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Subject: Safeguards for Health Domains

Dear Sirs

As non governmental organisations active in the field of public health, we are extremely worried about the process currently followed by ICANN for attributing the gTLD “.health” regardless of serious public health considerations. We notice with great concern that the objections expressed so far by the Objector, by the health community, as well as by some governments, have been either undermined or ignored, and that the ICANN has failed so far to realise the negative impact on health of an unregulated health internet domain.

Primarily moved by the public interest, our organisations are working extensively with developing countries and are, among others, regularly interacting with national and international NGOs active in the domain of knowledge sharing for better health. We are very much aware that the health professionals of these countries, as well as the patients and general population, badly need to access quality and reliable health information. Internet is increasingly becoming a major source of information for these people, if not the main one. It is therefore of extreme importance to ensure the transparency and credibility of the information provided on “.health”, prone to become a reference domain for health matters.

Health is a human right that needs to be protected and promoted, including through the provision of safe, trustworthy and quality information in line with the best scientific standards. Health is not merchandise. Building appropriate safeguards for the health-related internet domain names is critical for ensuring that the health domains are operated and managed in the interest of public health.

We very much hope that ICANN will follow the governmental advisory group’s recommendation that health-related domain names “may require further targeted safeguards”. We strongly believe that the safeguards proposed by ICANN in the context of allocating the new internet domain names are grossly inadequate for health. The providers as well as the users of health data and services on the health domains need to be able to rely on a safe and transparent system, which ensures the credibility of the sources of health information and products and the privacy of health data.

Convinced that public health interest must be protected as a matter of utmost priority, we call on the ICANN Board to delay the allocation of “.health” and other

health-related names until adequate safeguards, and baseline conditions for their implementation, are in place.

We urge the ICANN board to consider the terrible consequences that would derive from a health internet domain operated with minimal regulation, holding major risks of opening the door to all sorts of quacks, fake or poor quality information and products, exposing internet users to great risks for their health.

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