

The Middle East Space

Online Virtual Meeting on Monday 8 June 2020

Universal Acceptance & Email Address Internationalization using Arabic Script Statement

We, the Middle East (ME) community members, participating in the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) Middle East Space, addressed the concerns of the Universal Acceptance (UA) & Email Addresses Internationalization (EAI) using Arabic Script that have been raised in previous discussions by different working groups, and came up with this statement.

UA is a foundational requirement for a truly multilingual Internet, in which users of the Internet around the world can navigate (via Domain Name System -DNS) entirely in their own local languages. It is also the key to unlocking the potential of new generic Top-Level Domains (gTLDs) that have more than three ASCII characters to foster competition, inclusion, consumer choice, accessibility, and innovation in the domain name industry.

The ME Space community already made general recommendations about Universal Acceptance in its statement¹ at ICANN 64 in Kobe, Japan.

The 2019 IDN world report² shows that among the major challenges to the uptake of the IDNs is the poor usage of email, so through this statement, we will focus on **email addresses** specially the ones, which will use **Arabic script**.

According to the results³ of the study done by the Universal Acceptance Steering Group (UASG) on the evaluation of 1000 websites, an average of only 10% of them accepted email addresses comprising non-Latin characters. It is therefore necessary to promote UA readiness.

The future of EAI readiness falls into two main phases³,

- ❖ **Phase 1:** EAI Ready software where the software is capable of sending to and receiving from EAI addresses, while
- ❖ **Phase 2:** EAI Ready software is capable of hosting an EAI address.

In phase 1 we are looking for email servers (ESMTP, IMAP*, POP*) that are able to accept EAI addresses from email clients, which are also able to compile EAI addresses.

In phase 2 we are looking to have mailboxes (email addresses) in local languages like Arabic, Urdu, Farsi and other languages within the region.

¹ The Middle East Space's statement at ICANN64, Kobe, Japan.

https://icannwiki.org/images/a/a0/ME_space_statement_-_Universal_Acceptance.pdf

² The 2019 IDN world report shows that IDNs make 2.5% of the world's domains and that it has grown 0.5% over the figures reported in 2018. Despite this increase, the report indicates that among the major challenges to the uptake of the IDNs is the poor usage of email.

Source: <https://idnworldreport.eu/>

³ Universal Acceptance Steering Group

Source: <https://uasg.tech/information/>

The ME Space community supports the APNIC⁴ blog remarks stipulating that the deployment and use of EAs are still restricted to a handful of languages and that there is very limited or no support for it being offered by email servers (SMTP, IMAP, POP), email providers (Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail) and email clients (Thunderbird, Mail, etc.). Often, it is not even possible to create an email ID for end-users in a non-ASCII based language.

To help making good progress in implementation and use of Email Address Internationalization (EAI) using Arabic Script, we recommend that:

A. ICANN

- a. Encourages GAC members, through the GAC working group on IDNs and UA, to share best practices from their countries that may include:
 - i. Required national policies and industry led measures to drive the wheel for EAI adoption, implementation and usage
 - ii. National standard operating procedures for adopting UA readiness and keep the applications interoperable
 - iii. Inclusion of UA readiness and EAI support within the digital inclusion projects
 - iv. Share how they promote EAI within their countries
- b. Encourages ICANN community members (UASG, ALAC, GAC, etc.) to join other groups working on Internationalization and Universal acceptance outside ICANN for knowledge exchange and experience sharing.
- c. Addresses and promotes the use of local language domain name to access local language content and use local language email address to exchange data, through fostering the use of IDNs and EAs.
- d. Improves ICANN Learn environment with local languages starting with working languages of the United Nations.

B. UASG

- a. Conducts a study about the roles of different stakeholder groups such as Internet end users, software providers, (IDN) ccTLD operators, Email service operators, technical and academic communities, governments, private sector, etc., to further promote IDNs, EAs and UA.
- b. Addresses the current working EAI system models in countries that deployed it and discuss the challenges faced and best practices to be able to achieve full EAI implementation.

⁴ Deployment issues for Internationalized Email By Harish Chowdhary on 23 Jan 2017

Source: <https://blog.apnic.net/2017/01/23/deployment-issues-internationalized-email/>

- c. Develops a UA issues inventory for Arabic script languages affecting the progress of EAI adoption.
- d. Encourages UA local/regional initiatives and more cooperation with the ICANN GSE team to support the progress of IDN, EAI and UA technologies.
- e. Supports the establishment of a free EAI service that supports Arabic Script that can be used by the community in the ME region for ICANN meetings and regional events registration.
- f. Training local initiatives trainers on “UA Technologies, Internationalized Domain Names, and Email Address Internationalization”.
- g. Increases the number of UA ambassadors who have good skills to move the wheel ahead, and providing the current ones with in-depth knowledge.
- h. Strengthens the communications between the UASG and the Task Force on Arabic Internationalized Domain Names (TF-AIDN)⁵ on issues related to Label Generation Rules (LGR), technical and security issues related to Arabic domain names or Arabic email addresses; engage with TF-AIDN experts in the implementations of Arabic email servers and support them.
- i. Encourages and supports projects for the adoption of Arabic EAI with Arabic global organizations working on the promotion of Arabic script languages, (ALESCO is an example), governments, public entities, academic researchers, private sector and civil society organizations. These projects will show the benefits made possible by having Internet domains and Email Addresses in local language scripts.

C. Stakeholders

- a. Considers IDN ccTLD managers to be ccNSO members to promote addressing issues related to UA.
- b. Encourages Arabic ccTLD managers to be involved in the implementation of policies and systems related to Arabic IDN to join and engage with the TF-AIDN.

We want to thank all those who are working hard to push the Universal Acceptance project forward including the Email Address Internationalization (UASG, community members who are helping especially on the linguistic aspects, etc.,). We hope that these recommendations will be taken into account to make significant progress.

⁵ TF-AIDN was the first generation panel that completed its proposal for the Root Zone Label Generation Rules (RZ-LGR) for top-level domain names. They also completed the LGR for second-level domain names for the Arabic, Urdu Farsi and Pashto languages as a reference for the community to use. Furthermore, TF-AIDN is in contact with Jawi, Swahili, Sindhi and Turkmen language communities for LGR2. They are also done with the use-case report on issues encountered by languages using the Arabic script.