From: Tijani BEN JEMAA
Date: Thursday, April 29, 2021
To: Board Ops Team

Subject: ME Space statement on New gTLD SubPro

Dear Board Ops team,

This is the statement that the Middle East Space Community approuved on their virtual meeting on 20 April 2021 about some parts of the final report of the new gTLD Subsequent Procedure working group.

Please transmit it to the entire Board Members for their consideration.

Best regards,

Tijani BEN JEMAA
Executive Director
Mediterranean Federation of Internet Associations (**FMAI**)

New gTLD Subsequent Procedures

Final Statement

The Middle East Space Community at ICANN has prepared this statement on behalf of its members to express their views on a few Topics included in the New gTLD Subsequent Procedures Working Group's Final Report[1] adopted by the GNSO Council and being considered by the ICANN Board. This statement is meant to illustrate perspectives specific to the ME Space region, which may not have been considered by the Working Group, and to provide possible implementation guidance on Outputs in the Final Report should the report be adopted by the ICANN Board.

Topic 13: Communications

The ME Space community supports the Outputs under Topic 13 (Communications), however, we are concerned that the minimum 6-month period prior to the launch of the next application round specified in Implementation Guidance 13.3 will be insufficient for the purposes of the MEAC region.

While the minimum 6-month period prior to the opening of the application round might be enough time for those already having a strong (or basic) awareness of the existence of the application round, this period will be insufficient if consideration of outreach and awareness-raising for stakeholders who are either newcomers in or not engaged with ICANN and its processes is taken into account. This is very relevant to the MEAC region, if meaningful communication/outreach is conducted with the objective of generating applications from the region, which will subsequently be successful at contracting and delegation.

Potential applicants in the region may still need to develop and consider business plans, seek financing, as well as build capacities relevant to submitting applications and actually managing a gTLD Registry. Furthermore, potential applicants might need to prepare to apply for Applicant Support as well as consider a Registry Service Provider (RSP), both of which might require more than a 6-month period to successfully submit an application.

The ME Space community supports Implementation 13.5, in that ICANN's regional Global Stakeholder Engagement (GSE) teams are well-suited to be leveraged to support ICANN's

communication plan, but this need not be limited to the formal Communication Period specified in this topic. Earlier outreach than that which will be conducted during this period could be done, including reaching out to pre-existing networks (such as tech industry business associations) to raise awareness on the inevitable launch of the next application round, as well as assist interested parties in locating existing (and developing) resources with further information on the new gTLD Program.

The defining issue is that a one-size-fits-all communication strategy might not be appropriate in expanding the global participation of stakeholders in the next round of new gTLD applications. This is particularly true in the Global South and other communities from which there is a limited number of prior applicants or incumbent gTLD Registries.

Topic 17: Applicant Support

The ME Space community supports the Outputs under this Topic for both financial and non-financial support measures detailed in the Final Report. While the Working Group produced a number of Outputs regarding how the Applicant Support is to be implemented, The ME Space community takes special note of Recommendation 17.3 and Implementation Guidance 17.4, regarding outreach and awareness-raising.

The ME Space community agrees with the intent of Implementation Guidance 17.4 concerning a longer lead-time for the purpose of outreach regarding the Applicant Support Program than the lead-time recommended for the commencement of the Communication Period as we explained above (Topic 13).

Topic 25: Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs)

While the ME Space community supports the Outputs of the Working Group on Topic 25, we believe that implementation of Recommendation 25.2 (and the associated Implementation Guidance 25.3) should ideally be implemented in the same manner as other Outputs in the Final Report - making new gTLD subsequent procedures as predictable to all stakeholders as possible.

As it currently stands, Outputs 25.2 and 25.3 allow applicants to apply for TLD strings in scripts that may not yet be integrated in the Root Zone Label Generation Rules (RZ-LGRs), but recommends that these applications proceed up to the point of contracting, at which time the application process for applicable strings would be halted pending integration in the RZ-LGRs. Furthermore, the Working Group acknowledges potential vague conclusions to these types of applications noting that the period of time it may take to finalize them may be indeterminate, including the possibility that they may never be delegated.

In this respect, Recommendation 25.2 and Implementation Guidance 25.3 do not provide the same level of predictability and certainty to a potential minority of new gTLD applicants as the remainder of the report provides to other potential applicants. We respectfully believe that this is an unsatisfactory conclusion on this specific issue, and encourage the ICANN Board, ICANN org and the GNSO to seek further work on this issue, and the development of a more predictable pathway for applicable applicants.

The ME Space community also notes that this issue does not directly affect those applying for IDN strings in the Arabic script, which is the script predominantly used in our region. We do, however, believe that the rollout of IDN gTLDs needs to be successful across-the-board in any and all strings. While we do not offer a solution to this issue at this time, we strongly encourage the parties mentioned above to engage in a process attempting to develop one.

Finally, the ME Space community affirms that any applied for IDN String shouldn't affect the concept of Universal Acceptance, the security of the domain name space and reachability. Therefore, we believe that the engagement with IDN working groups of the concerned scripts would be appropriate.