



Africa's map in the digital inclusion!

30th December 2011

H.E. Ambassador John Shinkaiye

Chief of Staff

Bureau of the Chairperson

African Union Commission Headquarters

P. O. Box 3243,

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Your Excellency Ambassador Shinkaiye,

Subject: DotConnectAfrica's Prior Endorsement for the ICANN DotAfrica generic Top Level Domain (.africa gTLD) and the new African Union Commission RFP for the Operation of DotAfrica

We have been waiting patiently for the past several months to receive an official response from your office regarding the need to properly redress our wishes as conveyed at different times for the **official reinstatement of our earlier endorsement** received from the AU for the DotAfrica gTLD and registry.

A few months ago, we were led to believe after reading a copy of the '**Briefing Note on DotAfrica**' prepared by the AU Infrastructure and Energy Department – Information Society Division that the African Union Commission intended to apply directly to the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) for the new DotAfrica gTLD. **Again, in recent weeks we have learnt that the African Union Commission no longer wishes to apply for DotAfrica**, but has instead chosen to **outsource the operation of DotAfrica to a Consortium based on the guidelines contained in the AU Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Operation of DotAfrica.**

Even though DCA had received an endorsement from the AU as early as 2009 which we believe was valid at the time it was first given to us, and in subsequent months thereafter, **the issues became very controversial after the AU was advised by our opponents to apply directly for the ownership of DotAfrica** which caused the ill-fated unsuccessful attempt to withdraw our endorsement. Interestingly, although our opponents have also floated different proposals for the DotAfrica initiative at different times, **they now insist that the DotAfrica geographical gTLD should be operated and run for the benefit of their 'African Internet Community'**. It is now apparent that this intention of taking over the DotAfrica **geographic TLD for community use** and ownership is now being achieved by the means of the new **AU-sponsored RFP for the Operation of DotAfrica.**

Accordingly, we wish to inform our **unwillingness to participate in the new AU RFP process** based on the following reasons:

1. We are not convinced that the **current process is transparent and accountable**, since the reasons earlier given, that is, the AU will apply for DotAfrica is no longer the case. We believe that the sort of

'expert advice' received by the AU has been manipulated to cause the AU to shift its position to "no longer wanting to apply", thereby **satisfying the exact wishes of a vested interest group which stands to benefit most** should their preferred Consortium be selected based on the RFP process to apply directly for DotAfrica. We think that under the official auspices of the AU, **this group is using the RFP process to legitimize its surreptitious hijack of DotAfrica gTLD under false pretences** that is, as earlier mentioned taking over a geographic gTLD for community use and ownership.

2. In a situation where the **members of the AU Task Force on DotAfrica also happen to be the so-called leaders of the African Internet Community**, who have not only floated separate proposals of their own for DotAfrica, but have also **wrongly argued that a geographic Top Level Domain should be community-owned and operated**, we do not trust that the outcome of the present RFP will be favourable to DCA. We have repeatedly alleged that the people overseeing the current process have tried to undermine our initiative in order to stop us from applying to ICANN through various acts of sabotage of our endorsements, **including with the Corporate Council on Africa (CCA)**.
3. We think that the **outcome of the RFP process has been pre-determined**, since the Task Force members will perform the evaluation and award to the preferred bidding Consortium that they have pre-selected **through nepotism, thereby evaluating and awarding to themselves**. Participating in the new RFP process will provide our opponents the opportunity to further victimize DCA.
4. We believe that the time specified within the RFP from the date of submission of responses (**8th December 2011**) to when a winner will be announced (**15th December 2011**) is **simply too short for any meaningful evaluation to be done**; and given that a similar evaluation exercise by ICANN as detailed in the **gTLD Applicant's Guidebook will take up to 5 months**, this again suggests to us that the outcome of the RFP process is already pre-determined.
5. Finally, we believe that the process of applying for the DotAfrica geographical gTLD belongs to ICANN, and the **RFP is an extraordinary process that allows the Task Force members to receive in advance, details of our bid strategy** and other confidential corporate information before we submit our application to ICANN.

In conclusion, **we think that it would be good for the AU Leadership to do what is right and just in the present circumstances, redress our case satisfactorily**, and reinstate our endorsement to enable us go ahead with our application to ICANN.

DCA believes **that the ICANN process alone should be used to determine who should be awarded** the mandate for the operation of DotAfrica geographic Top Level Domain and the registry.

Thanking you in anticipation as we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Sbekele

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