
ICANN86 Seville | PF – Advancing Universal Acceptance Adoption
Tuesday, June 09, 2026 – 16:30 to 18:00 CEST

SEDA AKBULUT

Hello, and welcome to Advancing Universal Acceptance Adoption session. My name is Seda Akbulut, and I'm a participation manager for this session. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Community Participant Code of Conduct, ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior, and ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy. Please observe the following guidelines to participate in this session. I will also post them in the chat for your reference. During this session, questions will only be read aloud if submitted within the Q&A pod. Interpretation for this session will include English, French, and Spanish. If you'd like to speak during this session, please raise your hand in Zoom. When called upon, virtual participants will be given permission to unmute in Zoom. On-site participants will use a physical microphone to speak. Only questions posted in the Q&A pod will be read aloud during this session, as time permits and when directed by the chair of this session. Please state your name for the record, the language you will speak if speaking a language other than English, and speak clearly at a moderate pace. I will now hand the floor over to Sarmad Hussain. Over to you, Sarmad.

Note: The following is the output resulting from transcribing an audio file into a word/text document. Although the transcription is largely accurate, in some cases may be incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages and grammatical corrections. It is posted as an aid to the original audio file but should not be treated as an authoritative record.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Thank you, Seda, and welcome, everyone, to this session on Advancing Universal Acceptance Adoption. Unfortunately, we do not have translation at this time, and we will make that available as soon as the relevant staff is here. But in the interest of time, we will continue. This session is going to cover some various aspects of universal acceptance work, which is ongoing by the community. Obviously, as ICANN, we support those efforts. In our session, we have Dr. Xianhong Hu from UNESCO. She'll be talking about the recent work at UNESCO on the universal acceptance policy brief. She'll be followed by Edmon Chung, who's a co-chair of the UA Expert Working Group, and he'll be presenting the guidelines for advancing UA adoption as well as what are some of the next steps. Then we'll invite Seda Akbulut from the ICANN team to talk about and share a summary of UA Day 2026. And we'll also invite Dr. Xianhong Hu from UNESCO to share more about UNESCO's collaboration on UA Day. We are then remotely joined by Dr. Fatema Akbar, who's a professor at American University of Bahrain, where they are integrating the UA curriculum within the technical programs at the university. And she'll be presenting what is the current status of the integration and some of the findings. And we'll then take questions and answers. With that, let me pass it on to Dr. Xianhong Hu from UNESCO to talk about the UA policy brief. Thank you.

XIANHONG HU

Thank you, Sarmad. Thank you, Seda, online. Warm greetings to you from Sevilla. We really miss you. So hello, everyone. Thank you

for inviting UNESCO to ICANN, not only the meeting, but this very important session on universal acceptance. I take this opportunity to share our joint initiative on universal acceptance and also this recently launched policy brief, as Sarmad just mentioned. So next slide, please. Yeah, next as well. So why do we do this? The global digital divide still persists. If you look at the global data, 2.2 billion people are still not connected to the Internet. More than 7,000 languages are spoken by human beings. There are only a few hundred present online, and many minority and indigenous languages are disappearing while we are talking on a daily basis. So this enormous language divide deprives significant people from meaningful connectivity and digital opportunities. This language gap profoundly impacts the landscape of artificial intelligence. I know at this ICANN meeting there was an AI session yesterday. I'm very happy to see that AI also emerged as an issue discussed in this community. The lack of universal acceptance in the digital ecosystem eventually limits what AI can learn, how well it can perform, and who it can eventually benefit. Since most AI models still rely on existing data, meaning that most offline languages and the related data are excluded from AI development. But on the other hand, I would also like to indicate that AI can also be a very powerful tool to scale up language preservation. Next slide. This slide I was just talking about, how the language landscape is impacting AI inclusiveness. So next slide. Maybe I can... Seda, could you please move to the next slide?

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA Seda.

XIANHONG HU

Oh, yes. Okay. That's why, in this policy brief we are presenting, we highlight the key message that universal acceptance is not just a technical challenge, but it goes beyond that. I draw your attention to those major non-technical barriers we have identified, as advancing universal acceptance requires tremendous human intervention, the policy development such as in the areas of awareness and engagement, in the area of capacity building, institutional capacity building, in the area of policy regulatory development, as well as the coordination of ecosystems. Next slide, please.

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA We already did that. Maybe back one slide. No, one slide forward.

XIANHONG HU

Maybe one slide back. Yes. So next slide, please. Thank you. Yeah, in this context, no wonder that the latest global response, whether WSIS+20 resolution or the Global Digital Compact, they all recognize the urgent need to promote and preserve cultural diversity, cultural heritage, and languages, calling for closing all the digital divide, language divide, especially through a fair use of AI. So next slide, please. UNESCO has a unique, strong mandate and commitment to multilingualism, enshrined from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Our normative framework

is called UNESCO Recommendation Concerning Multilingualism. It was really a pioneering document instrument, endorsed by our member states early in 2003. After two decades, this instrument found itself even more pertinent than ever. We are now hosting the secretariat to implement the UN initiative on the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, to empower the indigenous communities and preserve their languages. So building on this extensive mandate and our core partnership with ICANN, UNESCO positions universal acceptance as a key enabler for inclusive digital transformation and AI development. Next slide, please. So thanks to our wonderful partnership with ICANN, with our ICANN colleagues sitting here and also Seda online, this is a very tangible outcome from this partnership. It is quite a unique policy and knowledge advocacy product. It not only identifies the gaps and challenges, but also provides tailored recommendations to different stakeholders. Next slide, please. The brief holistically analyzed the importance and the benefits of universal acceptance. In addition to the economic value and its contribution to the digital economy, the policy brief recognizes the important and profound value of UA for safeguarding the linguistic and cultural diversity in the world. It also facilitates linguistic inclusion for education delivery nowadays. A recent UNESCO report shows that children will learn best when they are taught in their mother tongue or their first language. That's why it's essential that those educational tools and platforms seamlessly function across all the languages and the scripts. This social and cultural value should never be underestimated and ignored in the public policy-making process.

Next slide, please. So the strong, actionable recommendations were provided towards universal acceptance for governments, for technology applications and service providers, for civil society, academia, and language communities, as well as for international and intergovernmental organizations like UNESCO. For UNESCO, with our normative authority, technical expertise, and global convening power, we are very ready, we are committed to help develop cooperation, accelerate cross-border alignment and collaboration on technical protocols, support country-level capacity building, and the implementation and adoption of UA as a core pillar in the national digital inclusion agenda. Next slide, please. Another contribution of this policy brief is the indicators presented to gauge the real-world impact. The policy brief will propose a number of measurements, including indicators and sources, to measure the UA adoption in four areas: one, awareness; two, policy support; three, capacity development; and also implementation. I'm here also encouraging all the stakeholders to use these indicators to do some initial gap assessments in your country, which can be a good evidence basis to consider further policy development and AI, and also UA adoption. Next slide, please. At UNESCO level, I'd like to share a few concrete actions we have done to implement UA. As I mentioned, we are safeguarding the implementation of the UNESCO Recommendation 2003 on multilingualism. We have included an indicator about universal acceptance for member states to monitor to what extent UA has been integrated into the national policies. Next slide, please. As I mentioned, awareness is one of the major non-technical gaps. So

we are expanding communication outreach to promote this UA concept and brief through multiple channels to ensure that the key messages delivered here can reach the member states, reach governments, policymakers, technical committees, and other stakeholders who can support the UA implementation. I also count on your support to share it with your networks. You know, as a UNESCO-ICANN joint policy brief, it's also open source. You are free to translate it in your local language and circulate it in your network. Next slide, please. We have recently launched this policy brief through EuroDIG, the virtual session, also in person. This kind of regional, in our eyes, crucial platform is for us to bring the concept of UA into broader Internet governance discussion. Next slide, please. Next slide, please. Yes, thank you. So this slide I can go through very quickly because I'm presenting that we are planning in the pipeline to launch this policy brief and trigger policy discussions about universal acceptance, from advocacy to adoption, in a number of global key forums, ranging from the forthcoming WSIS forum to take place in July in Geneva, to the forthcoming IGF in December in Nairobi. Next slide, please. As well as other policy forums, such as the United Nations University-organized global event, ICEGOV, to take place in Saudi Arabia, and also a UNESCO conference in Asia-Pacific. We warmly welcome your engagement with UNESCO, with ICANN on these joint events. So next slide, please. We're also raising high-level visibility through social media, through our joint news story events, plus the blog from both sides to keep this UA advocacy as an ongoing momentum toward the UA adoption actions. So I'm finishing here,

and the last slide is all about thank you for your attention and also for your engagement.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Thank you. Maybe we'll take a question, then the rest we can take after the speakers are done, in the interest of time. But we'll take a question if anybody has one for Xianhong. I see Abdalmonem.

ABDALMONEM GALILA

Yes, thank you very much for this great presentation. This is Abdalmonem Galila for the record. Actually, as I know, universal acceptance adoption, or universal acceptance itself, is a collaborative work between different stakeholders. So from my point of view, one of the biggest barriers against universal acceptance is the collaboration between different stakeholders. So the question is here: how could UNESCO help in order to mitigate such a kind of lack of cooperation between different stakeholders? Thank you.

XIANHONG HU

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for this question. I'd like to recognize your leadership in the UA Working Group in the GAC, which is important leadership in this area. As you mentioned, the multistakeholder approach, this seamless cooperation between and among stakeholders, is crucial for adoption because UA cannot be implemented and mainstreamed by one single actor among this ecosystem. That's why we need to have this kind of holistic

approach. That's exactly what we have promoted through this policy brief. So at UNESCO level, that's what we are mandated for: to foster international cooperation. We serve as a platform to bring all the member states and governments to exchange, to share good practice. We would expect to have some of the countries try out this UA adoption as examples. Then we also count on ICANN GAC's support. We can deliver this key message and the message for action to all the key policymakers in different countries. And second thing, we fully embrace the multistakeholder approach. We are present in all the multistakeholder policy forums. We are pushing this UA policy to be adopted not only by government, but also to be considered by the private sector in their self-regulation framework. We're also supporting capacity building because we have to integrate the education and training of UA into the national education program, into the training of the civil servants, into the training of the policymakers. So with these joint efforts, we can all work together to advance UA at the country level as well as at the regional and international level. Again, I would like to say that here at ICANN, I perceive such a good practice of multistakeholder cooperation. UNESCO will continue to engage with ICANN, with other communities, to move ahead with the UA agenda. Thank you.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Thank you. In the interest of time, we should move on. Anil, we see your hand up. If you can hold the question. Also, if you all can hold your questions till the end of the session, just to make sure that we don't run out of time. So we'll move on to the next speaker. We have

Edmon Chung, who's the co-chair of the UA Expert Working Group. Over to you, Edmon, to talk about UA guidelines, which have been published by the UA Expert Working Group.

EDMON CHUNG

Thank you, Sarmad, and thank you for having me here. Actually, it's my privilege to work with a very good group of people from the UA Expert Working Group to put together a set of guidelines. We can move to the next slide. So I just want to highlight one thing before I start talking about the guidelines themselves and some of the background. This is a set of guidelines that is produced from the community to provide the ICANN staff team to do their work in accordance with the strategic plan. But this is not something that would limit what the community would do alongside ICANN in universal acceptance, because as Abdalmonem quite correctly touched upon, this is not something that ICANN alone can achieve. It will require collaborative efforts among different stakeholders. And also, as Xianhong has mentioned, this is not just a technical coordination thing, actually. This really needs a groundswell of support, and it's a culturally driven aspect as well. So with that, next slide, please. I'll give you a bit of a background of the work at the UA EWG, and then some of the work that we've done, report back, and also some of the next steps. Next slide, please. So just as a starter, I guess most people know in this room already, but let me just note that, especially as we talk a lot about the new gTLDs, universal acceptance is to make sure that these new top-level domains, as well as internationalized domain names, can be used

seamlessly on the Internet, and, of course, including email addresses and so on. So this is a topic. Of course, new gTLDs is the hot topic, but UA is a foundation for any of that to really happen in a way that we can build trust in the DNS. Next slide, please. So in terms of background, we can go to the next slide. Yes, so this is coming from a resolution from the ICANN Board and is, as I mentioned, related to the ICANN strategic plan. This is in fact an implementation of that strategic plan, of which IDN and UA actually feature quite prominently in ICANN's work. So this is established, I guess, by the ICANN president and CEO. Next slide, please. And it includes a number of participants from the community, myself from At-Large, Abdalmonem from the GAC, and Nitin, Nabil, and Sami, and many others from different stakeholder groups. But next slide, please. It also includes some additional outside experts, especially from Unicode, from UNESCO, from CNNIC, but also Jiankang was also a part of the IAB, from the World Wide Web Consortium, Meta, academia, and so on. So I'm actually quite privileged to be co-chairing this group. And in fact, I was thinking about it as I was coming here. This is actually the first really official universal acceptance-focused group that ICANN has put together to look at the work going forward by the ICANN team, and also it would inform the community as well. Next slide, please. So in terms of scope of work, we started weekly meetings back almost a year ago. We identified 10 topics which formed the charter. And we published a first round of preliminary report or guidelines in February earlier this year and engaged with the community at the Mumbai ICANN meeting. Next slide, please. And these are the 10

topics. I will go into each one of them, so I won't go here one by one. But I do note that this is also, you can see the many recommendations or guidelines for each of the particular areas and topics, which ranges from how we approach big tech, how we approach open source, as well as academia, governments, and of course, the industry and the technical community. Next slide, please. And so, at our last meeting in Mumbai, I didn't go into the details because that was during the public comment period. But one of the things I did want to highlight is that coming out of the public comment period, one of the key aspects that the group felt is that the public comments really confirmed a lot of the observations from the group. So we have not made significant changes, but we definitely have made a lot of enhancements to the previously published preliminary report. So I'm going to go into the details of it a little bit here. So first of all, I think one of the things that is really interesting, and it, I guess, dovetails into Xianhong's report earlier, is that we identified two overarching principles, really. One of which is that UA needs to be put into a wider umbrella of the context of the multilingual Internet and how it fits into the wider topic of internationalization of the entire technology stack, whether it's for the government, for big tech, or whatever. So UA itself, standing alone, is not going to get enough traction. We need to put it in the right space and within the umbrella of internationalization. The other one that is overarching is about having different content and different focus on how to, quote-unquote, "pitch" UA to different people. That has been, in some ways, missing in the past. Often we talk about UA, and we talk

about it as a broad issue, and similarly to different stakeholders. But one of the key things that I identified here is for the ICANN team to produce targeted materials and communication materials for different stakeholders. So these two, I think, overarching guidelines are actually quite important, and you will see time and again, each of the 10 actually echoes some of that overarching theme as well. So in terms of the first one, it is about connecting with big tech organizations. And I think on this front, again, echoing just now what I said, in fact, within big tech, there are also different business units, and they care about the economic, the social, the linguistic, and cultural value. And highlighting each of them is going to be important for the entire organization to pick up UA. And again, the technology stack and how UA fits into it, especially in the lower layers of systems, is going to be something that is important for big tech. Next slide, please. Now, we come to the open source communities. That's the second area that we looked into. Here, we looked at prioritizing both the verticals, which means particular applications, popular applications, but also horizontally, open source components that are used by multiple systems. These are important aspects. And then, again, echoing the overarching theme, to look into different relevant areas and to have specialized communications for that. Into the third aspect, the specific standards, that's the standards bodies and so on. One of the things is we do identify that the core standards are there, but one of the aspects that is important is to identify, again, the full stack so that higher-level applications are not tripped over, in a way, by underlying platforms and providers. That's the chicken-and-egg

issue. The point about also participating in internationalization standards is also, for example, there are authentication and credentials standards that are developed by national, regional organizations. Those need to take into account, when they think about digital identity or authentication, IDN UA in their mix. Next slide, please. And then we go into the platforms and mechanisms for software development people. Again, the right messaging, differentiated messaging, is going to be important. One of the things that we also identified about the umbrella issue of internationalization is that there is actually a limited number of experts who can understand the entire stack for internationalization. So building the capacity, making sure that we have these experts going forward, is going to be important as well. Into the fifth area, which is system administrators. We identified that there are actually some similarities with open source and software professionals, but there are specific areas, such as to look at the particular relevant platforms, the conferences that are specifically for system administrators, and also, again, building the kind of capacity for system administrators to be comfortable with the new domains, with IDNs, and with internationalized email addresses. Next slide, please. And of course, we ourselves here at ICANN, the DNS community, it is very important for us to drink our own Kool-Aid. So part of the guidelines and recommendations is to ensure that the registries and registrars are incentivized to adopt universal acceptance. And part of this also, we've identified that there may be policy gaps that could address this. But also there may be work with governments and also ccTLDs where this is going

to be important because it would be beyond only looking at it at a market level, but also as a national strategic level as well. Next slide, please. Next slide is on the seventh item, which is the hosting providers and service providers. We noted that this is a stumbling block, actually. For example, people can register an IDN, but they stumble when they want to host it. And therefore, some technical solution, some aspect needs to be provided, and also to build the capacity, again, coming back to the messaging and the targeted messaging for different people. Then we identified the public sector. In fact, as we talk about the prioritization among these 10 areas, there is quite a good agreement among the group that getting to the governments is going to be important. Yesterday, at a different session, I also mentioned that we do see, and I think multiple people are seeing, that there is a market failure. The demand is not being realized, and therefore, government intervention is going to be important. And this is an aspect, how we collaborate with multiple ministries and also intergovernmental organizations, that is going to make a difference here. Next slide, please. And then on to the ninth one, which is academia. This mirrors a little bit the public sector, but we have identified specific areas. For example, when we create curriculum materials that include UA, it might be useful to look at hub universities, universities where certain materials, when created, actually get spread to a network of other universities or other university courses where they can be reused. So that's an interesting area, and, of course, again, connecting back to national strategy as well as intergovernmental organizations. Finally, the tenth area is about

measurement. We've identified a number of different areas of measurements that are required, from awareness to the actual implementation, to policy support, and to capacity development, with an emphasis on self-reporting, but also an important aspect which Xianhong earlier has mentioned, if that kind of self-reporting can come from countries into UNESCO, into the international organizations, that is going to, I think, make a difference in terms of the implementation. Next slide, please. And then finally, I go to the next steps, taking this forward. As we completed the public comment period, since Mumbai, the team has been working through the public comments and incorporating many of the comments back in to enhance the set of guidelines. We've incorporated a lot of it, but I want to highlight that we also wanted to take a minimum-edit approach in the sense that, by and large, the public comments did confirm that the direction that the group was taking is correct, with some additions. And I would highlight a couple of them. I think it's in the next slide. Yeah. So a couple of the highlights is that UA itself is, as Xianhong mentioned, not just about technology. It's about cultural equity, it's about human rights, it's about language justice, it's about digital inclusion. The other thing that was loud and clear was about AI, and including AI as part of the consideration, both in testing, both in AI itself handling universal acceptance and also different languages. And then finally, one thing that is, I think, really important from the feedback received is the view of the end-user experience. Because a lot of times when we previously talked about UA, we talked about, are the systems ready? And there are different systems and different components

of the systems. Are they ready? But at the end of the day, it's the end-user experience. Does it work? And it requires many components to work together. Some measure to look at, as a general user, in the user experience way, to think about and measure where we are with UA is going to be important. So I want to add these. And then in terms of moving forward, what we're working through right now is working through the comments, but also to prioritize some of the topics, because part of the comments received also asked us to prioritize because, as we know, if everything is a priority, that means actually nothing is a priority, right? So we're working through that. Next slide, please. And we're hoping to drive toward a conclusion. Are we going to the next slide? Which is a conclusion of it in the next little while. I don't know. It's me that has stopped. Sorry. The one before, with the little timeline. Yeah. My screen's froze. So we're looking at wrapping it up by the next month or two. And in fact, we have completed all 10 areas, and we're focusing on the prioritization, and we'll be wrapping it up within probably the next few meetings. So that's the plan going forward. Thank you for paying attention, and thank you for the many comments that were sent in. They were very valuable, and I think they enhanced the product, which is the guidelines, very much. Thank you.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Thank you. So we'll go to an online question. We'll have time just to take one question, and then we'll come back for the rest. So any

question on this section first from the room? If there are none, then we'll move up. There is one. Dennis, please.

DENNIS TAN

Thank you, Sarmad. Thank you, Edmon, for the comprehensive presentation and update on the Expert Working Group work. Just as a bit of clarification, you are going through the public comment period and trying to clean up and categorize the comments and define an action plan afterwards, right? The implementation of the guidelines. Is that what is going to happen, the work product of what the priorities are going to be, the action plans in, I think it's in two months' time? Or did I get that right?

EDMON CHUNG

I guess, Edmon here, I'll respond quickly and probably Sarmad can add. So right now, the working group is not going to look into the actual implementation. We're basically just finalizing the guidelines. But within the guidelines, we will add some thoughts on the prioritization part, and that will wrap up our work. Further implementation plan, I think, will take more than two months, but that is to Sarmad's team.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Thank you. Yes. Once we do get the guidelines from the working group, then my team will work on looking at the prioritization recommendations as well as the guidelines and develop a plan, and obviously start implementing that plan as well. And we'll be

regularly updating the community on the progress we're making on that plan. Okay. Thank you, so let's move on. I'll invite Seda to give us an update on UA Day, and may I request you to please do that in about 10 minutes?

SEDA AKBULUT

Sure. Thank you, Sarmad, and hello, everyone. So I will talk about UA Day, which is a global event series that has been driving mobilization around UA for four years with the aim of creating an Internet for all. And achieving UA requires significant effort by relevant stakeholders. Therefore, UA Day plays a crucial role in reaching thousands of people who can contribute to a multilingual, digitally inclusive Internet. So I would like to highlight that it's not a one-day event or not just for IDN. It consisted of several events that take place annually by interested organizations such as ICANN Community, ccNSO, ALAC, in collaboration with ICANN and UNESCO. And the aim of UA Day is to rally top technical and language communities, companies, governments, and domain name system industry stakeholders to spread awareness around UA and encourage UA adoption through various types of events around the world. So the events promote not only IDNs, but also ASCII-based new gTLDs and email addresses, as well as their acceptance into Internet-enabled applications and devices. UA Day 2026 events were concluded as of 30 May, and I'm happy to report the fresh results here. We have received 70 proposals from 45 countries and territories for the fourth annual UA Day, and a community-based team that consisted of eight members from

ALAC, ccNSO, and UNESCO was formed to review all the proposals and shortlist them. And they shortlisted 30 events from 30 countries and territories. In addition to these, we had also received some interest from the institutions who wished to voluntarily hold awareness-themed events. Overall, we ended up this year with a total of 33 events across 30 countries. And we have collaborated with UNESCO, just like we did for the last UA Day events after a memorandum of understanding. Now our collaboration continues and evolves with UNESCO. So 33 UA Day events were held in 30 countries in just 66 days. In total, we reached 5,851 people who participated in these events, and these events were held in local languages, spanning 15 local languages, including Indigenous Amazigh, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, English, French, Kiswahili, Krio, Nepali, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Thai, and Urdu. On the right side of the slide, you can see the ICANN community groups with which the event organizers are affiliated. Nine of them were from ALAC, and eight of the events that happened this year were conducted by ccTLDs, or they collaborated with the ccTLDs, and three of them already are UA Local Initiatives. And four events were from our ICANN-accredited registrars and IDN registry operators. So there is one side that it's good to see their collaboration from the ICANN community, but it's equally nice to see the organizations that are outside the ecosystem of ICANN. They're also interested in UA Day, UA, and they also come from our stakeholder groups like academia and the digital space. So this chart shows the regional distribution of the proposals that we received, shortlisted, and then finally took place.

Because our session is now rich in content and slides, I will just focus on the main details rather than the details. I will skip some part of it. And this is the kind of distribution of the whole UA Day events that happened this year. The main focus of UA Day this year was UA adoption and demonstration. Therefore, half of the events are from this category. But still, we had other types of events, like curriculum integration, in which the academic institutions started to discuss how they can integrate the UA curriculum, the 12 modules, into their relevant degree programs or courses. And there are still some awareness events, and we had one regional event per region. And the adoption type of events were mostly done in Africa and Asia-Pacific, where non-Latin scripts are used in the majority. So as for the timeline of UA Day, this represents the flow of the process that we follow every year. For this last UA Day event, we called for proposals on 9 October, and then received all the proposals by 24 November. And after that, the shortlisting review team reviewed all the events, and we posted the shortlisted events on our website in December. After that, we provided demo training of six hours to all UA adoption event organizers, and we had one-to-one calls to help support them to achieve the UA adoption requirements so that they have successful deployments. And then the whole events took place between 24 March through 30 May. So now we are at the reporting phase, following on the reports from all the organizers. We will compile them and hopefully post them online on our website by the end of this month. And it will be all available on the [universalacceptance.day](https://www.universalacceptance.day) page. So many of the events were held in May, though the events are spread over the

window of three months. This is mainly because the adoption event requirements needed more time to prepare, and about 12 of the UA Day events out of 17 were held in May. So here is a list of 30 countries where UA Day events took place this year based on the type of the events, regional or national, and more details can be found on our website as well. So this year, UA Day marked a significant collaboration on 24 March, observing UA Day this year. An event was held during the International Telecommunication Union's Regional Development Forum. It was organized by ICANN, EURid, UNESCO, and ITU, and the theme of the event was "Universal, Meaningful, and Affordable Connectivity for an Inclusive and Sustainable Digital Future." So it was attended by around 70 high-level representatives from ITU sector members, including representatives from the Council of Europe, European Commission, and national European ministries and regulators. And while speaking about regional events, we also held one regional strategic event per each region. So each of these regional events brought together high-level stakeholders as well from different countries in their continent or region, including governments, academia, developers, DNS industry, and so on. So for Africa, for example, AFRALO brought 16 speakers that talked about technical adoption and education and different aspects of UA, and it was a purely online virtual event that received participants from 27 countries. For Asia-Pacific, we had a regional event from VNNIC where countries, Vietnam, Laos, India, Thailand, and China representatives, joined this session from the DNS industry and governments to talk about the technical execution part and to form

the regional strategy, and 204 people participated in this event. Similarly, for the European region, from Armenia, Internet Society NGO conducted an event in three languages for 100 participants across the region to talk about their regional strategy as well. On the Americas side, we had LACNOG and CoDi that also brought similarly the experts from the stakeholders. And for CoDi, for example, they also talked about, on the AI side, inclusive language infrastructure and community-driven data initiatives in shaping a more multilingual and participatory digital future. And similarly for LACNOG, they also invited the technical adoption organizers from UA Day to share the experiences with the regional experts. So here I would like to share how the UA adoption demonstration events look. Seventeen event organizers actually registered an IDN and then set up a web space online, either with WordPress or Drupal, then set up an email server using a self-hosting script that is freely available on ICANN GitHub, and then created Unicode-based email addresses and showcased how this is possible in these languages. But I will share more in these details, the languages and the scripts. So these are the non-Latin scripts that were used in the UA adoption events. So basically, they registered these domain names from right to left, left to right, even in indigenous languages like Amazigh, Tamazight, Telugu, Nepali, Thai, or Urdu, and Arabic scripts were used in the domain registration as well as in email address creation. This shows the Latin script examples, where there are some special characters also involved. So here you see some snapshots showing some UA Day organizers. It's not possible to include all the photos, but we will have a Flickr page soon,

together with the UA Day annual report, so you will find more snapshots from there. But one common feature that we observe on the UA Day photos is the participants look fulfilled to be part of creating a multilingual and diverse Internet, and they left the events with a better understanding of the benefits of UA and how they can make their systems UA-ready. And one of the main supports ICANN provides to the UA Day event organizers is the key messaging materials and the presentations, as well as the training materials, to ensure that our messages are conveyed consistently at all UA Day events, and these materials can be accessible online on the [universalacceptance.day](https://www.universalacceptance.day) page. And to wrap up, this shows the summary of the four years of UA Day events in which we succeeded to complete 200 UA Day events in 86 countries, in 42 languages, and these featured more than 29,000 participants. And at the bottom, you can see the distribution of these 200 events by type, and these are almost equally proportional for the technical training and adoption events. And we started with more UA awareness events, but the majority is now becoming more technical in nature. So due to the nature of the adoption events, which is harder to achieve, there seems to be a lesser number of participation, but in fact, we had more participation per event this year. This is due to the number of events also being less compared to the last year. And this is all from UA Day for now, and we can get the questions, I think, in the end, because we have one more speaker, but I will pause here for now. Thank you.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Thank you, Seda. We'll continue. UNESCO actually has been collaborating with us very closely on UA Day events as well. So we'll give the floor to Xianhong Hu to very briefly maybe add a few more details on how UNESCO has been contributing before we go to our last speaker, Fatma, who's online.

XIANHONG HU

Thank you. Sure, I will. I start by extending our warm congratulations to ICANN, to all the local partners on the huge success we have perceived from the UA Day celebrations. We have the honor to be your partner and have been engaged in most of them, not only at HQ level, but also we have 18 field offices involved in this UA Day celebration. We perceive a truly inclusive multistakeholder engagement in all the UA events we have been participating in. Next slide, please. I'll be very brief and quick. As you can see, we have an album of the UA events we have been contributing to. The regional ones, such a creative organization at regional level. We perceive very effective good practice sharing and also the cross-country exchange among different stakeholders. Next slide, please. I also echo what has been said by Seda. UA Day is not just about advocacy. We have perceived so many actions taken, the results and outcome from this UA Day celebration. The countries took initiative to register IDNs, also to advance UA adoption. Next slide, please. We have the pleasure of participating online in many national events as well. I really confirm that a very vibrant network can be very instrumental in the next step adoption of UA. Next slide, please. So the last thing I'd like to say is let's keep

UA not just as a picture, but as a film. Keep it ongoing. I also call upon all of you to help us to deliver messages through social media. Let's continue to make UA a lasting global momentum. Thank you.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Thank you very much, Xianhong. In the interest of time, we'll continue to our last speaker and then come back to the questions which are in the queue, and we'll take more from the audience, time permitting. So our last speaker is Dr. Fatema Akbar. She's a professor at American University of Bahrain and has been integrating the UA curriculum at the university. She'll be providing some updates on their work at American University in Bahrain. So over to you, Fatema.

FATEMA AKBAR

Thank you, Sarmad. It's an honor to be with you in this meeting to share the perspective of academic institutions and share our experience integrating the UA curriculum into our computing programs. Next slide, please. Next. So I'll cover four points and then conclude. I'll start by sharing the timeline of the AUBH-ICANN collaboration, and then I'll talk about the need for UA curriculum integration in academic programs. Then I'll give concrete steps that we implemented at AUBH to integrate the curriculum, present some of the challenges, and I'll conclude. Next. So our first interaction with ICANN as a university was actually through a hackathon organized between the Telecommunication Regulatory Authority and ICANN in 2023. And this was the first time some of our

faculty, including myself, were exposed to the topic of universal acceptance. And it was interesting to see the technical challenges given to students in this hackathon related to universal acceptance. The year after, there was another hackathon with the same theme of universal acceptance, where students had to build an application and incorporate UA principles in it. And this started a conversation between ICANN, the TRA, and academic institutions in Bahrain about what can we do to collaborate further and integrate this officially in our curriculum. And in 2024, in October, we had faculty training by ICANN, organized by the Telecommunication Regulatory Authority, where several representatives from different universities here attended and learned about the modules developed by ICANN to be integrated in different courses, from elementary programming courses to advanced courses on security and databases and mobile programming, and how to incorporate universal acceptance principles in those courses. Still on that slide. This started a conversation: how can we officially integrate this? How can we take this further? How can we commit to this? And this took some time, but in April of 2025, we officially started working on an agreement with ICANN, and then we signed this agreement. And the agreement said that ICANN will be providing training to the faculty, will be providing the curriculum material, and the American University of Bahrain will be also providing their faculty expertise to enhance the curriculum and to integrate it in our computing programs. And we started integrating those curriculum modules into our courses in batches. And I'm going to present our plan next.

Next slide, please. All right. So before we even integrated the curriculum, in my class and in some other workshops I did outside the university, I had a very short survey, Kahoot, if anyone is familiar, for the attendees just to see if this is something they're familiar with. So one of the questions was, which of the following are not valid top-level domains? And as you can see, most participants thought things like .bank, .london, .vote, so longer top-level domains are not valid. And these are computing students. These are students in university studying computing-related fields or disciplines. And this indicated to me that, oh, this is then our education in these topics is outdated. We're still teaching them it's only .com, .net, .org, .edu. We're not really exposing them to the recent changes in the domain name system. Next. And this was another question. Domain names can only use ASCII characters, and this refers to the domain name itself and not how it is resolved. And most participants said true, it can only be ASCII characters, which again indicated that students are really not aware and not exposed to the recent changes in domain names that can be in multiple languages. Next. So a typical IT or computing graduate will take courses on programming, databases, networks, security, software, web, and app development. In all these courses, we focus on ASCII, and there is minimal focus on handling languages. This usually comes either in later stages or in specialized projects, introduced as special topics. So it's not really integrated from the beginning that, within all these topics, you should be able to handle multiple languages. And the reason behind that is historically, computing has been based on ASCII, and this is what's in the

textbooks and reference materials that we use. So we needed to update our materials, or the content of the courses that we deliver, to incorporate UA principles. Next, please. And if we focus primarily on ASCII in computing programs, this can have several implications. Our graduates being less prepared to handle internationalization and localization, especially in a country, in Bahrain, where we speak multiple languages. We have people from different countries here and speaking multiple languages. And applications we build here, a lot of them go global, so we should be able to equip our students with the skills to handle internationalization and localization. And also students will be less exposed to modern standards and the recent changes in the domain name system. And there are also narrowed problem-solving skills if we don't cover handling different languages, because there are unique problems that are specific to handling languages other than languages that are in the ASCII code. Next. So the need for incorporating UA principles was clear. And we thought, okay, what are the concrete next steps for us as a university and for any university? I think we can either make small-scale upgrades to our existing courses. This is like adding a new topic or a subtopic or even adding a UA concept as a requirement for projects or assignments. For example, in one of my Introduction to Programming courses, where students learn how to read and write from files, I added to their homework assignments that you should be able to read and write in any language, although we did not cover it in detail in class. So now they're aware that, oh, I have to do something slightly different when I have to work with multiple

languages. And the same thing can be applied in courses like databases and networks. All right. Next slide, please. These are the 12 modules developed by ICANN, and we worked with them to enhance them a bit, add exercises, things that make it easier to implement in class and assess students and engage them as we explain these topics. As you can see, it starts from programming fundamentals, which can be introduced in elementary programming courses or Introduction to Programming. Then it goes into more advanced programming courses, data structures, algorithms, databases, and then very specialized topics on IDNs, on email address internationalization. Then we have mobile programming, security, and operating systems. Next, please. So what we did to integrate this curriculum, it did not happen overnight, as you saw in the timeline I presented earlier. It really took a long time for us to map the modules to our courses, to officially make changes to those courses when needed and get the required approvals, and then implement it and report back. So step one was mapping our courses in the computing programs to the UA curriculum modules. So we created something like the table you see here, where we listed the ICANN modules and which course in our curriculum this module can be embedded in. And for some modules, we could not cover all the topics. Some of the topics were either very specialized for that level of the course, or they were not within the scope of the course. And then we had a plan. So step two was the phased integration plan. So when are we going to implement this course with the addition of this ICANN module? So some courses were in the fall, some courses for the spring, some

courses for the year after. And it's also helpful to indicate the faculty who would be responsible for integrating this material and delivering it in their course, and listing any support needed in terms of extra training needed, any tools, any teaching materials to provide support for the faculty who are delivering those courses. Next, please. Then step three would be supporting faculty as they're covering the UA topics. For example, at the beginning of the semester, sending a reminder email, attaching the material to be included, and also it's usually helpful to establish some accountability. So if you have a yearly plan or annual plan for your college, you say, "Okay, this person, this is the action item, and we're going to follow up next year." So there is a bit more motivation to actually implement it. And then, of course, recognizing the faculty who successfully integrated the material by reporting on it next year and acknowledging their efforts. Next. And lastly, step four, we call it closing the loop, which is reporting and feedback and the action plan for the next cycle. So for the courses that we integrated the ICANN curriculum in, we got feedback from the faculty: what were the challenges, what was covered, what was not covered, and why, so we can improve on it in the next cycle. And as you can see in this table, we put all the UA modules, the courses in which they were integrated, and then we got feedback on topics covered, assessments given, teaching material used, and instructor comments. Next. So this is where we are. We covered six modules, successfully integrated and delivered, and they will continue to be delivered in our computing courses. Some modules needed more thought about how to integrate so that it achieves or

matches the learning outcomes for the course, and it matches the rest of the topic, so the flow of the course remains consistent. More modules are planned for future semesters, especially the advanced ones. And so far, we have one capstone project, which is the graduation project for senior students, and it's related to universal acceptance. The project is in progress to be completed next semester. Next. The challenges, I would say, the main one is how dense the courses already are. In the computing field, there is something new every day. We need to update our material every now and then. So it's challenging to keep adding topics. But in some courses, it's easy to find ways to cover it within the material covered or as an extra requirement on an assignment. In other courses, it's a bit more difficult given how dense the material is. And it's also challenging to link the current course learning outcomes to some of the material. So for every assessment, we are an outcome-based teaching institution, so every assessment we give to students has to be matched to a learning outcome. So that was challenging in some courses, as faculty reported. And also, to make any change to course syllabi or to offer new courses, it's a long administrative process. And some of you in academic institutions might relate. There are several layers of approval, and it has to align with our overall plan for the program. So a small change in a course, but it's reflected in the overall plan of the program. And also, for some topics, faculty themselves might need more training in order to be able to deliver the material to students. Next, please. To conclude, as universities, our job is to prepare students for the future. We're preparing developers, researchers,

and administrators who will face challenges related to handling multiple languages, and we want them to be ready for those challenges. And we want them to be shaping the future of the Internet, of applications, and technology. So integrating the UA curriculum is a concrete step toward achieving this goal of preparing our students for the future. All right. And with that, I conclude my presentation. Thank you for listening, and I'll take any questions in the Q&A part.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Thank you very much, Fatema. We'll open the floor and take questions for all the panelists. And I'll hand it over to Pitinan to take us through the questions.

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA

Thank you. And the first one we have from raised hand, Anil, please go ahead.

ANIL KUMAR JAIN

Thank you, Pitinan. Wonderful presentation and wonderful update on universal acceptance all across. I just have two suggestions. One is to Dr. Hu from UNESCO. We are working, from ICANN, on implementation of UA, and everybody has recognized the role of government in implementing UA. But unfortunately, the proactiveness from the government in getting IDN as an accepted domain and also universal acceptance is seen lacking. My suggestion here, in case it is possible, is to declare, by the member

countries, adopting the Internet as a fundamental right in local languages. If we can adopt this, I think that is going to be a great achievement in the UA thing. The second suggestion I want to give to ICANN org, or the implementing agency of ICANN: yes, we have gone through the various phases of UA, including UASG and now the UA Expert Group. We have come up with several guidelines, but the time has come for implementation, and I suggest a very important thing, which is a measurement of how much Internet traffic is flowing using IDN and universal acceptance. I think that is going to be a major measurement, how the adoption of UA is actually taking shape as per the guidelines, as per the efforts which the ICANN community is making. Thank you.

XIANHONG HU

Thank you for the question and the suggestion. I would like to say that UA, it is positioned by UNESCO in a broader mandate related to the human rights framework, related to our broader mandate of promoting cultural diversity, heritage, and multilingualism. We do have such a normative instrument as mentioned. It's called UNESCO Recommendation on Multilingualism in Cyberspace, endorsed by the member states in 2003. As you may know, this kind of recommendation is not binding. They are not hard law, but they are soft recommendations, which show the strong commitment of member states to implement the principle of multilingualism in cyberspace. It's under this normative authority we are delivering a very strong message to our member states to integrate UA into the national digital strategy and the national development agenda.

Without a UA component, a national digital transformation won't be inclusive. Without UA, multilingualism and cultural diversity won't be able to be achieved. So in a sense, we do agree that there's a broader human rights perspective. This cultural mandate, multilingualism, can give us a strong strategic position to promote UA.

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA Thank you. And Sarmad, do you want to take it?

SARMAD HUSSAIN Yeah. Thank you, Anil. And there was a second part of your question related to implementation. From that perspective, ICANN org is working on it. We already provide regular updates on the technical implementation work, which is being done during prep weeks, and we'll provide another update to the community in the next meeting on the work which the ICANN team is directly undertaking. We are also, as I shared earlier, looking forward to the guidelines which are being developed by the Expert Working Group. And once those guidelines are finalized, we will obviously take those on, develop a plan, prioritize them based on the prioritization suggested by the working group, and then start implementation work on it. And part of that, if you look at the last section, does look at indicators and measurement of UA. So that's also where we already report on a couple of indicators, but we'll actually be, as part of that implementation exercise, looking at what additional measures we need to look at and which we will then start reporting on as well.

So stay tuned. More is coming. Thank you. And we'll keep providing updates.

PITINAN KOOARMORNPATANA Thank you. And then next we have a gentleman in the room on the left. You want to pose your question? Thank you.

SONGO Yes. Thank you. I raised that question in the previous session that we had, but I'd like to reiterate to the representative from UNESCO, because at the moment, I'm attached as part of the inaugural working group research team member at the Coalition Digital Impact. We're working on a minimum viable data set, trying to promote UA and internationalized domain names, IDN. And one thing that I realized through our discussions is that our languages are disappearing, especially for the Pacific Islanders, where we don't have a proper writing system. Like I can communicate with my people back at home in our local tongue, but most of the youth, because of the impact of social media, they are beginning to forget their own mother tongue. So when we communicate with them in our local tongue, they can hear and understand, but to reply or respond to us in their own tongue, they cannot. So languages are really disappearing and facing this risk. I just want to ask, were there any initiatives that have been done by UNESCO to preserve especially languages from those cultures where their languages are based on oral traditions? Are there any initiatives done in the past, or currently they are working, to preserve those oral-based

languages, like capture them or integrate them into the Internet ecosystem to preserve them so that later generations, in the event that because of the impact of globalization, when they forget their own languages or when the languages disappear in the future, they can rely on the Internet to learn their own native dialect? So are there any initiatives being done by UNESCO people, whether in the past or currently? Could you shed some light on that? Thank you.

XIANHONG HU

Thank you for raising such a crucial question on preserving minority and perhaps indigenous languages, including those languages that don't have written formats, and including those sign languages used by many people, which are disappearing, which lack preservation, which are not digitally present. UNESCO has been working on this jointly with the UN system. We have started the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, or called IDIL, from 2022 to 2032. We are now at the midterm of this implementation. That's one of the most important initiatives I'd like to share with you. I had a slide, but I didn't elaborate then. So with this initiative, we are connecting with all the minority indigenous language communities and member states and indigenous peoples. So we have already developed 21 action plans at the national levels and a couple at regional levels, and also a few institutional action plans to implement the 10 strategic objectives of this decade. One of them is about digital empowerment, recognizing the potential of, basically, it's really opportunities using AI, using digital technology to preserve, to digitize the

minority and indigenous languages very effectively and efficiently. We had a strong partner in Stanford University. They have been supporting a number of initiatives, online platforms, digital tools in Latin America, in Africa, to digitize and to preserve the local minority languages. And also we have another strong initiative jointly with universities, academia, to support the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and information, to preserve indigenous languages. For example, in Brazil, we also perceive that by engaging with a young generation of those minority language people, they are able to join a university. They can become the vehicle to preserve their own languages. We even have a project to use AI to translate those STEM, the physics, mathematics equations, into the local languages. So there are a lot of things going on. I would suggest you just Google UNESCO IDIL Decade. Then we have a whole website and also a community platform to share the initiative in this regard. And also, you are free to reach out to me after the meeting. I'm happy to share more. Thank you.

SONGO

Thank you. Thank you very much.

SARMAD HUSSAIN

Thank you, everyone. We're already a bit over time, so we do still have some people who have questions. May we request you to email the questions to uaprogram@icann.org, and we'll make sure that we respond to these questions. I would like to thank all the

panelists here and online for joining us and sharing their valuable information and input. I would also like to thank all the participants, audience online as well as in the room, for your engagement and questions. We will now close the session. Thank you very much.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]