

2 March 2022

Mykhailo Fedorov
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Digital Transformation
Ukraine

Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

I am writing in response to your letter received 28 February 2022. First, let me express my personal concern for the well-being of your citizens in the midst of this conflict. ICANN and its global community are aware of and concerned about the terrible toll being exacted against your country.

You have asked that ICANN target Russia's access to the Internet by revoking specific country-code top-level domains operated from within Russia, arranging the revocation of SSL certificates issued within those domains, and shutting down a subset of root servers located in Russia.

ICANN is an independent technical organization that manages the Internet's unique identifiers. ICANN is a facilitator of the security, stability, and resiliency of these identifiers with the objective of a single, global, interoperable Internet. In our role as the technical coordinator of unique identifiers for the Internet, we take actions to ensure that the workings of the Internet are not politicized, and we have no sanction-levying authority. Essentially, ICANN has been built to ensure that the Internet works, not for its coordination role to be used to stop it from working.

As you know, the Internet is a decentralized system. No one actor has the ability to control it or shut it down. ICANN's primary role, through the functions of the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA), is to ensure the consistent and unique assignment of Internet identifiers in line with global policies. These policies were developed by a multistakeholder community that includes technical experts, businesses, academics, civil society, governments, and other stakeholders who worked collaboratively to solve policy and technical challenges through consensus. It is a model that has allowed the Internet to flourish over decades, and this broad and inclusive approach to decision-making fosters the global public interest and makes the Internet resilient against unilateral decision-making.

I want to specifically address your requests, from both the technical and policy perspective:

- For country-code top-level domains, our work predominantly involves validating requests that come from authorized parties within the respective country or territory. The globally agreed policies do not provide for ICANN to take unilateral action to disconnect these domains as you request. You can understand why such a system cannot operate based on requests from one territory or country concerning internal operations within another territory or country. Such a change in the process would have devastating and permanent effects on the trust and utility of this global system.

- The root server system is composed of many geographically distributed nodes maintained by independent operators.
- We do not have the ability to revoke the specific SSL certificates for the domains you mentioned. These certificates are produced by third-party operators and ICANN is not involved in their issuance.

As you have said in your letter, your desire is to help users seek reliable information in alternative domain zones and prevent propaganda and disinformation. It is only through broad and unimpeded access to the Internet that citizens can receive reliable information and a diversity of viewpoints. Regardless of the source, ICANN does not control Internet access or content.

Within our mission, we maintain neutrality and act in support of the global Internet. Our mission does not extend to taking punitive actions, issuing sanctions, or restricting access against segments of the Internet – regardless of the provocations. ICANN applies its policies consistently and in alignment with documented processes. To make unilateral changes would erode trust in the multistakeholder model and the policies designed to sustain global Internet interoperability.

ICANN stands ready to continue to support Ukrainian and global Internet security, stability, and resiliency.

Sincerely,



Göran Marby
President and Chief Executive Officer
Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)