Opening Statement by
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Launch of Sri Lanka's Internationalized Domain Names
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Thank you for inviting me to join you on this historic day.

Thanks especially to Prof. Tissa Vitarana, Minister of Techonology & Reserarch, and Prof. Epasinghe, Chairman of the Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka (ICTA), for their vision and dedication to bring this idea into reality, in keeping with their motto, "Ideas Actioned."

Sri Lanka will soon be one of the first six countries in the history of the Internet to secure an internationalized top level domain name, allowing people whose primary language script is Sinhala or Tamil to access websites and address emails entirely with their own characters.

This achievement is a reflection of Sri Lanka's forward thinking and visionary leadership. The Internet is the way of the future, and Sri Lanka has recognized and embraced that future in pursuing these IDNs on behalf of its people.

ICANN works toward a common good – a stable and secure global Internet. It keeps the Internet running by maintaining the security and stability of the domain name system to keep the Internet unified. And it is a multi-stakeholder, multinational institution overseen "by the world, for the world", reflecting its increasingly global work.

A truly global Internet means that anyone can connect to anyone anywhere. Our economies, our communications, our social and cultural lives are linked by the Internet – the most powerful communications tool in the history of mankind. And for many millions, the introduction of IDNs means they can do so in their primary language.

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.

Sri Lanka has seen amazing growth in its Internet usage in the first decade of this century – growing 857%. Sinhala, spoken by about 18 million people is one of the world's oldest languages, dating back to the 3rd century BCE. Tamil, the other official language of Sri Lanka is an ancient and classical language with a long history in the South Asian region. Today, we marry an old and an ancient classical language to the era of modern Internet technology.

Sri Lanka is one of Asia's rising tigers. With more than 1 million people online already, your country of 21 million is ready to grow into this networked world that we live in. The ccTLD manager of Sri Lanka, LK Domain Registry, is one of the respected registry operators in the region, as well as technologically savvy. That is reflected in its commitment to win approval for IDNs. Sri Lanka,

with the leadership of its ICTA, is the first country in the region to introduce its IDN Top Level Domains. We are also delighted that Sri Lanka's Top Level Domains are DNSSEC-signed, truly a next generation step.

Sri Lanka has been a member of ICANN's Government Advisory Committee (GAC) for many years, and LK Registry is also a member of the country code Name Supporting Organization (ccNSO).

China, Egypt, Russia, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates are among the first countries – and Sri Lanka will soon join this pioneer group - to have their top level domain IDNs approved.   Dot Lanka and Dot Elangai will bring multiple benefits. It will help to foster innovation and creativity, and provide better branding opportunities for local companies. It will increase convenience and consumer choice, and generate educational opportunities. It will open up access to the Internet to more Sinhalese and Tamil speakers, who until now have been blocked by the need to use Latin script.

And it might promote better cohesion and integration between Sinhalese and Tamil speakers who can now communicate to each other online using their languages – united in purpose. As we would say in Tamil, இலங்கையர்களுக்கும் வெளிநாட்டடவர்களுக்கும் இன்றிலிருந்து முதன் முறையாக ஸிந்ஹலத்தில் .லங்கா மற்றும் தமிழில் .இலங்கை என்ற முகவரிகளை கனணியில் நேரடியாக எழுத முடியும். உலகற்றிலேயே இணையற்றில் முதன் முறையாக தமிழ் முகவரிகளை காண முடியும் என்றது மிகுந்த மகிழ்ச்சியான செய்தி. இந்த பெரிய சாதனையைச் செயலாற்றிய ICTAவிற்கும் LK Registryவிற்கும் ICANNஉடைய மனமார்ந்த வாழ்த்துக்கள். Today for the first time, people in Sri Lanka and abroad can access .Lanka and .Ilangai from their computers directly in their own languages. That this is the first time in the world that Tamil addresses can be directly accessed from the Internet is news for celebration. ICANN congratulates ICTA and LK Registry for their significant achievements.

We know that the future generations of Internet users here in Sri Lanka, those who navigate the Internet in English, Sinhala or Tamil, will now have a greater chance to benefit from the Internet's opportunities because of the leadership shown by the TRA and Sri Lanka's Minister of Technology & Research.

With every passing moment, the world is becoming closer connected as never before. The Internet, one of the world's greatest inventions is helping that happen, now in the languages of the peoples of the world. And these millions of people – the next generation of the Internet's users in Sri Lanka and beyond – will be able to use Sinhala and Tamil to connect, grow and learn.

We are honored to be with you today in recognition of this significant achievement.

Congratulations.

Thank you.