# dotAfrica Launch Strategy: Operational Briefing

**Proposed by the ZA Central Registry**

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18 February 2013

## Table of Contents

1. **Introduction** ................................................................................................................. 2
2. **Definitions** .................................................................................................................. 3
3. **Project Time Lines** .................................................................................................... 4
4. **Diagrammatical Overview** ......................................................................................... 5
5. **Launch Strategy** ......................................................................................................... 6
   5.1 **Phase 1: Policy Development and Adoption** ..................................................... 6
       5.1.1 This Launch Strategy Document: ................................................................. 6
       5.1.2 The TLD Charter: ........................................................................................... 6
       5.1.3 The Launch Policies and Procedures: ............................................................ 6
       5.1.4 The Registry Supplemental Policies: .............................................................. 8
   5.2 **Phase 2: Launch Phase** .......................................................................................... 8
       5.2.1 Part I: Reserved Name Lists (RNL) ............................................................... 8
       5.2.2 Part II: Sunrise Phase ...................................................................................... 8
       5.2.3 Part III: Premium Name Redemption ............................................................... 10
       5.2.4 Part IV: Land Rush ............................................................................................ 10
   5.3 **Open Delegation** .................................................................................................. 11
1 Introduction

The purpose of this document is to identify and explain the mechanisms and procedures required for the launch of the dotAfrica (.africa) Top Level Domain (TLD) by the ZA Central Registry (ZACR).

This document must be read in conjunction with various other supplemental documents in order to obtain a more comprehensive overview of the TLD process leading up to and during its launch. These related documents include:

- The Launch Policies and Procedures
- The Registry Supplemental Polices and Procedures.

In terms of the evolution of the dotAfrica project, we currently find ourselves on the cusp of a transition from the Application Phase to the Launch Phase. These two phases currently overlap and will continue to do so until the TLD is eventually delegated. The fundamental differences between the two phases is that the Application Phase focuses on the ICANN application process itself, including government and stakeholder support, whilst the Launch Phase focuses on issues such as:

- Reserved Name Lists;
- Priority Rights and Sunrise; and
- Premium Names and Land Rush
2 Definitions

“accredited registrar” means a EPP enabled registrar accredited by the ZACR

“domain name” means a name delegated in the net.za Second Level Domain (SLD)

“EPP” means Extensible Provisioning Protocol, which is an open standard adopted and implemented by the ZA Central Registry for its domain name registry platform.

“landrush phase” means a first-come-first-served process where domain names that have not been reserved may be registered

“launch phase” means the combination of a Sunrise and Landrush phases.

“MVS” means the Mark Validation System used to capture, validate and prioritise marks and provide a Signed Mark Data (SMD) identifier to be used in the application for domains during the sunrise phase.

“marks” means proprietary name rights including registered and un-registered trade mark rights, company and personal names to mention a few.

“redemption process” means a process specifically relating to the RNL, which governs the processes for the registration of a reserved domain name by a pre-determined organisation. In other words a reserved name may only be redeemed by a pre-defined registrant and is not allocated on a first come-first-served basis.

“registry” means the entity administering the TLD, being the ZACR.

“regulator” means the company/organization responsible for the oversight of the .za zone. In this case the regulator is ZADNA.

“RNL” means Reserved Name List, more fully explained in clauses 5.1.3.1 and 5.2.1

“sunrise” means a domain registration process in which mark holders may register their various marks and apply for their marked domains.

“TMCH” means Trade Mark Clearing House, a mechanism established by ICANN and which is similar to the MVS in operation, but is applicable across all new gTLDs (http://icannwiki.com/index.php/Trademark_Clearinghouse).

“ZACR” means the .ZA Central Registry (NPC)
3 Project Time Lines

ICANN and dotAfrica Time Line

- Application Submission
- Admin Completeness
- Initial Evaluation
- GAC Processes
- Delegation
- Comment Filing
- Objection Filing
- Extended Evaluation
- Dispute Resolution
- String Contention

Anticipated dotAfrica Pre-Delegation Phase

Anticipated start of dotAfrica pre-delegation process based on "307" Prioritisation Draw 15 May '13

First Result from IE" according to Prioritisation Draw 23 March '13

DotAfrica Delegation and Launch Anticipated: 1 Sept 2013

GAC Process

GAC EW Starts 1 Nov '12
GAC EW Issued 21 Nov '12
GAC Advice Starts 15 Jan '13
GAC Agenda Submission Deadline 19 Feb '13
GAC Advice Issued 25 Apr '13

GAC Meeting ICANN Beijing 7 Apr '13

ICANN notifies applicant

Accept Advice

Reject Advice

GAC Adverse Consultation

End of GAC Advice Process
4 Diagrammatical Overview

**Phase 1: Policy Development and Adoption**
- TLD Charter
- Registry Policies
- Launch Policies and Procedures

**Phase 2: Launch**
- Priority Rights and Sunrise
- Premium Names and Land Rush

**Phase 3: Open Delegation**
- Commencement of Normal Registry Operations

**Figure 1: DotAfrica Launch Strategy Overview**

Steercom collects and collates all required policies, charters and plans.

ZACR provides Registry Policies for Steercom approval.

Steercom conducts the necessary consultative process for the adoption of the policies, plans and charters.

(MVS is established and mark holders begin to register their marks for the Sunrise Phase)

(Reserved Name List is established and relevant stakeholders can submit their proposed domain names for reservation)

(Reservation of premium names in accordance with the Premium Name Strategy)

Sunrise phase is conducted in accordance with Launch Policies.

MVS mechanism continues to operate after Sunrise as a Watch Service.

Land Rush phase is conducted in accordance with Launch Policies.

(Redemption of names reserved during Premium Name Strategy)

Open Delegation commences in accordance with Registry Policies.
5 Launch Strategy

5.1 Phase 1: Policy Development and Adoption

Policy development and adoption requires that the various policy documents, charters and plans required for the launch and on-going administration of the TLD, must be finalized and approved. The finalization and formal adoption of these documents is an important first phase for the launch of the TLD and serves as a blueprint to define the various roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in the process.

5.1.1 This Launch Strategy Document:
• Provides the context and background for the other documents and processes necessary for the launch of the TLD by the ZACR.
• Broadly defines the operational processes and mechanisms to be implemented by the ZACR in launching the TLD.

5.1.2 The TLD Charter:
• Defines the general function and purpose of the TLD, including: whether it is to be an open or moderated domain; pricing and any other aspects that the SteerCom would like to include.
• The Charter will inform the direction that the Registry Policies and the Launch Policies will need to adopt.

5.1.3 The Launch Policies and Procedures:
• Outline the detailed operational policies and procedures that will govern the launch of the TLD under the administration of the ZACR.
• These documents will generally seek to govern the mechanisms and procedures relating to:
  o Reserved Name List (RNL – see 5.1.3.1)
  o Priority Rights and Sunrise mechanisms; and
  o Premium Names and Land Rush mechanisms.

5.1.3.1 Reserved Name List (RNL) Policy:
• This policy forms part of the collection of Launch Policies (clause 5.1.3) and regulates the reservation of certain domain names, prior to launch, which
may be regarded as important, sensitive, offensive and/or otherwise in the
general interest for the wellbeing of the TLD.

• The RNL policy should:
  o Identify key stakeholders to participate in the RNL process;
  o Define the rules, procedures and guidelines for identifying domain
    names that should be reserved and how they will be moderated
    (approved) for entry into the RNL.
  o Outline the mechanisms and procedures for the actual submission
    and classification of names into the RNL, the period reservation, the
    entity responsible for the redemption of the domain name (if
    applicable) and other related administrative matters.

• Whilst a domain name has been entered into the RNL the Registry (ZACR)
  will ensure that the name is not made available for registration, other than
  through a defined redemption process.

• For policy development, please refer to:
  http://policy.dotafrica.org/doku.php?id=policy:rnl_policy

5.1.3.2 Priority Rights and Sunrise Policy:

• This policy forms part of the collection of Launch Policies (clause 5.1.3) and
  regulates the protection of priority / proprietary rights within the TLD,
  particularly trade mark rights, during the Launch Phase (clause 5.2).

• The policy should:
  o Establish a mechanism and associated procedures whereby the
    public and the Intellectual Property community can submit their
    marks for validation either via the TMCH or MVS;
  o Establish the guidelines and procedures for the appointment of a
    mark validation provider and its role and responsibilities;
  o Establish guidelines for the type and prioritizing of marks;
  o Define the registry / registrar mechanisms and procedures that
    domain name applicants must utilise in order to apply for domain
    names, corresponding with their validated marks, during the Sunrise
    process.
  o Define the contention resolution mechanism and processes if two or
    more domain name applicants lawfully apply for the same domain
    name during the sunrise period.

• For policy development, please refer to:
  http://policy.dotafrica.org/doku.php?id=policy:sunrise_policy

5.1.3.3 Premium Names and Land Rush Policy:

• This policy forms part of the collection of Launch Policies (clause 5.1.3) and
  regulates the identification and allocation of high value / premium names
  within the SLD.

• The policy should:
  o Establish a mechanism and associated procedures whereby
    members of the public can obtain premium names (or premium
    name options) from established premium name providers and/or
    directly via a Land Rush mechanism administered by the Registry;
  o Establish the guidelines and procedures for the appointment
    of premium name providers and the basis on which they may obtain
    premium name options;
o Establish guidelines for identifying premium name lists;
o Define the registry / registrar mechanisms and procedures that domain name applicants must utilise in order to apply for domain names, during the Land Rush process.
o Define the contention resolution mechanism and processes if two or more domain name applicants apply for the same domain name during the Land Rush period.
• For policy development, please refer to: http://policy.dotAfrica.org/doku.php?id=policy:land_rush_policy

5.1.4 The Registry Supplemental Policies:
• This document outlines the detailed operational policies and procedures that govern the relationship between the Registry (ZACR) and Registrars.
• This document will generally seek to govern the mechanisms and procedures for inter-Registrar transfers, domain updates, deletes, billing issues and dispute resolution etc.

5.2 Phase 2: Launch Phase

As indicated above, the Launch Phase culminates in the consecutive implementation of the Sunrise and Land Rush mechanisms, which are designed to address the allocation of priority rights and high value / premium names.

From the Diagrammatical Overview above (clause 4) it should be apparent that certain “independent” mechanisms in support of the Launch Phase might already have been implemented as early as Phase 1, depending on whether or not the necessary policies have been finalised and adopted.

5.2.1 Part I: Reserved Name Lists (RNL)
• As outlined in detail above, the RNL process must be established as soon as the policy framework governing its implementation has been finalised and adopted. This could happen as early as during Phase 1.
• The provisions and processes set out in the Reserved Name List Policy (clause 5.1.3.1 above) will apply.
• Names entered on to the RNL will take precedence above all other applications submitted during the Launch and Open Delegation Phase.
• Although the RNL will be used for a wide variety of Registry functions, its primary purpose is to provide stakeholders (particularly African governments) with an opportunity to reserve domain names that are potentially offensive, sensitive and/or otherwise related to a substantive national interest.
• A special online facility has been developed to assist African governments and other relevant stakeholder groups in submitting their proposed names to the RNL moderator (Ms. Alice Munyua). This facility will be accessible via the dotAfrica.Org website, under the government tab.

5.2.2 Part II: Sunrise Phase
• The MVS will be established and made available as soon as the policy framework governing its implementation has been finalised and adopted. This could happen as early as during Phase 1.
• The holders of various proprietary-naming rights, in particular trade mark rights, can start submitting their marks into the MVS, together with the necessary supporting documentation. Once submitted, independent Intellectual Property experts, appointed by the ZACR, will validate the marks.
• All validated marks will result in the holder obtaining an SMD (Signed Mark Data) token, which will essentially validate the holder's claim to a corresponding domain name when applying for that domain name during Sunrise.
• Once the Sunrise Phase officially commences in accordance with the Sunrise Policy, mark holders will provide their SMD, via their accredited registrars, to the ZACR in order to validate their claim to a particular domain name.
• All successfully validated domain name applications submitted during the Sunrise window will be queued by the ZACR and all uncontested applications will be delegated, whilst all contested applications will be referred to an auction process to determine the successful applicant on a “highest bidder wins” basis.
• Once all applications submitted during the Sunrise window have been either delegated or refused, the ZACR will move onto the Premium Name Redemption phase.
• Names on the RNL may not be delegated. Names allocated during the Sunrise phase may be contested, after the fact, via an Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism.
5.2.3 Part III: Premium Name Redemption

- A premium name strategy can be established as soon as the policy framework governing its implementation has been finalised and adopted. This could happen as early as Phase 1 of the SLD transition.
- As outlined in clause 5.1.3.3 above, depending on the prescriptions of the Launch Policies, one option would be to identify and allocate limited premium name lists to established premium name providers.
- Once the Land Rush window officially commences in accordance with the Land Rush policy, premium name applicants can start applying for their selected names.
- The ZACR will queue all legitimate applications (IE applications that meet the Sunrise Policy requirements) and at the close of the Land Rush window all uncontested applications will immediately be delegated, whilst all contested applications will be referred to an auction process to determine the successful applicant on a “highest bidder wins” basis.
- Once all applications submitted during the Land Rush window have been either delegated or refused, the ZACR will move onto the Open Delegation phase.

5.2.4 Part IV: Land Rush

- A premium name strategy can be established as soon as the policy framework governing its implementation has been finalised and adopted. This could happen as early as Phase 1 of the SLD transition.
- As outlined in clause 5.1.3.3 above, depending on the prescriptions of the Launch Policies, one option would be to identify and allocate limited premium name lists to established premium name providers.
- Once the Land Rush window officially commences in accordance with the Land Rush policy, premium name applicants can start applying for their selected names.
- The ZACR will queue all legitimate applications (IE applications that meet the Sunrise Policy requirements) and at the close of the Land Rush window all uncontested applications will immediately be delegated, whilst all contested applications will be referred to an auction process to determine the successful applicant on a “highest bidder wins” basis.
- Once all applications submitted during the Land Rush window have been either delegated or refused, the ZACR will move onto the Open Delegation phase.
- Names on the RNL may not be delegated. Names allocated during the Land Rush phase may be contested, after the fact, via an Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism.
5.3 Open Delegation

The Open Delegation phase reflects the commencement of normal registry operations for the TLD, where names are allocated and administered in accordance with the charter and the registry polices and procedures.

Whilst it is envisaged that domain names will be allocated on a first–come-first-served basis, it should be noted that a suitable Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism would be implemented for the TLD space to protect against the abuse of established rights. It is likely that the ADR mechanism will protect against both abusive and offensive domain name registrations.

In addition to the alternate dispute resolution mechanism, it is envisaged that the MVS (and possibly the TMCH) will continue to provide monitoring services over the TLD in that all new domain name applications will be checked against the MVS for conflicts. Should a conflict be identified the Registry will notify the MVS, which will in turn notify the relevant mark holders.