Opening Statement by
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President and Chief Executive Officer
Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)
Launch of Egypt's Internationalized Domain Name
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As prepared for delivery

Thank you for inviting me to take part in this wonderful celebration on this historic day. Egypt's achievement in securing one of the first international domain names is a milestone in the history of the Internet.

Thanks especially to Minister of Communications and Information Technology Tarek Mohamed Kamel, whose dedication to bringing an Arabic IDN to Egypt has been a driving force in this achievement. Minister Kamel has been a great supporter of ICANN. He was the gracious host of ICANN's 33rd International Meeting, held here in Cairo in 2008.

ICANN works toward a common good – a stable and secure global Internet. A truly global Internet means that *anyone can connect to anyone anywhere*, and for many millions, the introduction of IDNs means they can do so in their primary language.

Overall, the numbers are staggering: five of the top ten languages in use on the Internet today rely on a non-Latin script: Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Russian and Korean, in roughly descending order. That represents 647 million users. And another 310 million fall into the broad category of "other" languages – not in the top ten – and many of them will also rely on non-Latin scripts.

Arabic is the seventh most common language on the Internet, with an estimated 60 million Arabic language users online. In the last decade Arabic speakers came online faster than other language group – by an amazing 2300 percent.

Three countries were approved at the same time to use top level domain names in Arabic script – Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Egypt's inclusion indicates the potential of these new extensions to profoundly transform the Internet and how people use it.

Forty five percent of Egypt's population is under 18, and many have already embraced the Internet. Egypt has the largest Internet population in the Arab world, with 18 million users, and we expect the introduction of the Arabic IDN to increase this number. The Egyptian government is also facilitating use of the Internet by increasing broadband access. So far there are about one million broadband users here, with prices starting at about $8 (45 Egyptian pounds) per month.

Egypt has been an Internet leader and a supporter of ICANN's multi-stakeholder, bottom up model of policy formation. It has participated since the beginning in the Governmental Advisory Committee – the voice of governments in ICANN, and a body whose influence has greatly increased as ICANN has internationalized following the Affirmation of Commitments concluded last year. Manal Ismail represents Egypt on the GAC and has been instrumental in the policy development process for the IDN program.

The new IDN will not only open up access to the Internet to more Arabic speakers. It will foster innovation and creativity, and provide better branding opportunities for local companies and more educational opportunities. And we were delighted to learn that the Egyptian government plans to boost Arabic content online by preserving Egypt's cultural heritage by digitizing national archives.

As we speak today, people who have never used the Internet are joining this world movement. We are all becoming connected through this amazing global system.
Millions of them – the next Internet users in Egypt – will now be able to use Arabic script to do so.

Thank you.