian, Hindi, Greek, Korean, Yiddish, Japanese and Tamil.

I should tell you that within hours of its going live, traffic on the evaluation site mushroomed — to thousands of hits.

I invite — no, I challenge — everyone here to go to these wiki pages — you can start at idn.icann.org — and see how the addresses display and how links to IDNs work in your programs. Then let us know the results of your evaluation on those same wiki pages. Your feedback will play a key role in helping us move toward full implementation for all the literally tens of thousands of characters that make up the languages of the world.

Of course, well before this evaluation step started, ICANN's County-Code Names Supporting Organization, Generic Names Supporting Organization and Governmental Advisory Committee began working together to define processes for allocating new TLDs, some of which will be IDNs.

The critical topic for the ccNSO is a potentially faster way to put a process in place for those regions having a strong need for IDN TLDs. The GNSO has as its goal to make the IDN TLD process available by mid-2008.

I hope what I've said this morning has whet your appetite for more information about the progress we're making with IDN deployment. To

learn more about the technical and policy issues surrounding IDNs and IDN TLDs, please make a note of the following speakers and times.

Later this morning, Tina Dam, director of ICANN's IDN project, will talk more about IDNs and the GNSO process for introducing new gTLDs and the IDN pieces.

This afternoon, Donna Austin, our manager of government relations, will give you a detailed overview of where the ccNSO–GAC effort on the streamlined application process is headed.

We have reached a huge milestone by getting the IDN TLDs inserted in the root zone for the first time. We all feel a sense of urgency about enabling this giant step in the globalization of the Internet, and will continue to press forward and to keep the community advised of all further steps until we can realize full global IDN deployment.

Plan for new gTLDs

Now I'd like to turn to the subject that we expect will introduce a whole new dynamic into the domain name marketplace, one that, at least in part, parallels IDNs — fast-track accommodation of new gTLDs.

The major challenges with implementing the new gTLDs are policy related. That is where the ICANN multi-stakeholder consensus building model is singularly apt. Its unique bottom-up policy development process exactly suits this situation.

Representatives from the business, registrar–registry, intellectual property, and other constituencies and have together worked very hard over the past year and a half to develop 19 cogent policy recommendations for

dealing with the rollout of new gTLDs. These recommendations are about to go before ICANN's Board for review.

Accompanying these recommendations is a set of principles and implementation guidelines that are intended to guide ICANN in the implementation of these policy recommendations.

The GNSO's major focus has been to develop the best method for allocating these new gTLDs. They feel a clear, concise, predictable, transparent process will enable applicants to gain a clear understanding of the entire process before they apply for a new gTLD. They want a baseline contract with all contractual arrangements clearly spelled out. And they want to know what the baseline technical and business criteria are so that ICANN can judge whether an applicant is capable of operating a TLD.

The policy also addresses what to do when individuals or entities apply for strings that clearly violate public policy — such as one burdened with hate language — or that clearly violate another's intellectual property rights, or misappropriate a community name. It takes little imagination to see that there will be applications for strings that should be excluded or denied because of one or more of these three reasons.

Even if such applications are few, there should be a process for placing an objection to such a string and for resolving any resulting dispute in a fair and impartial way. Thus, the GNSO has asked ICANN to develop a objective dispute resolution process for such cases.

So the new gTLD process has a two-fold goal. For the millions of names that are not controversial or objectionable or similar to an existing TLD or won't break the Internet, the application process will be clear and timely.

For applications for potentially objectionable strings, a dispute resolution process that is open and impartial, and that takes place outside of ICANN will determine whether that string is approved.

Take a moment to imagine with me what these new gTLDs and IDN TLDs can offer. Explore the opportunities to create entirely new business models. Envision the multitude of ways businessmen will find to bring additional value to the domain name space and additional services to DNS users. Alongside this as yet undefined array of choices for businesses, there are more choices for consumers as well.

We are already witnessing the exploration of nontraditional business models that do more and offer more than the traditional business models with which we are all familiar. One example is Telnic, which has the .tel registry. Telnic is creating a repository for contact information that can be used in a variety of ways to provide access to people or services or companies. The repository has no websites, just volumes of records of information. It remains to be seen whether Telnic's business model succeeds. But today's dynamic domain name marketplace offers a lot of promise.

The proposed .post is another nontraditional top level domain. Domain holders will be free to allocate third-level domains to every addressee in their jurisdictions. How they will do that and whether addressees will find a need for a personalized domain address is still being explored, but the possibilities are vast. You can use your imagination to envision how messages will be sent in this environment.

So there is plenty of room for innovation beyond traditional second-level registration for a traditional website. We have no idea what the demand for new gTLDs will be — One hundred? One thousand? Perhaps more.

The introduction of IDNs will enhance the status quo because there will be country-code IDNs and generic IDNs. The ccIDNs are being evaluated even now for this fast-track process. Once ccIDNs are in the root, then releasing gTLDs becomes the logical next step. There is a kind of symmetry at work here. The gTLD process is on the critical path to introducing IDNs, and the IDN technical and policy issues are on the critical path to releasing gTLD IDNs. The IDN process may be in place before the gTLD process, but we fully expect both to be ready before the end of 2008.

Conclusions — Observations —

The Internet has grown into a vast, global ecosystem embracing stakeholders from all sectors: the public, industry, academia, governments and civil society. Its physical manifestation lies in the hands of a remarkable confederation of parties. And it is utterly dependent on collaboration, cooperation and coordination among these many stakeholders for its effective operation. In addition, Internet users around the world are relying increasingly on the Internet's global infrastructure, including the domain name space, to communicate, transact business, transfer and store data, and gather together in virtual communities.

As grand as all that sounds, a reality check is in order here. More than 1.3 billion people can access the Internet today. That's a huge number, but it's really only about 20 percent of the people on the earth. Clearly, we all have much to do to make the Internet reach out to those 5 billion-plus people who still do not have secure, stable, and low-cost access.

The deployment of top level IDNs and new gTLDs will propel this expansion. These and other significant initiatives demonstrate that the Internet's stakeholders, including the stakeholders in this audience, are working hard to make the Internet truly global.

The Internet is the most powerful and pervasive means of empowering individuals in recent human history. It is becoming part of the glue that ensures a rapid unleashing and sharing of humanity's knowledge and possibilities for all persons no matter their age, sex, class, ethnicity and — at least in some degree — wealth. And it is radically breaking down the obstacles to a global community.

By continuing to work together as a community, we can ensure the rapid and successful development of a secure, stable, and globally interoperable Internet.

I would like to conclude with my strong recognition and continued welcoming of the participation by everyone here in ICANN and its processes. I am confident that the effective participation of all Internet communities will greatly and positively contribute to the ICANN process, and will bring valuable and novel views to the dialogue from which the global community can benefit.

Finally, allow me once again to express my personal delight at being invited to this distinguished regional meeting, and my sincere appreciation for the opportunity to share such exciting news with you.

Thank you.