



Africa's map in the digital inclusion!

Ref: dotafrica/2011/01/26

26 January 2011

H.E. Monsieur Jean Ping
Honourable Chairperson of the African Union Commission
AU Commission Headquarters
P. O. Box 3243
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

H.E. Mr. Abdoulie Janneh
United Nations Under-Secretary General and
Executive Secretary of the
United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)
P. O. Box 3005
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Your Excellencies,

Subject: A Note of Official Complaint Regarding Certain Influence-Peddling Activities Being Perpetrated Against DotConnectAfrica (DCA) Organization, and Wrongful Withdrawal of Endorsement Letter Granted to DCA on account of Willful Negative Manipulation Against Our Efforts by Our Detractors

We have decided to jointly address this Note to Your Excellencies for joint action since we believe that the actual responsibility of implementing actionable programs and policies that pertain to the overall good and success of the New African project rests squarely on both of you, as the respective heads of two important organizations that have the specific mandate to develop Africa for Africans.

Our DCA has within the past year received endorsements from both the UNECA and the AU, however, the endorsement received from the AU has remained somewhat contentious. **From an article published in the ComputerWorld Kenya on-line magazine, we learn that the AU will be directly involved in the Dot Africa debate. (Please see attached for your immediate reference).**

The endorsement initially bestowed upon us by the AU Chairperson was unfairly withdrawn by a letter purportedly written and signed by the Deputy Chairperson of the AU, which, in our estimation, is not genuine, since it goes against every rule of administrative procedure and protocol for a letter signed by the Deputy Chairperson to countermand an earlier one granting a principled approval by the Chairperson, a present already bestowed by a higher authority. Therefore, we still believe that our original endorsement that was given by the AU Chairperson remains valid. As a direct consequence, we no longer give credence to the letter that was purportedly issued in the name of the Deputy



Chairperson, which to all practical intents and purposes was manipulated by our detractors simply to deny us our original endorsement letter, by copying ICANN whereas the original endorsement letter was never copied to ICANN by the AU.

Moreover, in addition to the obvious invidious machinations against our avowed interest, as per the article attached, **it is also obvious that our opponents are now using the Ghanaian ICT Minister to manipulate the ICANN, hoping to use this to manipulate the official thinking of the AU in a certain direction.** DCA is not happy with this shameless influence-peddling that is being perpetrated by our detractors. A copy of **our official rejoinder to the Computerworld Kenya** publication is attached herewith for your perusal.

To this end, DCA wants to bring to the attention of Your Excellencies, as respective heads of two important organizations, that there appear to be a nexus of conspiracy against DCA and its principal promoter Ms. Sophia Bekele with Ms. Aida Opoku-Mensah and Mr. Nii Quaynor, both Ghanaian nationals, at the center of it. Sadly, we feel that we have not been welcomed by Ms. Aida. So far, she hasn't shown much interest in and enthusiasm for our initiation for whatever reason as evidenced by her lack of action and support to move it forward even though she was entrusted to handle this noble cause a long time ago, since our first letter to her in 2006 ; **to which now DCA realized she only gave lip service to the Executive offices for our support, when in truth has expected a different outcome.** We appeal to ECA's Executive offices and urge Ms. Aida herself to pass on this assignment to somebody who could be more enthusiastic and more devoted to move it forward immediately. We think that Ms. Opoku-Mensah can no longer be trusted to act impartially for the benefit of all African stakeholders, in particular to this very important project for Africa, to serve the interests of her Ghanaian compatriot.

We find that first, our opponents initial manipulation that was aimed at using the Francophone element to project Pierre Dandjinou into the ICANN Board failed. Therefore, they are now using their 'supposed Plan B', which is to use the Ghanaians, to wit, Nii Quaynor, and Aida Opoku Mensah to manipulate the Ghanaian Minister of ICT into nudging the ICANN to behave in certain direction. **Only such persons in privileged position, would use this shameless influence peddling scheme to tilt something in their favor, as the "dotafrica.org" company has been registered to Nii Quaynor for their version of dotafrica.**

In this article which is written in flagrant disregard for journalism ethics and decorum, they have devised a scheme to thwart public opinion to their version of a dotafrica proposal **claiming a "community" model**, while making assertion that DCA's proposal is for self interest; to everyone's surprise after many public claims by the same group in the past, that DCA's proposal is a carbon copy of their own, which was found to be an empty accusation without merit. **Additionally, they have attempted to give the impression that AU should be the arbitrator instead of ICANN in selecting the dotafrica registry, against international rules and procedures.** This has been embarrassing at the international platforms of ICANN's stakeholders, with only the African continent asking for exception while other geographic name applicants to include Latin America and Caribbean which are following ICANN rules; certainly making nepotism and grandfathering an acceptable norm in Africa for choosing partnerships rather than respect for the rule of law.

From what we and observer see, **this group have done nothing on the ground on .africa that they could show as proof of their positive commitment; neither do they have any solid endorsements from any serious stakeholder, any institutional support or even community acceptance aside from their own clique;** Therefore, their plan is to continue to sabotage our AU endorsement along with their 'friends' and 'secret cabal' within the AU and UNECA. This is likened to a scenario that not only do they



want to steal the car that we have been driving, but also surreptitiously demanding a legal “right” to the key to the car without even knowing or demonstrating that they ever purchased a car or proving that they can properly drive a car; which only a legally-mandated authority can do, which in this case is ICANN.

Therefore, DCA condemns such dishonorable tactics and so should the leadership of the African Union and UNECA whose endorsement and support is being undermined by these special interest groups that continue to sabotage the serious work and arduous sacrifices of DCA. **Hence, we would like the leadership to strongly caution them to cease and desist on all these unwholesome and highly unethical practices** that are not helpful to the perpetrators of these crimes against DCA and to these two highly respected organizations. We thought we reasoned the **wise course of action to bring these matters to bring your good offices to bear on the situation so as to stop their hatred and traducement campaign against DCA.**

Finally, we need not overstress the point that these negative activities performed by our detractors only serve the cause of undermining the African Renaissance efforts being put in place, and the vision and hard work of leaders such as yourselves. **It is therefore not too much for us to request your kind and earnest intervention to reassure us all that these people should not be allowed to continuously act with impunity simply to serve parochial interests,** but that they could be called to account now that their willful manipulations have been uncovered.

We thank your Excellencies in kind anticipation, as we hope that the matters that we have raised in this communication will be addressed squarely so as to reassure us of the faith that we have put in the judicious resolution of this matter.

The DCA would like to use this opportunity to reassure you of its highest esteem and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Sbekele

Ms. Sophia Bekele, B.S., M.B.A., C.I.S.A, C.C.S, CGEIT

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Attach: Copy, ComputerWorld Kenya: **“African Union Joins .Africa Debate”**

Copy, DCA Commentary to ComputerWorld Kenya , submitted and published on external media

cc: ICT Minister of Mauritius

ICT Minister, Kenya

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ethiopia

Office of the CEO, ICANN Corp. USA

Commentary by DCA: African Union and the .Africa debate

Our attention has been drawn to a recent article on computerworld.co.ke re: **African Union and the .Africa debate**, by staff writer Ms Rebecca Wanjiku who inadvertently revealed a rather disturbing influence-peddling activities coupled with evidence of abuse of office.

The article makes it quite evident that there is an attempt at high-profile influence peddling that pervades the on-going debate and ‘fights’ on how the management of the .Africa tld (Dot Africa Top Level Domain) should be handled between and amongst the contenders, and what role is expected of the African Union as one of the principal Pan-African organization. The article also attempts to give the public an impression that AU should be the arbitrator instead of ICANN in selecting the dotafrica registry, against international rules and procedures.

Following the recent rejection and failed electoral bid by a certain cabal to enable their own candidate Pierre Dandjinou (quoted in the article) gain a seat on the ICANN Board, this ‘cabal’ has again constituted itself into an influence-peddling ring which somehow managed to inveigle the Ghanaian ICT Minister to write to ICANN, simply with the intention of steering and/or manipulating the ICANN Leadership to behave in a certain manner. It is therefore important to ask some pertinent questions: **“What or who pushed the Ghanaian ICT Minister to write to ICANN? What inspired him to write to ICANN to portray another contender in somewhat negative light? What further proof do we now need to reveal to one and all that the ‘influence peddlers’ have pushed a government Minister of Ghana to abuse his office? Why the overt involvement in a matter that is of no direct concern to the Government of Ghana? Does the Government of Ghana now speak for the African Union, as to warrant this unnecessary intervention, yet evidently willful manipulation that was simply aimed at pushing ICANN in a certain direction? How come only the Ghanaian ICT Minister and not the ICT Ministers of the rest countries of Africa wrote to ICANN? If all African ICT Ministers write to ICANN, and this important body gets pulled in different directions, how could ICANN function independently without undue interference in its affairs and internal policy-making machinery?** The questions are indeed many.

Even though we are not pointing any accusing fingers at anyone, it is well-known that Nii Quaynor has high-profile friends and contacts within the Ghanaian Government and Ghanaian contacts in intergovernmental organizations, and that dotafrica.org which is registered to him is wanting to be other contender in the dotafrica bid. Additionally, Nii has recently in public email accused DCA of wanting to privatize the dotafrica TLD, to which the Ghanaian Minister seem to have implied in his letter to ICANN; This following another untruthful accusation Nii threw in the same public note, on plagiarism of dotafrica model from his own, as well as registration of “connectdotafrica.org” domain in 2007, stating "who is copying who" which is now proved to be bogus, an empty accusation without merit. The community has learned as of his accusation date that “connectdotafrica.org” was not registered to anyone, however DCA has now registered it to protect our domain portfolio from such empty claims so as not to confuse the public. Another question to ask here is, **how come then the ICT Minister of Ghana did not raise the same concern of privatization and self interest to the other proposal?** How does Nii’s model inadvertently become a “community” model, Mr. Vika has referred to in the same article.

Therefore one would not be overtly speculative in deducing that those who have constituted themselves into a nexus of opposition against DCA now seem to have entangled themselves in a web of confusion, influence-peddling, and blatant abuse of office. We would therefore like to strongly urge ComputerWorld Kenya, to act in the spirit of investigative journalism to dig deeper into the matter and help uncover the underlying truths behind this entire saga. Stop this negative campaign of traducement against DCA.

Now to the other issues we have with the report.

It is unbalanced, non-factual, and perhaps due to inexperience of the writer, and her apparent unjustifiable haste to go to press, she forgot to verify information from the AU, and also forgot to seek the opinion of alternate stakeholders so as to present a balanced, and factually-accurate report that adheres to the canons of journalistic integrity, ethical principles, sanctity of public information, and fairness to all parties.

Therefore, overall, even though the report was somehow presented unfairly in order to damage our corporate interests, we feel victorious and encouraged that our enduring moral position has been again bolstered and vindicated.

Written By Thomas Kamanzki,

Africa Union joins .africa debate

Rebecca Wanjiku

16.12.2010 kl 14:48 | Computerworld Kenya

The African Union (AU) has expressed interest in playing a key role in selecting the operator for the .africa and .afrique generic Top Level Domains (gTLDs).

The .africa domain is expected to target companies with continental operations, just like .eu and .asia. The AU is hoping to represent governments' interest in the selection process, the way the European Union was involved in .eu.

Two weeks ago, Ghana's ICT minister sent a letter to ICANN indicating that .afrique and .africa discussions should involve the AU to avoid potential hijack for "private use."

Various entities have expressed interest in managing new gTLDs but critics question whether they are motivated by profit or by a genuine desire to increase domain-name uptake in the region.

"On one side is the self-serving commercial interest that some entities are already championing; these are entities that are in it purely for the money; on the other side is a community-serving commercial interest that most of the African internet community prefers," said Vika Mpisane, president of the Africa TLD organization (AfTLD).

"For the community model, the overall aim is to use the profits made from .africa domain name fees not to enrich an individual, but to grow and sustain the African internet community through various projects such as research and training," he added.

The debate about which entity should run .africa has been hinged on hopes that it will be a source of profit, like the business done by registries in developed countries. But the slow pace of Internet growth in Africa is likely to dent those hopes.

"Although there is such heated debate on .africa, I am not certain everyone understands the stakes so far," said Pierre Dandjinou, Executive Director, Strategic Consulting Group. "It is not primarily about big business, at least for the first years of operation, but about a projection of an African image and branding."

The .africa domain could help current country code TLDs, which have suffered from slow uptake, according to some industry insiders. "Most African TLDs lack an aggressive communication and marketing strategy," added Dandjinou, who is also a past chair of AfriNIC.

"A .africa registry could open up possibilities for capacity development for ccTLDs managers who could also be retailers for .africa." The new .africa domain may fare better than the ccTLDs simply because of the name, adds the AfTLD's Mpisane.

"There is a feeling amongst the African internet community that while a substantial lot of ccTLDs struggle with increasing registration uptake, the .africa domain will be more exciting for African brands and people as the name 'Africa' is naturally more recognizable than names of individual African country names," said Mpisane, who is also the general manager of the za Domain Name Authority in South Africa. While the debate on commercial and community interests has dominated the discussions, Mpisane and Dandjinou feel that the US\$185,000 application fee required is likely to lock out interested applicants from the region. There are discussions within ICANN to reduce the fee.