



**yes2dotAfrica campaign**  
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## ***DotConnectAfrica Executive Briefing Note following the ICANN-42 International Meeting in Dakar, Senegal***

DotConnectAfrica's Yes2DotAfrica Campaign triumphed at the recent ICANN-42 International Meeting held in Dakar, Senegal from October 23<sup>rd</sup> to October 28<sup>th</sup> 2011. It was a very exciting moment for DCA, a silver-level co-sponsor of the ICANN International Meeting, and a global stakeholder of the ICANN new gTLD programme. The gathering provided an important opportunity to further boost and consolidate the successful Yes2DotAfrica Campaign as the commencement date of the new gTLD application round draws inexorably closer. **DCA intends to submit an application to ICANN to obtain the mandate for the sponsorship of DotAfrica gTLD and the administration of the DotAfrica registry.**

### **African Ministerial Round-Table Meeting**

Prior to the ICANN-42 international gathering, there was an African Ministerial Round-Table and Meeting of Experts which took place from 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> October 2011 and whose main objective was to devise an African Agenda for the main ICANN-42 Meeting ('African Agenda ICANN'). **DCA had participated in all sessions of the African Ministerial Round Table Meeting as an observer which afforded it the chance to express its opinions on the agenda of the meeting;** and be involved in the ensuing debate regarding the resolution proposed by the Meeting of Experts for adoption and submission to the African Ministerial Round Table for ratification as the African Agenda for ICANN Meeting.

### **AU Commission's Request to Include DotAfrica in the Top-Level Reserved Names List**

DCA had expressed very strong reservations regarding some of the provisions contained in the resolutions such as the proposal to include **DotAfrica, DotAfrique, and DotAfriqia**, all similar name strings, in the List of Reserved Names so as to make these prospective new gTLD strings unavailable in the current new gTLD application round. **DCA felt that such a proposal was a very disingenuous attempt to afford special legislative protection to the African Union Commission to own these strings through a method of bypassing the formal application process of the ICANN new gTLD programme.** Such a special legislative protection was being sought by the AU Task Force on DotAfrica to enable the AU Commission gain separate control of the negotiation and delegation of DotAfrica outside the ICANN process without ever applying formally for it.

DCA also felt that such an obtrusive move was not only a threat to the multi-stakeholder governance model of the Internet but also aimed at undermining the current ICANN new gTLD application round to the extent that it would set bad precedents. **Furthermore, this also presents immitigable risks to organizations like DCA, a prospective applicant for the DotAfrica gTLD that has already spent several years of arduous effort and expended huge amounts of money to sustain a global campaign and promotion of the DotAfrica gTLD initiative.** DCA had presented a formal written statement in opposition to the tendentious plan, thus resulting in the lack of a unanimous decision on the issue (See 'DCA

**Exclusive Commentary on the African Ministerial Round Table Outcome and Resolution’** at <http://www.dotconnectafrica.org/2011/10/dca-exclusive-commentary-african-ministerial-table-outcome-resolution/>). It is clear that DCA’s timely intervention was a major frustration to the proponents of the idea who failed to win universal support for their illegitimate intentions.

### **Clarifications Provided by ICANN Leaders during Public Forum Meeting**

Even so, the unpopular resolution was eventually submitted to ICANN, and again, DCA had another opportunity during the ICANN Public Forum to oppose the plan to include DotAfrica in the List of Reserved Names, since this will have implications for the relevant section of the gTLD Applicant’s Guidebook that specifies the strings that are currently reserved and unavailable. (See ‘**DCA’s Executive Briefing Note following its Engagement with ICANN Leaders at the ICANN-42 Public forum Meeting at Dakar, Senegal – October 27<sup>th</sup> 2011**’ at <http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs053/1102516344150/archive/1108422124191.html>).

Based on clarifications provided by ICANN leaders and the feedback comments received during the interactive session, DCA remains confident that the plan will be completely rejected by the ICANN Board who have also acknowledged the AU Communiqué and have committed themselves to consider all the 12 requests presented in the Communiqué and give a public response (See ‘**Receipt of Communiqué from the African Union**’ at <http://www.icann.org/en/minutes/resolutions-28oct11-en.htm>).

However, the ICANN-42 Meeting was not only about the controversy created by the AU DotAfrica Task Force regarding the proposed inclusion of DotAfrica and similar name strings in the List of Reserved Names.

### **Visit of President Abdoulaye Wade to DCA’s Exhibition**

At the official opening ceremony of the ICANN-42 Meeting that was hosted by the Government of the Republic of Senegal, His Excellency Monsieur Abdoulaye Wade, President and Head of State of Senegal, had attended the session, and afterwards visited the exhibition stand of DCA, accompanied by H.E. Monsieur Moustapha Guirassy, Minister of Telecommunications of the Republic of Senegal. The visit of President Wade to DCA’s exhibition space enabled Ms. Sophia Bekele, DCA’s Executive Director and spearhead of the Yes2DotAfrica Campaign, to briefly explain the DotAfrica project to President Wade and his entourage. [\(Include photo with President Wade here\)](#)

The ICANN-42 Meeting had opened with a clarion call by the ICANN CEO, Mr. Rod Beckstrom for greater Internet Access for Africans (See <http://www.icann.org/en/news/releases/release-24oct11-en.pdf>). In his speech, he laid great emphasis on the multi-stakeholder model and insisted that the voice of every stakeholder should be heard in the Internet governance process. He said that “in a multi-stakeholder model, it is important that everyone be heard.” In his detailed report, the ICANN.

**CEO reiterated that ICANN’s fairness, objectivity, and independence are of paramount importance to the future of the Internet, and re-affirmed that ICANN is “not here in the domain name business; we are here to serve the global public interest”.**

(See ‘**President’s Report for the 42nd ICANN International Meeting Dakar, Senegal**’ at <http://www.icann.org/en/presentations/>)

DCA believes that such altruistic and visionary comments when juxtaposed with the posturing of those in the AU Task Force on DotAfrica who have tried to give the AU both the leadership and ownership of DotAfrica would cause one to wonder **why ICANN presently believes that it is not in the domain name business in the service of the global interest, whilst the AU is already convinced that it must be involved in the domain name business in the service of an 'African interest'**. DCA believes that such an apparent philosophical dichotomy that has been observed in the position of ICANN when contrasted with the position of the

***AU can only be properly resolved when the AU allows for an independent process to prevail on DotAfrica and withdraws itself from any further involvement.***

### **Support System for Deserving Applicants for New gTLDs from Developing Countries**

The ICANN-42 Meeting in Dakar was an opportunity for ICANN to announce some very important accomplishments. The ICANN Board resolved to review the proposed recommendations by a Special Joint Applicant's Working Group to provide a support system for deserving applicants for new gTLDs from developing countries. In the words of ICANN President and CEO Rod Beckstrom: "It is very important that deserving applicants, such as those from emerging economies, be included in the new gTLD program", and also stressed that "It is necessary to encourage diverse participation in this new program and to broaden the scope of our multi-stakeholder model." (See '**ICANN Board Focuses on Assistance for Developing Economies**' at <http://www.icann.org/en/news/releases/release-28oct11-en.pdf>) The ICANN CEO had indicated in his report that **"support for needy applicants will ensure that ICANN will receive a diversity of new gTLD applications, and these are not just domains for big organizations and the developed world"**. A detailed plan for the scoping and implementation of the proposed Special Working Group recommendations is expected by 8<sup>th</sup> December 2011.

### **ICANN Conflicts and Ethics Practices**

At the ICANN-42 Dakar Meeting, the ICANN Board also **resolved to lay greater emphasis on issues of ethics, and conflicts of interests.** **"We want to achieve a Gold Standard in terms of conflicts and ethics practices,"** said Mr. Steve Crocker, Chair of the ICANN Board. "Specifically we are working on a system which will lay out how Directors interested in specific new generic Top Level Domain applications will be restricted from participation in the deliberations and decisions regarding the new gTLD Program."

### **DCA's Official Position Regarding Conflicts of Interest and Unethical Practices**

Again, this **Board Resolution provided a certain amount of reassurance for DCA whose Yes2DotAfrica campaign has repeatedly raised issues of Conflicts of Interest and stridently decried the unethical practices of certain members of the AU Task Force on DotAfrica.** DCA believes that **the issue of ethics and conflict of interest should not only focus on ICANN Directors, but should equally apply to members of the AU Task Force who have shown specific interest in the DotAfrica generic Top Level Domain;** and in the process, undertaken certain extraordinary measures to willfully sabotage DCA's endorsement for its DotAfrica Initiative, whilst also showing open support for the opponents of DCA by attempting to either facilitate illegitimate endorsements for them and or create deliberate obstacles to exclude DCA from the new gTLD applications process. So far such efforts have not been successful simply because of DCA's strenuous efforts in highlighting the illegal activities of the DotAfrica Cabal who have continued to employ different strategies in their determined pursuit to hijack DotAfrica. **It is to be recalled that in support of the same principle that ICANN has now highlighted above, DCA in 2010 had successfully campaigned against the candidacy of Monsieur**

*Pierre Dandjinou, Chairman of the AU TaskForce on DotAfrica and an avid supporter of the dotafrica.org proposal; who had sought to be elected to occupy the ICANN Board Director seat 15, without ever disclosing his numerous conflicts of interest especially on the DotAfrica gTLD.*

**New RFP Process that Requires DotAfrica gTLD Applicants to Participate in Mandatory Consortium**

For example, the AU DotAfrica Task Force Cabal had devised the Expression of Interest (EOI) in May 2011 hoping to use that process to facilitate an illegal endorsement for their preferred bidder, but that devious effort had collapsed after DCA discredited it and distanced itself from participating in the EOI. In addition to the new proposal to make the DotAfrica string unavailable by including it in the List of Reserved Names, so as to frustrate the hopes of genuine applicants like DCA, is the equally dishonest prescription of insisting that prospective applicants for the DotAfrica gTLD should now form a consortium based on a new RFP process.

This continues to be a serious bone of contention between DCA and the AU DotAfrica Task Force who also convened another forum on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2011 on the sidelines of the ICANN-42 Meeting in Dakar **to force through their illegitimate proposal regarding the new RFP process that will make it mandatory on all prospective DotAfrica gTLD applicants to form a Consortium and rob the process of any independent action outside the oversight of the AU DotAfrica Task Force.**

Whilst DCA believes that this extraordinary tactic is aimed at allowing new entrants such as the African Registry Consortium (ARC) who had no legal establishment at the time of the EOI to now participate in the proposed RFP process. In the face of such crass nepotism, DCA is of the view that these types of opaque arrangements are unethical and seriously undermine the DotAfrica gTLD process by giving secret control to the Cabal who continue to use official AU aegis and political influence as an inter-governmental organization to interfere in the process and take over the DotAfrica gTLD. **The Cabal continues to send the unpalatable message that only those who kowtow to their power and influence would be allowed to bid for the DotAfrica gTLD after signing an agreement with the AU.**

**The Only Transparent Way is Strict Adherence to the Provisions of the ICANN new gTLD Applicants' Guidebook based on ICANN's Multi-stakeholder Model**

DCA remains deeply concerned and chagrined that a spurious conditionality is now being imposed forcefully on genuine applicants for DotAfrica thus introducing new modalities that are actually not part of the ICANN new gTLD Applicants' Guidebook even as the Cabal continues to arrogate to itself a 'king-making role' and the power to approve and or disqualify prospective DotAfrica gTLD applicants. It is for this reason that DCA continues to use every opportunity to make its voice heard in the matter whilst appealing to all prospective applicants for DotAfrica to fully abide by the ICANN multi-stakeholder model in addition to a strict adherence to the provisions of the ICANN new gTLD Applicants' Guidebook. (See for example, 'DCA's Statement Regarding the AfriCANN Meeting on DotAfrica at Dakar, Senegal' at <http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs053/1102516344150/archive/1108347659795.html>)

Overall, the Dakar-42 Meeting provided DCA with an important platform to **undertake further outreach activities for its DotAfrica initiative, consolidate its global campaign as a strong candidate applying for sponsorship of the DotAfrica gTLD and operation of the DotAfrica Registry, and also reaffirm its undiminished support for the ICANN multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance.**

The Dakar-42 International Meeting was a successful outing that focused very positive attentions on DCA's DotAfrica Initiative, **even as the Yes2DotAfrica Campaign managed to deny its opponents the opportunity to receive the endorsement of the African Ministerial Round-Table.**