The ICANN GNSO "Business Constituency"

ICANN Business Constituency (BC) Comment

On

[The Draft Final Report of the 2023 Africa Domain Name Industry Study](#)

8-Feb-2024

Introduction:

This document is the response of the ICANN Business Constituency (BC), from the perspective of business users and registrants, as defined in our Charter. The mission of the BC is to ensure that ICANN policy positions are consistent with the development of an internet that:

- Promotes end-user confidence, because it is a safe place to conduct business;

- Is competitive in the supply of registry- and registrar-related services; and

- Is technically stable, secure and reliable.

General Comment:

The BC is happy to comment on the 2023 Africa Domain Name Study (Study). The Study presents a comprehensive view of the DNS industry in Africa. In particular, the BC appreciates that the Study includes data on infrastructure that supports the DNS industry. Since the membership of the BC includes many Internet infrastructure providers that support the DNS industry, the BC welcomes the opportunity to help support these companies in addition to the DNS industry as well.

The BC appreciates the effort it took to complete the Study, and thanks the authors for their dedication to the important goal of supporting the DNS industry in Africa. Our specific comments follow.

1. It is clear that the development of Africa's IXP and data center infrastructure and hosting industry as set out in Sections 4.4.3.1, Figure 4-19, 4.4.3.2, 4.5.5.2, table 4-9, 5.3.1, must precede development of the DNS industry. In particular, support to the local hosting industry will help support growth in the DNS industry.

2. The BC appreciates that in section I.V "Success Factors" the authors say that training in "good DNS management and implementation" will be necessary for growth of the DNS industry in Africa. The BC points out that good DNS management includes a sensitivity to fraud and abuse.

3. The BC appreciates that in section I.VI.ii entitled "Internet Service Demand" the authors identify security as a key driver to stimulate the DNS industry and demand overall. Facilitating the security of the DNS as a whole is part of ICANN's mission. The Study notes that in some African countries, criminal users have hampered the growth of the DNS in that country. The Study notes that end user confidence in the DNS will facilitate the growth of generic TLDs in particular.

4. The BC appreciates that in section I.VI.III entitled "Policy and Regulation" the authors specifically note that African governments must act to facilitate trust in the DNS by enacting laws and regulations to facilitate trust in the DNS. The GAC has routinely noted that facilitating trust in the DNS is an obligation of National Governments. The BC supports this effort.

5. The BC generally supports open registration of domain names as is recommended in section I.VI.V entitled "inhibiting factors." While recommendations to reduce unnecessary regulations such as business registration and a legal presence in the country are supportable, the relaxation of registration regulations should consider whether a particular regulation prevents the introduction of fraud into the DNS. In particular, countries who have enacted strong intellectual property protections into their domain name registration policies may have created more trust in their DNS industry since the registration itself is more trustworthy. The BC suggests that any change in regulations regarding intellectual property be narrowly tailored to reduce inefficient registration processes, and not create new avenues for introducing intellectual property theft and other elements of fraud into the DNS.

6. The BC applauds the idea of a DNS observatory in Africa, and encourages the observatory to look at additional issues such as security, policies that establish trust in cyberspace and the "Success Factors" identified in Section 1.V to its list.

7. The BC is aligned with the projection in the study that the limited number of ICANN Accredited Registrars which currently stands at 13 from a global pool of 1,122 has an impact on the African marketplace, but suggests mechanisms be explored to educate indigenous businesses on how to be contracted with ICANN to grow the registrars base and emphasize the need for those currently contracted to allow for more transactions in local currencies.

8. The BC notes Section 5:4 and 7.1 of the Study highlight the huge disparity in some cases in the cost of domains sold by some international registrars compared to the cost of the same domains sold locally by the ccTLD's accredited Registrars. The Study notes the impact on the purchase of domain names and how this disparity creates the notion that African domains are pricey. The report does not contain recommendations on how to reduce this disparity, and the BC suggests that the authors, or ICANN itself, make recommendations to do so.

9. The BC suggests that in the final Study, the metrics adopted in the ranking of countries in Section 6.2 to determine which countries were the most successful in the African DNS ecosystem should be better explained, such that there is clarity on the approach used. The BC suggests that the Study should include a note on the reasons why the Namibian ccTLD was exempted in the Study.

10. The BC notes that on page 114 of the Study, reference was made to a chart showing the top 10 per capita DNS industry earning countries, but this chart was missing.

This comment was drafted by David Snead and Lawrence Olawale-Roberts.

It was approved in accord with the BC Charter