

Domain names registration: SA doing well



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When it comes to the issue of registering domain names South Africa is doing well, with some 60% of the continent's total of registered domain names. The rest of Africa, more than 50 countries, shares the continent's other 40% of about a million top level domains.

There are currently 107.9 million registrations of generic top level domains (gTLDs) in the world, and some 74.1 million of country codes top level domains (ccTLDs), Vika Mpisane, GM of .za DNA (.za Domain Name Authority), announced yesterday, Wednesday 29 July 2009, at a media workshop on domain names held in Rivonia, Johannesburg.

Africa, however, only accounts for fewer than 1 million of ccTLDs, while South Africa (co.za) has at least 60% of that figure, which translates at some 492 164 registrations.

"Setting up a domain name registration project is not an expensive exercise, but many African governments take the digital divide as an excuse to sit back and do nothing, further exacerbating the problem," Mpisane said.

"Until we sort out the issue of infrastructures, including networks, regulations and broadband, as a continent we will always remain behind," Mpisane added, citing the lack of political will as a fundamental obstacle.

China has some 12 million ccTLDs, while Germany and UK have 11 million and 6 million, respectively.

According to Mpisane, .com, .org, .net, .gov, .edu, .mobi, .biz, and .travel are listed as gTLDs, which have no geographic limitations and do not account to national governments, but to ICANN, a US government-managed organisation.

.com the most dominant

".com alone has more than 80 million registrations, making it is the most dominant domain of the gTLDs, which use second-level registrations (e.g. yourname.com or myhouse.org) and their disputes are resolved through ICANN-UDRP."

He said ccTLDs (.za, .au, .fr, .uk, .zw, .ke, .ng and so on) serve a particular country, use between second- and third-level registrations (eg simone.co.za or simone.za), and are usually operated by a local entity, have locally driven policy development process and are subject to own country's jurisdiction and do not account to ICANN.

ccTLDs are managed by profit and not-for-profit entities - government-sponsored and totally independent from government, which generate revenue generation from registration and renewal fees. "Unfortunately in Africa, re-delegation is still an

issue, as African ccTLDs are still far back in registration figures.”

.za DNA is an organisation established in early 2000 and is funded by the Department of Communications (DoC) to the tune of R1.5million per year. In SA, org.za is second at around 14 000 registrations.

Mpisane pointed out that initially SA should have an .sa instead of .za. “But Saudi Arabia outsmarted us way before 1990 and we ended up with .za.”

A warning - holding a domain name is a licence, not a right

He warned: “Many people take domain names for granted, by saying for instance ‘I want to have my own website’, but let me tell you that you cannot have a website without registering a domain name.

“And if you fail to renew your domain name by a few minutes, somebody might grab it and register it as his or hers, and that is where the dispute occurs, and some people might say ‘it is my name’.

“Holding a domain name is a license - not a right,” Mpisane pointed out. “Registration is on first-come first-served basis. Registry does not sit watching against name theft or abuse.

“Registration and renewal process is usually automated. Exceptions exist for restricted domains (e.g. ac.za). And lastly, registration and renewal is done through registrars or ISPs.

“Failure to renew makes name available for registration. Be careful of domainers who wait to register expired names and make money.”

He also said that his organisation provides financial assistance to those who want to lodge a domain name dispute but cannot afford the R10 000 to do so.

For more, go to www.zadna.org.za.

ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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