

## **ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION**

Ashland Inc. v. Ronald Mawejje

Case No. D2025-3517

### **1. The Parties**

The Complainant is Ashland Inc., United States of America (“United States” or “US”), represented by CSC Digital Brand Services Group AB, Sweden.

The Respondent is Ronald Mawejje, Uganda.

### **2. The Domain Name and Registrar**

The disputed domain name <ashland-globalholdings.com> is registered with Cosmotown, Inc. (the “Registrar”).

### **3. Procedural History**

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the “Center”) on August 29, 2025. On September 1, 2025, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On September 3, 2025, the Registrar transmitted by email to the Center its verification response, disclosing registrant and contact information for the disputed domain name which differed from the named Respondent (Private Whois) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on September 3, 2025, providing the registrant and contact information disclosed by the Registrar, and inviting the Complainant to submit an amendment to the Complaint. The Complainant filed an amended Complaint on September 4, 2025.

The Center verified that the Complaint together with the amended Complaint satisfied the formal requirements of the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Policy” or “UDRP”), the Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Rules”), and the WIPO Supplemental Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Supplemental Rules”).

In accordance with the Rules, paragraphs 2 and 4, the Center formally notified the Respondent of the Complaint, and the proceedings commenced on September 9, 2025. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was September 29, 2025. The Respondent did not submit any response. Accordingly, the Center notified the Respondent’s default on October 3, 2025.

The Center appointed Manoel J. Pereira dos Santos as the sole panelist in this matter on October 7, 2025. The Panel finds that it was properly constituted. The Panel has submitted the Statement of Acceptance and Declaration of Impartiality and Independence, as required by the Center to ensure compliance with the Rules, paragraph 7.

#### 4. Factual Background

The Complainant is a global specialty materials company which serves customers in a wired range of consumer and industrial markets, including adhesives, architectural coatings, automotive, construction, energy, food and beverage, nutraceuticals, personal care and pharmaceutical. The Complainant provides practical and innovative solutions to customers in over 100 countries, employs approximately 3,200 people worldwide and maintains a strong online presence, predominantly through its primary domain name <ashland.com>, registered in 1995.

Ashland Licensing and Intellectual Property LLC is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Complainant and owns ASHLAND brand and trademarks, directly or through its subsidiary Ashland Global Holdings, Inc. The trademarks relevant to this instant matter are:

TRADEMARK	JURISDICTION/ TM OFFICE	REGISTRATION NUMBER	REGISTRATION DATE	IC CLASS
ASHLAND	US / United States Patent and Trademark Office	921002	September 28, 1971	2
ASHLAND	Canada / Canadian Intellectual Property Office ("CIPO")	TMA168802	April 23, 1970	1, 3, 4, 27, and 29
ASHLAND	Canada / CIPO	TMA182095	March 24, 1972	1, and 3
ASHLAND	European Union / European Union Intellectual Property Office ("EUIPO")	000216101	May 19, 1999	1, 2, 4, and 42
ASHLAND	European Union / EUIPO	008285744	January 14, 2010	1, 2, and 4

Additionally, the Complainant owns numerous other domain names incorporating the ASHLAND trademark. (Annex 7 to the Complaint).

The disputed domain name was registered on February 11, 2025 and was inactive when the Complaint was filed pursuant to Annex 3 to the Complaint. The Complainant has also filed evidence showing that the disputed domain name was used in furtherance of a fraudulent email scheme.

#### 5. Parties' Contentions

##### A. Complainant

The Complainant contends that it has satisfied each of the elements required under the Policy for a transfer of the disputed domain name.

Notably, the Complainant submits that, by virtue of its trademark and service mark registrations and relying on the WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Selected UDRP Questions, Third Edition, (["WIPO Overview 3.0"](#)), section 1.2.1, "[w]here the complainant holds a nationally or regionally registered

trademark or service mark, this prima facie satisfies the threshold requirement of having rights for purposes of standing to file a UDRP case". The Complainant also argues that the Respondent, in creating the disputed domain name, has added the generic descriptive term "global holdings" to the Complainant's ASHLAND trademark, thereby making the disputed domain name confusingly similar to the Complainant's trademark. A reference is also made to the fact that the Complainant, prior to being renamed in July 2022, was called Ashland Global Holdings Inc. The Complainant further argues that the generic Top-Level Domain ("gTLD") of a disputed domain name, such as ".com", and the addition of a hyphen does nothing to distinguish the disputed domain name from the Complainant's trademarks.

The Complainant submits that it holds exclusive right to use the ASHLAND trademark in commerce on or in connection with the goods and services specified in the registration certificates, and argues that the Respondent is not sponsored by or affiliated with the Complainant in any way and is not commonly known by the disputed domain name, as the Respondent's name does not resemble the disputed domain name in any manner. Therefore, the Respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in respect of the disputed domain name. The Complainant further argues that the Respondent's use of the disputed domain name does not constitute a bona fide offering of goods or services or a legitimate noncommercial or fair use because, prior to the Complainant agent's successful takedown efforts, the Respondent was using a confusingly similar disputed domain name to create the impression that the Respondent's e-mail is one that is authorized and administered by the Complainant and to attempt to impersonate the Complainant as part of a fraudulent e-mail phishing scheme, as per Annex 9. Following successful takedown efforts from the Complainant's agent, the Respondent began to redirect users to a website that resolves to a blank page and lacks content.

Finally, the Complainant submits that the Respondent, by registering a domain name that is confusingly similar to the Complainant's trademark and domain name, has demonstrated a knowledge of and familiarity with the Complainant's brand and business. Therefore, it is inconceivable that the Respondent could have registered the disputed domain name without actual knowledge of the Complainant's rights in the ASHLAND trademark. In addition, the Respondent has registered and used the disputed domain name for purposes of sending fraudulent e-mails by creating e-mail addresses based on the disputed domain name. Following the successful takedown efforts by the Complainant, the disputed domain name began to resolve an inactive site and is not being used. The Complainant argues that, on balance of the facts set forth in the Complaint, it is more that likely that the Respondent knew of and targeted the Complainant's trademark and has registered and used the disputed domain name in bad faith.

## **B. Respondent**

The Respondent did not reply to the Complainant's contentions.

## **6. Discussion and Findings**

### **A. Identical or Confusingly Similar**

It is well accepted that the first element functions primarily as a standing requirement. The standing (or threshold) test for confusing similarity involves a reasoned but relatively straightforward comparison between the Complainant's trademark and the disputed domain name. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.7.

The Complainant has shown rights in respect of a trademark or service mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.2.1.

The Panel finds the Complainant's mark is recognizable within the disputed domain name. Accordingly, the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.7. Although the addition of other terms (here, "globalholdings") may bear on assessment of the second and third elements, the Panel finds the addition of such term and of a hyphen does not prevent a finding of confusing similarity between the disputed domain name and the mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.8.

Regarding the gTLD “.com” in the disputed domain name, it is well established that a gTLD does not generally affect the assessment of a domain name for the purpose of determining identity or confusingly similarity. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 1.11.1.

Therefore, the Panel finds the first element of the Policy has been established.

## **B. Rights or Legitimate Interests**

Paragraph 4(c) of the Policy provides a list of circumstances in which the Respondent may demonstrate rights or legitimate interests in a disputed domain name.

Although the overall burden of proof in UDRP proceedings is on the complainant, panels have recognized that proving a respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in a domain name may result in the difficult task of “proving a negative”, requiring information that is often primarily within the knowledge or control of the respondent. As such, where a complainant makes out a prima facie case that the respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests, the burden of production on this element shifts to the respondent to come forward with relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the domain name (although the burden of proof always remains on the complainant). If the respondent fails to come forward with such relevant evidence, the complainant is deemed to have satisfied the second element. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 2.1.

The Complainant has established to the satisfaction of the Panel that the Respondent has used the disputed domain name for the purposes of email fraud. Panels have held that the use of a domain name for illegal activity (here, phishing) can never confer rights or legitimate interests on a respondent. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 2.13.1. The use of a domain name to impersonate a trademark owner for the purposes of fraud can never give rise to rights or legitimate interests in respect of that domain name.

Therefore, the Panel finds the second element of the Policy has been established.

## **C. Registered and Used in Bad Faith**

The Panel notes that, for the purposes of paragraph 4(a)(iii) of the Policy, paragraph 4(b) of the Policy establishes circumstances, in particular, but without limitation, that, if found by the Panel to be present, shall be evidence of the registration and use of a domain name in bad faith.

Given the degree of distinctiveness or reputation of the Complainant's trademark, the composition of the disputed domain name, including the insertion of the term “globalholdings”, and the manner in which the disputed domain name was used, the Panel finds it beyond doubt that the Respondent had actual knowledge of the Complainant's trademark when the disputed domain name was registered. It is implausible that the Respondent chose to register the disputed domain name randomly, with no knowledge of the Complainant's trademark.

Panels have held that the use of a domain name for illegal activity (here, phishing) constitutes bad faith. [WIPO Overview 3.0](#), section 3.4. Having reviewed the record, the Panel finds the Respondent's registration and use of the disputed domain name constitutes bad faith under the Policy.

Moreover, as noted above, the Respondent has failed to submit a response or to provide any evidence of actual or contemplated good-faith use.

Therefore, the Panel finds that the Complainant has established the third element of the Policy.

## **7. Decision**

For the foregoing reasons, in accordance with paragraphs 4(i) of the Policy and 15 of the Rules, the Panel orders that the disputed domain name <ashland-globalholdings.com> be transferred to the Complainant

*/Manoel J. Pereira dos Santos/*

**Manoel J. Pereira dos Santos**

Sole Panelist

Date: October 21, 2025