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| **Council Working Group on International Internet-related Public Policy Issues Seventeenth meeting – 19-20 January 2022** |  |
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| **English only** |
| Contribution by the United Kingdom and Canada | |
| Topic proposal for the next Council Working Group Open Consultation | |
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The United Kingdom and Canada are pleased to submit this contribution to the Council Working Group (Internet). We welcome the opportunity the Group provides to identify, study and develop international Internet-related public policy issues. For the next open consultation, we invite the Council Working Group to consider the following topic

**Advancing and Enhancing a true multilingual Internet**

We often talk about a global Internet; which indeed many of us have the privilege to enjoy. We also talk about the progress being made in connecting those currently without the Internet, and indeed the ITU, through the work it, and others, do through the Broadband Commission deserve credit here. What, perhaps, we do not always pay sufficient attention to is the ability of an increasingly non-english speaking world to have meaningful access to the Internet and the services on it.

While much work has been taken forward by many bodies, such as UNESCO, the ITU, ISOC and ICANN (particularly with respect to the furtherance of International Domain Names) to further multilingualism on the Internet, there is much work still to do. A key issue, and indeed a significant problem is Universal Acceptance; essentially the ability of all users to be able to access the Internet though their own scripts and identifiers.

Indeed Universal Acceptance is a fundamental requirement for a truly multilingual and digitally inclusive Internet. It ensures that all domain names, including new (and often longer) Top Level Domains (TLDs) and International Domain Names (IDNs), and email addresses are treated equally and can be used by all Internet-enabled applications, devices, and systems. Universal Acceptance provides the gateway to the next billion Internet users, and arguably until it is achieved, it is not possible to provide a consistent and positive experience for all Internet users.

ICANN has contributed to the cause of Universal Acceptance through the creation of a multi-stakeholder UA Steering Group which works with governments, business and the technical Community to promote Universal Acceptance across the Internet. In working with the Internet Community the Steering Group notes that while some 65% of the global population is connected to the Internet, that 92% of Internet web-pages are published in just 12 languages, while over 60% of such content is *only* in English. This despite the fact that there are over 7000 languages and dialects used across the globe.

In light of the above, we propose the following questions for consultation:

* *What more could governments and stakeholders do to ensure that the Internet becomes more multilingual in nature and thus accessible for more of the global population?*
* *What problems (if any) have ITU member countries and sector members experienced concerning the lack of Universal Acceptance?*
* *What more could governments do to promote Universal Acceptance, both in public sector (such as in procurement practices and provision of public services) and in the private sector (in websites and other Internet services)?; and*
* *How ITU, working with ICANN and other interested parties, might help promote Universal Acceptance?*

We look forward to both the Council Working Group meeting in January and future sessions.

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