

COMMUNIQUE dotAfrica gTLD



The African Union Commission (AUC) has been entrusted by its member states to carry out the process of applying to the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) for the dotAfrica gTLD in terms of the New Generic Top Level Domain (gTLD) programme. dotAfrica is set to be a distinctive pan-African identification for regional online operations when it is opened up for registration.

The AU Commission, through its Information Society division (ISD), embarked on identifying the best open and transparent approach, which led to the formation of the dotAfrica Taskforce comprising respected African experts.

The Task Force and the assigned consultants provided the needed support to the AU Commission to launch the dotAfrica tender process to select a competent Registry Operator. Accordingly, the AU Commission selected UniForum SA (the ZA Central Registry Operator or ZACR), to administer and operate dotAfrica gTLD on behalf of the African community. The endorsement of the ZACR is the only formal endorsement provided by the African Union and its member's states with regard to dotAfrica.

The endorsement follows the evaluation of proposals submitted in December 2011, which attracted local and international registries interested in managing dotAfrica gTLD. The evaluation was conducted by a team of experts selected by the African Union.

Shortly after its appointment, the ZACR, in consultation with Internet Community representatives from all over Africa, at a meeting held in Johannesburg, established a Steering Committee to exercise moral and ethical oversight over the dotAfrica project. Representatives of the broader African Internet community are currently participating in the project through the Steering Committee and which comprises African Internet experts, Country Code managers, Registrars and others volunteering for a better Internet for Africa.

On the margins of the ICANN-43 meeting in San Jose, Costa Rica, March 2012, the AU Commission and ZACR have also formally concluded the dotAfrica Agreement to regulate the relation between the AUC and the ZACR for the application and operation of dotAfrica, which is to be administered in a inclusive and professional manner and in accordance with the project proposal submitted by ZACR during the tender process.

dotAfrica will be among the new generic Top Level Domains (gTLDs) that are likely to be approved by ICANN in 2013, and as such the African and global communities are eagerly anticipating the official launch of the dotAfrica gTLD,

The AU's officially endorsed Registry Operator (ZACR), together with the Steering Committee members, continues to receive African support and encouragement from all corners of the continent and from a wide range of stakeholder groups. The ZACR is currently finalising the detailed ICANN application process and is relying on its extensive experience and established resources as an African Registry Operator to complete this important task.

The deadline for the close of applications is 12 April 2012.

For more information please visit

www.AfricaInOneSpace.org www.facebook.com/africandomain www.twitter.com/africandomain

About UniForum SA (ZACR)

UniForum SA, trading as the ZA Central Registry, was established as a non-profit organisation in 1988 by a group of end users, developers, and vendors who cooperated to form a professional association that would promote and exchange information on open systems.

It was assigned the responsibility of administering the CO.ZA domain name space in 1995 because it was seen as not only having the technical skills and resources to do so, but also committed to neutrality and unity of purpose.

At startup, the co.za zone contained in the region of 400 entries. Today, with over 750000 domains, amounting to over 95 % of the total registrations in the .ZA ccTLD, co.za ranks as a medium to large zone and within the top 30 registries world-wide in terms of size.

Over the years UniForum SA has played active role in the African Internet industry including, but not limited to, the following:

- Establishing the alternate dispute resolution process for adjudicating domain name related disputes in the co.za domain.
- Translating the CO.ZA registry web site into all 11 official languages of South Africa as far back as 2001.
- Cooperating with a range of other industry bodies to drive the growth of the South African Internet, joining the South African Internet Service Providers Association (ISPA) in 1996 and having since worked with them on a range of web and social responsibility projects.
- Sponsoring and participating in the ISPA “Train the Teachers” initiative.
- Addressing and sponsoring learner education, educator development and the provision of IT infrastructure and curriculum development through the Mindset Computer Science Curriculum project, COZA Cares School of the Month project and ISPA Teacher Training initiatives.
- Participating in important debates, including contributing towards legislative and regulatory aspects that may effect the Internet.
- Providing regular DNS training to the South African Internet community at large.
- Transitioning the CO.ZA system into a world class EPP registry.
- Collaborating with South African Domain Name Authority (ZADNA) in transitioning into the ZA Central Registry in order to administer all open second level domains including. org.za, .net.za, and .web.za.

In summary, UniForum SA has served as a non-profit organisation that exists for the good of the South African and African Internet. We are proud to have remained loyal to the basic premise that surplus funds raised beyond covering operating expenses are ploughed back into the greater Internet community.

Although our role and the way forward might be changing, our principles and ideals have remained constant for more than 17 years and will endure into the future.

For more information:

www.registry.net.za

http://www.uniforum.org.za/cares/coza_cares.html