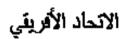**AFRICAN UNION**

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PRESS RELEASE

ICANN & ZACR sign Landmark DotAfrica agreement

Addis Ababa-Thursday, 27 March 2014 - On the 26th of March 2014 the Registry Agreement was signed in Singapore – in the presence of the African Union Commission (AUC), by Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) representative, Mr. Akram Atallah, (President, Global Domains Division), and the representatives of the technical operator appointed by AUC – ZA Central Registry (ZACR) CEO, Lucky Masilela and COO Neil Dundas.

From the left: Mr Luck Masilela (ZACR CEO), Mr Akram Atallah (ICANN President, Global Domains Division), Mr Neil Dundas (ZACR COO) and Mr Moctar Yedaly (Division Head, Infrastructure and Energy, African Union)

"This is an historic moment for the continent. Africa has finally secured its e-IDENTITY. Africa now has a unified presence on the Internet" said H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission. "DotAfrica as a new Top Level Domain is designed for the promotion of African business, peoples and culture in the Internet" she continued.

In early 2012, the African Union Commission (AUC) selected ZACR through an international tender to apply and operate DotAfrica for the common good and benefit of Africa's citizens and businesses. AUC and ZACR are partners in the drive for Africa to have its own space on the Internet through the DotAfrica geographic Top Level Domain (gTLD).

The origins of DotAfrica date back to 2000 when a handful of African Internet professionals strongly argued that DotAfrica should by operated by Africans for the benefit of the entire continent. In view of the demands expressed by the African community at large, African Union organs have requested the AUC to fast track the launch and operation of DotAfrica.

"The agreement signed between ICANN and ZACR outline the contractual terms according to which the ZACR will operate the DotAfrica gTLD and marks the end of AUC's 7 years journey toward implementation of this project" said Dr. Elham Ibrahim, the AUC Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy in charge of Information Society. "The establishment of DotAfrica means that African business and individuals will soon be able to pay for their domain names in their local currencies and this will save Africa valuable foreign exchange which currently goes to foreign-owned registries. Africa will now contribute more to the digital economy" she continued.

"The finalization and acceptance of contracting terms from ICANN means nothing can stop the DotAfrica project. In May 2014, the curtains will rise and the first of the DotAfrica domains will become available for application during the initial sunrise and land rush phases. The former will seek to ensure that domain names are made available to applicants who have corresponding trade-mark rights, while the latter will see generic premium domain names being made available to the public" explained Mr. Lucky Masilela, the ZACR's CEO.

With the technical launch of DotAfrica, it is expected to see the first domain names on DotAfrica as soon as August 2014.

The African Union Commission wishes to express its thanks to the African Internet community for the unwavering support for DotAfrica project through its long journey to its final delegation by ICANN.

For more detailed information regarding the above, please visit:
http://africainonespace.org/ or follow the dotAfrica (.africa) campaign on Twitter @africandomain