

DRAFT APTLD Bangkok 2006 Communiqué

14 November 2006

Representatives from 16 APTLD ccTLDs and observers from six other organizations met in Bangkok on 13 and 14 November 2006.

The meeting engaged in presentations and discussions on four key agenda items:

- ICT and ccTLD management in Thailand
- Internationalized Domain Names (IDN)
- Growing and dealing with ccTLD growth
- APTLD Administrative matters

ICT in Thailand

We learned that the Thailand government has a strong focus on ICT as a means to prosperity and is actively pursuing multiple fronts to raise Thailand's international ICT rankings. Mobile phone density is quite strong (one mobile for every two people) but Internet and computer utilization is low, but growing.

The .th domain is managed through a tripartite arrangement of Policy Maker, Registry operator and single registrar. The registrar is about to engage resellers to broaden the exposure of the .th ccTLD. Domain names in the native Thai script are also available.

IDNs

We heard that many of our members were engaging in IDN deployment within their ccTLDs. Early adoption has been slow but has been boosted by incentives such as 'buy an ASCII name and get an IDN for free' programs.

We have learned that there are a host of technical challenges associated with the complex characteristics of some members' languages and scripts but that these are being addressed through research and development efforts of members.

Beside the technical challenges which are being addressed within the DNS we learned that IDN integration into applications has been slow – both at the client side (such as e-mail) and the server side (such as SMTP Mail servers). However, the members were delighted to hear of the Research and Development work undertaken by TWNIC (also independently by CNNIC – both CNNIC and TWNIC are members of Chinese Domain Name Consortium (CDNC)) on server side IDN enabled mail server applications.

We also learned of the steps being taken by ICANN in developing technology solutions in the generic name space

- APTLD members agreed to work with ICANN's working groups and act as a conduit for IDN information into our respective country ICT development industries in an effort to improve application's abilities to deal with IDNs.

Some registries, .NZ for one, will be changing their policies to prohibit registration of domain names that begin with "xn—" – the standard string for identifying ASCII equivalents of IDNs.

We also discussed the technical and policy issues associated with IDN's native to the root file. APTLD will monitor this situation and provide considered views to Internet coordinating bodies such as ICANN.

Growing ccTLDs

The meeting heard from a number of speakers on how to grow a ccTLD and what to do if it grows.

We also heard of one of the region's ccTLDs that's had a static registration of fewer than 400 names for the past seven years. But, because the ccTLD charges US\$1,000 per name per year they are receiving significant financial benefit from their efforts. Registrants are principally there to protect name brands.

CcTLDs need to make sure that they decide what 'brand value' their ccTLD will represent. Once this is done, then a relaxation of restrictions could generate considerable capital and growth. The example from .au was how they relaxed their restriction on 'generic words' through an auction process that netted a significant amount of start-up funding.

More generically, .my's research showed that the lower the level of restrictions (in this case pertaining to residency) the larger the number of registrations. It was noted by .my that their research was limited to just nine ccTLDs.

We also learned that some of the policy and administrative as well as technical and operational issues could be combined, particularly for smaller ccTLDs. These components often have high fixed costs and low transaction costs. By combining with common principals and approaches ccTLDs can join together to share the fixed costs, resulting in greater contribution to the ccTLD's operating reserves.

We also learned that the market, particularly for ccTLDs, is not very price sensitive. We heard many examples of how lowering prices did not result in dramatic increases in registrations. We also learned that several ccTLD had differential pricing based on either the location of the registrant (generally cheaper for locals) or for the number of characters in the domain (shorter are more expensive).

An effective means for growing registrations is to grow local Internet and ICT experiences and demand.

It was clear that there are opportunities for many members to expand the number of registrations depending on what they do with their policies. (It was suggested that all members keep their government engaged.) We also learned that, particularly for smaller ccTLDs, surpluses can be increased by sharing some fixed cost components.

APTLD Administrative Matters

The members learned how to access and update the APTLD Wiki and were asked to ensure that information about themselves and their organizations was correct and rich.

The members agreed on four meetings next year – one in late February in association with APRICOT in Bali; one in late May somewhere in the middle-east; one in late October in association with the ICANN meeting in the region, and one in the Pacific in conjunction with the PacINET meeting (this latter meeting being focused on Pacific ccTLDs). The members also accepted a meeting registration fee to cover costs as being reasonable.

The meeting instructed the General Manager to engage with AIT to organize technical training programs for 2007 in Bangkok.

The meeting also instructed the General Manager to work with the current Secretariat to review a transfer of administrative and support services from the Secretariat to the General Manager, and the level of fees and to review the remaining functions of the Secretariat at the next meeting in Bali.

Summary

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Asia Pacific Top Level Domain Association

The meeting was deemed a success with interesting and useful information exchanged, new opportunities identified and new skills learned.

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