21 February 2024

RE: Universal Acceptance Issues with .BRAND Domains

Crews Gore
President, Brand Registry Group

Dear Mr. Crews Gore:

Thank you for your letter raising concerns about challenges related to the Universal Acceptance (UA) of the .BRAND top-level domains (TLDs). The letter is posted at https://www.icann.org/en/system/files/correspondence/gore-to-icann-board-04dec23-en.pdf. We welcome your input and encourage the members of the Brand Registry Group (BRG) to help us get the word out about UA, and to be a strong strategic partner in this work.

To help address UA-related challenges ICANN org is strengthening its technical UA team. The team engages with technical organizations and communities, raising bug reports, as well as contributing open-source code, where possible. Some of the team's recent work is documented in Section 7.7.1 of the UA-Readiness Report for FY23 available at https://uasg.tech/download/uasg-047-ua-readiness-report-fy23/. The UA remediation work includes outreach to organizations and communities developing software applications which are used by a large user base. Examples include META and WordPress.

More specifically for WhatsApp, as you note, the underlying list of TLDs was updated in September 2023 and will percolate to the different devices based on Android OS updates. The ICANN org team has met with META and reported UA-related issues to them, including linkification.

ICANN org is also working on the third-party open-source components that are typically used for linkification, and has contributed improvements, for example to the components used in the top five programming languages. These engagement efforts by ICANN org and the ICANN community continue to expand to other organizations, and the examples for .BRAND TLDs will be included in the conversations we schedule with these organizations in the future.

We also appreciate your input on how ICANN might better implement UA solutions. The TLD list published by IANA is already part of the UA documents and training available on https://icann.org/ua and is being actively shared with the technical community through the opportunities listed above.

The technical community engages with ICANN though multiple platforms, for example through the Business Constituency of the Commercial Stakeholder Group and the Non-Commercial Users Constituency of the Non-Commercial Stakeholder Group. Technical

organizations can also get involved more directly with the [Universal Acceptance Steering Group](#) (UASG), a community-led group that promotes universal acceptance, for UA-related discussions. We would also reiterate that .BRAND TLDs could also help ICANN reach out to relevant technical stakeholders and contribute toward the ongoing community efforts to promote UA-readiness.

I am thankful to you for raising the matter and assure you that ICANN will raise these issues with relevant organizations, as well as continue to make a direct effort to address these challenges by applying code fixes where possible. We are committed to making all TLDs work with all software applications.

Sincerely,

Tripti Sinha
Chair, ICANN Board of Directors