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MEDIA CONTACTS: Brad White – ICANN Director of Media Affairs
Washington, DC
Ph: +1 202.429.2710
brad.white@icann.org

Andrew Robertson – Edelman Public Relations
London, England
Ph. +44 20 3047 23021
Andrew.Robertson@edelman.com

Historic Agreements Punctuate CEO's Trip to Europe to Push Internationalization of the Internet

New Contract Clears the Way for the Appearance of “.post” on the Internet

Geneva, Switzerland... December 11, 2009... The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and the Swiss-based Universal Postal Union (UPU) today signed a historic agreement giving the UPU managing authority over .post as a top-level domain.

The UPU is the first United Nations agency to obtain a top level domain for the industry it represents, though Rod Beckstrom, ICANN's President and Chief Executive Officer, says he hopes it will pave the way for other U.N. agencies to consider similar actions.

“We are terribly excited about the emergence of .post as the newest generic top-level domain,” Beckstrom told reporters at the U.N. office in Geneva during a news conference immediately following the signing of the contract. “This contract with the UPU, a specialized agency of the United Nations and an intergovernmental institution, is an important contribution to the Internet. It is part of our desire to provide a single interoperable communications network that can connect all people around the globe.”

UPU Director General Edouard Dayan said the .post project is an important initiative for developing and providing secure and trusted postal services over the Internet.

“Postal services will explore new frontiers and basically go where no postal services have gone before,” said Dayan. “Many Posts already successfully offer a range of electronic products and services that meet customers' new communication needs. Dot-post will enable the UPU to reach the full potential of its original mission, to build a worldwide space without borders where personal and business communication is facilitated in a secure environment.”

The signing of the UPU-ICANN contract followed the signing of another important agreement the day before in Paris with another U.N. entity, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The UNESCO-ICANN cooperation agreement is intended to assist with the process of expanding the adoption of Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs). IDNs are non-Latin based characters that can now be used on a limited initial basis in the top-level domain portion of an Internet address name, which is that portion of the name that is to the right of the dot, such as .com.

“IDNs might well lead to a huge expansion of Internet users among many who have previously felt estranged from the online world by their inability to use their native language,” said Beckstrom. “But this agreement with UNESCO will assist the inclusion of as many language groups as possible and in the process it will help ICANN fulfil its mission of global inclusivity by expanding our wide arena of international stakeholders.”

Under the cooperation agreement, UNESCO will call upon its network of linguistic experts to help with elements of the IDN ccTLD Fast Track process, and exploring other avenues to assist developing countries in enhancing capacities to participate in a multilingual Internet provided through the expansion of IDNs. It will also inform its Member States about the new IDNs; encourage involvement of other relevant United Nations agencies; and establish working groups to help developing countries participate in the program.

“This is a development that UNESCO has long been advocating. The internet must be linguistically diverse so that all language groups can harness its unique potential,” said Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO. “Through this new agreement, UNESCO and ICANN will work together to bring more people into the information network.”

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To access an audio recording of today’s UPU-ICANN news conference in Geneva, Switzerland, go here:
<http://audio.icann.org/meetings/upu-signing-geneva-11dec09-en.mp3>.

To see pictures from the UNESCO-ICANN signing, go here:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/seiitiarata/sets/72157622978859354/>

About ICANN:

To reach another person on the Internet you have to type an address into your computer - a name or a number. That address has to be unique so computers know where to find each other. ICANN coordinates these unique identifiers across the world. Without that coordination we wouldn’t have one global Internet. ICANN was formed in 1998. It is a not-for-profit public-benefit corporation with participants from all over the world dedicated to keeping the Internet secure, stable and interoperable. It promotes competition and develops policy on the Internet’s unique identifiers. ICANN doesn’t control content on the Internet. It cannot stop spam and it doesn’t deal with access to the Internet. But through its coordination role of the Internet’s naming system, it does have an important impact on the expansion and evolution of the Internet. **For more information please visit:** www.icann.org.

About the Universal Postal Union:

Created in 1874, the UPU, based in Berne (Switzerland), is an intergovernmental organization and the primary forum for cooperation between governments, Posts and other stakeholders of the worldwide postal sector. In addition to maintaining a genuinely universal network that provides modern products and services, it establishes the rules for international mail exchanges among its 191 members and makes recommendations to stimulate mail volume growth and to improve the quality of service for customers. Some 5.5 million employees process and deliver 433 billion domestic letter-post items annually, as well as some 5.5 billion international items and over 6 billion parcels. Many postal services also offer expedited mail, financial and electronic services. About 660,000 postal establishments make the postal network the largest physical distribution network in the world. The UPU celebrated 60 years as a specialized agency of the United Nations in 2008.

About UNESCO:

UNESCO - the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was founded on 16 November 1945. For this specialized United Nations agency, it is not enough to build classrooms in devastated countries or to publish scientific breakthroughs. Education, Social and Natural Science, Culture and Communication are the means to a far more ambitious goal : to build peace in the minds of men. For more information please visit: www.unesco.org