



Dear gTLD Registries and Registrars,

As you're aware, the coronavirus pandemic has led to thousands of deaths, with thousands more expected to die over the coming months. It is impacting much of the world and disrupting the lives of millions. It is also capturing the attention of cybercriminals who are intent on using domain names as part of their efforts to victimize a desperate and worried public.

These cybercriminals are using those domain names to enable phishing, malware, and [other forms of abuse](#). They are preying on anxieties by making phony claims that they can prevent, cure, or treat COVID-19, along with other false offers of aid, including, efforts to leverage the [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act \(CARES\)](#) in the U.S.

The [U.S. Federal Trade Commission reports](#) that it has fielded more than 7,800 complaints related to the coronavirus-related scams. The agency noted that U.S. consumers have collectively lost more than US\$5 million.

As you're also aware, ICANN cannot, under our bylaw and practically speaking, involve itself in issues related to website content. But, that does not mean we are unconcerned or unaware of how certain domain names are being misused in fraudulent activities during this global pandemic. We're doing what we can, within our remit, to help. For example, we continue to actively engage governments and law enforcement, providing subject matter expertise about the domain name system (DNS), and facilitating communications with registries, registrars, and other relevant bodies.

We're involved in a number of operational security trust groups aimed at mitigating COVID-19-related DNS abuse. We are developing a system that helps identify domain names used for this particular kind of threat that will share data about those domain names with the appropriate parties. This will help demonstrate that the DNS ecosystem is responding in a collaborative fashion to stop malicious activity that aims to leverage the global pandemic.

We are grateful to the many registries and registrars that are already helping to combat some of this malicious activity and commend their efforts. The Registrar Stakeholder Group's recent document, "[Registrar approaches to the COVID-19 Crisis](#)", affords excellent guidance.

The [Framework to Address Abuse](#), signed by many of ICANN's contracted parties, shows an admirable willingness to address domain abuse and website content abuse.

During this global pandemic, we anticipate that the domain name industry will again demonstrate its commitment to the public interest by helping to mitigate those forms of DNS abuse that seek to victimize the public at a time when they are most vulnerable. Thank you for your vigilance and concern for the public's safety.

As I've noted in other contexts, but which is applicable here, we're all in this together. If there is something that the ICANN organization can do to help your efforts, please let me know.

Respectfully,

Göran Marby
ICANN President & CEO