



Africa's map in the digital inclusion!

4th June 2012

The Honorable Senator John 'Jay' Rockefeller IV
Chairman of the United States Senate Committee on
Commerce, Science and Transportation (112th Congress)
United States Congress
531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510
USA

Dear Senator Rockefeller,

Subject: *Open Letter to Express Support in Defense of the Status Quo on Global Internet Governance Model and Reaffirmation of the Multistakeholder Process*

We begin Senator by commending your enviable record of distinguished public service in the United States Congress spanning nearly three decades, and your esteemed leadership of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation and previous stint in the Senate Committee on Intelligence where you introduced and made invaluable contributions to cyber-security and telecommunications legislation. We note the official support and encouragement received by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) to commence the expansion of the Internet through the new programme to introduce new generic Top-Level Domains (gTLD), a global process under which domain names such as "DotAfrica" are expected to be delegated as new Internet domains to be created in the root zone of the Internet. The new gTLD programme was threatened at some stage by many dissonant voices that called for either its postponement or outright cancellation which would have frustrated the hopes and aspirations of many especially in Africa.

DCA Trust is an independent, non-profit and non-partisan organization that is constituted under the Laws of the Republic of Mauritius, and its main charitable objects are: (a) for the advancement of education in information technology to the African society; and (b) in connection with (a) to provide the African society with a continental Internet domain name to have access to Internet services for the people of Africa as a purpose beneficial to the public in general.

DCA Trust has participated in the new gTLD ICANN programme of ICANN during the application window that opened on 12th January 2012, and closed on 30th May 2012. DCA Trust has funded the application to the tune of nearly US\$500,000.00 (Five Hundred Thousand United States of America Dollars) to cover payment of the ICANN Registration and Application Evaluation Fees, and the set-up of a Registry Continuity Operations Instrument (COI) undertaken for the proactive protection of intended users and registrants of DotAfrica gTLD from any registry business failure. Therefore, DCA Trust has already taken upon itself certain financial and other strategic risks on behalf of future Internet users of the DotAfrica gTLD in Africa which can only be mitigated by success in the current application round. Apart from the huge application fees and mandatory reserves that need to be provided for registry business operations continuity just to participate in the application round, large sums of money have also been expended on preparatory work and campaigning globally for the programme that took place over many years.

However, success in the current programme is not guaranteed, and in our estimation, one reason that poses severe risks to the entire new gTLD programme is the possible changes to the Global Internet Governance Architecture that is presently overseen by ICANN that handles the IANA mandate under a contract with the U.S. National Technology & Information Administration (NTIA) of the Department of Commerce. Honorable Senator, it is clear that since ICANN is ‘midwifing’ the new gTLD programme, any change to the present Global Internet Governance structure and its multi-stakeholder underpinnings could very well have an impact on the outcome of the new gTLD programme, with potential disruptions and unforeseen risks to those organizations, including DCA Trust, that have already participated in the present gTLD application round, not forgetting the disappointment to all those that are looking forward to a smooth Internet expansion programme.

Recent news reports in global media, and moves by certain countries such as Russia, China, India, South Africa and others proposing changes to the present governance model of the Internet and to place its regulation under the aegis of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), a member of the multilateral United Nations Organizations (UN), could possibly derail the current ICANN-led stakeholder model, with potentially disastrous impact not only on the new gTLD programme but on global Internet availability, security, stability, openness; and the inalienable rights of peoples everywhere to freedom of communication, availability of information, and the free usage of the Internet as a forum for inter-change of ideas and a platform for fostering education, collaborative research, innovation and inventiveness, etc., ideals and values that are considered pillars of American culture and a buttressed democratic ethos which the United States continues to share with the world through its international public diplomacy efforts.

The Internet itself has proved to be a very useful platform for bringing Africa into the mainstream of global information and communication technology usage, and its gradual and increasing availability is helping Africa to bridge the so-called ‘Digital Divide’. Many examples exist of how the Internet is acting as a mechanism for development in Africa, and how it is impacting lives positively in the areas of education and health, of which the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is helping to fund many programs in Africa such as Basic Education Systems Overhaul (BESO), General Educational Quality Improvement (GEQIP), and various HIV/AIDS prevention and management and general health sector improvement and disease control initiatives in Africa. Most of these international development projects funded by the USAID in Africa – including the improvement of agricultural production and livestock management and market value chains - have large computer procurement and Internet service delivery components necessary for modern agricultural commodity/produce marketing information systems and commodity exchange. Programs such as COMPETE – Competitiveness & Trade Expansion Program - assist in building and accelerating Africa’s trading competitiveness in the global marketplace. Most of these programs are very life-changing and continue to impact positively on the socio-economic development prospects of communities in different countries in Africa.

We think that a proposed change in Internet Governance to the multilateral UN poses a great risk to the current multi-stakeholder model over-sighted by U.S.-based institutions. It is for this reason Honorable Senator that we are writing to express the support of DCA Trust for the U.S. Government's position in defense of the Global Internet Governance status quo; which promises further stability and continuity in a more predictable manner, whilst also expressing a willingness to testify should further hearings at the US Senate become necessary on the Current Multistakeholder Internet Governance process, with a view to enhancing and protecting its core participatory and democratic principles, present and future operational consolidation and overall effectiveness for the benefit of a Global Internet Society which requires continuing American stewardship. Even in Africa, an open multi-stakeholder based Internet is very essential for the development and consolidation of democracy, human and people’s rights, and human security in Africa, as the continent becomes more and more integrated into the global community.

DCA Trust is ready to present its opinion on the matter should the U.S. Senate decide to commence official proceedings and hold more comprehensive hearings on Global Internet Governance and the Multi-stakeholder Process which go beyond the current discourse on UN plans to regulate the Internet. We also use this opportunity to urge the U.S. Government – on an inter-agency basis - to consider providing without stint, any required capacity supports for ICANN to enable it play a more compelling role in Global Internet Governance so as to shore up the Multi-stakeholder process.

We thank you in anticipation of your expected consideration, and would like to close by wishing you and other U.S. leaders continuing strength and courage in your dexterous handling of important legislation and other public service duties that impact not only the lives of Americans, but the lives of peoples all over the world.

Most respectfully yours,



Ms. Sophia Bekele, MBA, CISA, CGEIT
Executive Director/CEO
DotConnectAfrica Trust

cc: **Congressman John L. Mica**
The Honorable Chairman,
Transportation & Infrastructure Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
112th Congress
Washington D.C., U.S.A.

cc: **Honorable Jim Langevin & Honorable Michael Thomas McCaul, Sr.**
Co-Chairs of the Congressional Cyber-Security Caucus
U.S. House of Representatives
112th Congress, U.S.A.

cc: **The Honorable Nancy Pelosi**
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
112th Congress
Washington D.C. , U.S.A.

cc: **H. E. Senator Hilary Rodham Clinton**
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington D.C. , U.S.A

cc: **H. E. Ambassador Johnnie Carson**
Assistant Secretary
Bureau of African Affairs
U.S. Department of State
Washington D.C., U.S.A

cc: **Assistant Secretary Larry Strickland**
National Technology & Information Administration (NTIA)
US Department of Commerce
Washington D.C., U.S.A

cc: **Her Excellency, Ambassador (Dr.) Susan Rice**
United States Ambassador to the United Nations
New York, U.S.A

cc: **Thomas C. Power**
Chair, Committee on Technology, and
Deputy Chief Technology Officer of the United States for Telecommunications
Office of Science and Technology Policy
Executive Office of the President of the United States
Washington D.C. U.S.A

cc: **Dr. Rajiv Shah**
Administrator
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
Washington, D.C., U.S.A

cc: **Dr. Steve Crocker**
Chairman of the Board
Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)
Marina Del Rey, CA, U.S.A

cc: **Mr. Rod Beckstrom**
President and CEO
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