dotDurban passes first ICANN hurdle

The exclusive internet namespace .durban is on its way after passing the first Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) hurdle.

According to ZADNA (the .ZA Domain Name Authority), in the initial evaluation phase, ICANN wanted to determine if the applicant possessed the required financial and technical ability to operate an internet TLD (Top Level Domain).

This development is significant because it means the application has overcome the main evaluation hurdles. This makes it likely that South Africa will see URLs ending with .durban, such as tourism.durban and conference.durban by year end.

The dotDurban TLD project is one of the recent collaboration efforts between ZADNA, ZA Central Registry (ZACR) and the Department of Communications (DOC). Other collaborations include the dotCapeTown and dotJoburg TLDs.

Funding comes from ZACR using revenue generated over time from co.za operations and other investments.

World-class platform

"This initial evaluation outcome is an important development that gives a great vote of confidence on the ZADNA-driven ZA Central Registry project. It shows that the Central Registry provides a world-class platform that an international decision-maker like ICANN can trust to keep the internet running safely and effectively," says Dr. Hasmukh Gajjar - ZADNA Chairperson.

The decision to have the ZA Central Registry (ZACR) apply to ICANN for the three local city TLDs came after ZADNA secured the support of the DOC and the relevant metro municipalities for ZACR - a not-for-profit entity - to apply for the three TLDs in early 2012 when ICANN opened up to receive new TLD applications.

"The three applications are a solid contribution to reinvest revenue generated from co.za into protecting South Africa's interests. This is especially important at a time when ICANN is opening up the internet massively beyond dotCom, dotNet and dotOrg. We applied for the three cities because we saw a firm trend where leading international cities are planning to

secure their exclusive namespaces," says Gajjar.

dotDurban ahead of dotJoburg, dotCapeTown

The dotDurban application was ranked ahead of the dotCapeTown and dotJoburg applications when ICANN decided to use a lottery to prioritise the over 1300 TLD applications it received last year. This rank set dotDurban to be evaluated ahead of the other two local city TLDs. The successful evaluation of dotDurban means that ZACR and its partners can confidently expect the dotCapeTown and dotJoburg applications to pass the initial evaluation stage as well.

The three TLDs are intended to complement the .ZA namespace by making it possible for businesses and people identifying with the three cities to register names carrying the cities' names. As custodians of their cities' names, the relevant metro municipalities will receive priority when it comes to registering names for their entities and programs. Expect to see URLs such as police.durban, rates.capetown and pikitup.joburg.

In addition, provincial and national governments will be given an opportunity to reserve their names and names of national heritage in the three TLDs before the public is allowed to register names on first-come, first-served basis. These names will form part of a reserved name list, which is an important requirement by ICANN for the new TLDs.

Preventing intellectual property, trademark abuse

ICANN has also ensured that the new TLDs prevent intellectual property and trademark abuse by allowing trademark owners an opportunity to register their trademarks in a database that will be used by TLD operators to ensure that names that are applied for do not infringe in trademarks.

Preparations for the launch of the three city TLDs are well underway with ZADNA and ZACR planning to hold a joint policy and project workshop with the three cities on 31 May 2013. The workshop is meant to give a detailed feedback and to outline launch plans for the three city TLDs. This will be followed by a consultation with national and provincial governments to prepare them to reserve their names in the TLDs. All the three TLDs are expected to be launched before 2013.

For more, go to www.durban.registry.net.za , www.zadna.org.za and www.registry.net.za.