



Connect Arab Summit  
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## Innovation

### *Background Paper Executive Summary*

#### 1. BACKGROUND

During the Summit preparation process, *innovation* was identified as one of four thematic priorities that should be further explored. One reason is a growing recognition by policy makers of the important contribution that innovation plays in national development and socio-economic growth.

By bringing together key global and regional players in the sector, the *Connect Arab Summit* can:

- Raise awareness of the role of innovation for socio-economic growth in Arab States, particularly as relating to the supporting role of the ICT sector;
- Contribute to the development of related national and regional strategies and identify priorities, goals and targets for the promotion and fostering of innovation in Arab States;
- Identify key stakeholders and mobilize the human, financial and technical resources necessary to support growth in innovation capabilities in Arab States;
- Federate political and economic initiatives that contribute to an enabling environment for innovation in Arab States.

This paper proposes possible policy interventions that may positively support building innovation at national and regional levels.

#### 2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- Governments should consider innovation as a key component of government policy and ensure policy coherence by treating it with strong leadership at the highest political level.
- Governments should articulate and adopt a strategic and broad-based framework approach to innovation that takes into consideration current best practices and involves a range of stakeholders, including governments, educational and research institutions, firms, consumers and, increasingly, ICT-enabled users.
- Governments should robustly promote ICTs as general-purpose platforms for innovation and knowledge sharing to build knowledge societies.
- As firms are the pre-eminent means of translating new ideas into jobs and national wealth, governments should promote a policy environment that supports the start-up and expansion of new and young firms as they are critical for innovation to flourish.

- Considering the high levels of unemployment in the region, with most of the jobless being young people, governments, in cooperation with the private sector and regional Arab organizations, should consider innovative thinking, new approaches and bold steps to leverage the combined potential of youth, entrepreneurship and innovation in the region.
- Governments, private firms and regional Arab organizations should consider the adoption of regional Arab approaches to fostering and promoting innovation strategies.
- In order to support evidence-based decision-making and policy accountability, measurement of innovation capabilities should be undertaken at national levels as well as comparative measurement at regional levels in Arab States.

### 3. RECOMMENDED GOALS AND TARGETS

Based on these goals and consultations during the Connect Arab Summit preparation process, the background paper proposes a set of more specific target initiatives to advance an agenda of innovation at national and regional initiatives.

Goal	Targets
<p>Consider innovation as a key component of government policy and ensure policy coherence by treating it with strong leadership at the highest political level.</p> <p>Articulate and adopt a strategic and broad-based framework approach to innovation that takes into consideration current best practices and involves a range of stakeholders, including governments, educational and research institutions, firms, consumers and, increasingly, ICT-enabled users.</p> <p>Support evidence-based decision-making and policy accountability, undertake measurement of innovation capabilities at national levels as well as comparative measurement at regional levels in Arab States.</p>	<p>Integrate ICT innovation as a key component of government policy in coherence with national development agendas with clearly expressed political support and strong leadership at the highest political level.</p> <p>Provide a high level policy commitment to an innovation agenda as part of national development strategies and ensure policy coherence by establishing a governance framework that crosses regions and sectors and includes roles for relevant stakeholders, including governments, education and research institutions, firms, consumers and ICT-enabled users.</p> <p>Foster innovation in the public sector at all levels of government to enhance the delivery of public services, improve efficiency, coverage and equity, and create positive externalities in the rest of the economy.</p> <p>Develop robust measurement of innovation capabilities at national levels as well as to support comparative measurement at regional levels in Arab States.</p> <p>Promote a culture of innovation at all levels from consumers to corporations. Document and share related and replicable best practices.</p>
<p>Promote ICTs as general-purpose platforms for innovation and knowledge sharing to build knowledge societies.</p>	<p>Create a suitable policy and regulatory environment that allows for the responsible development of technologies and their convergence.</p> <p>Ensure that a modern and reliable knowledge infrastructure that supports innovation is in place, accompanied by the regulatory frameworks which support open access to networks and competition in the market.</p> <p>Undertake national ICT innovation initiatives, where appropriate, using partnerships, that respond to improving delivery of public services (e.g., government, education, health, transport, quality of life).</p>
<p>Promote a policy environment that supports the start-up and expansion of new and young firms as they are critical for innovation to flourish.</p> <p>Establish a cooperation agenda between governments, private sector and regional Arab organizations, to</p>	<p>Develop a national policy coherent approach fostering the start-up and expansion of new and young firms through concrete initiatives such as seed funding and grants, business incubation/support, bureaucracy reduction, tax and other incentives, use of shared facilities and employment policies that facilitate efficient organisational change.</p> <p>Mobilise private funding for innovation, by fostering well-functioning financial markets and easing access to finance for new firms, in particular for early</p>

Goal	Targets
<p>consider innovative thinking, new approaches and bold steps to leverage the combined potential of youth, entrepreneurship and innovation in the region to face high levels of unemployment in the region, with most of the jobless being young people.</p>	<p>stages of innovation.</p> <p>Foster partnerships, open markets, a competitive and dynamic business sector and a culture of healthy risk-taking and creative activity.</p> <p>Provide necessary mid and long term predictability in the general environment in order to encourage entrepreneurship in general and in the ICT sector in particular.</p>
<p>Develop and coordinate an Arab regional ICT innovation approach to make Arab states collaborate efficiently for the benefit of a regional integration based on best practices in innovation strategies.</p>	<p>Establish an efficient and effective follow-up regional coordination mechanism to support an innovation agenda across Arab States and the ongoing sharing of best practices and experiences.</p> <p>Establish a regional “Arab Centre for Development of Innovation and Knowledge”.</p> <p>Establish a regional web portal and capacity building activities focused on innovation.</p> <p>Develop cooperation and partnerships between Arab States as well as between developed and developing countries, to encourage innovation and creativity and the adoption of cost-effective technologies.</p>