

# ITU CONNECT ARAB SUMMIT

16:30-17:30, MONDAY 5 MARCH

DOHA, QATAR

## PRESS CONFERENCE

### DR HAMADOUN TOURÉ

SECRETARY-GENERAL,  
INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION

Ladies and gentlemen,

- It is a great pleasure to welcome you to the Opening Press Conference of ITU's Connect Arab Summit. This is the third event in ITU's 'Connect the World' series, following on from Connect Africa in 2007 and Connect CIS in 2009. And with the energy we're already feeling here in Doha, this Arab States edition promises to be our most exciting Connect event yet.
- This high-level summit represents a unique opportunity for leaders from government, from industry, from the regional and international financial community and from civil society to come together to forge the strategies that will further stimulate the growth of information and communication technologies throughout this vibrant region.
- That means improving access to cutting edge ICTs for everyone right across the Arab world.
- It also means nurturing the region's burgeoning ICT industry, so that the Arab States realize their full potential as a hub for hardware and software development.
- Here in the Arab world, you are uniquely well-placed to become a real powerhouse for ICT innovation, thanks to an exceptionally talented, well-educated and hard-working young population who are really beginning to make their mark on the industry at a global level.
- I confidently predict that, in 10 years' time, many of the world's most exciting new ICT companies will be based in this region, and that the ICT sector will have become perhaps THE major employer of young talent.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- The Arab States may be one of the world's most dynamic markets for ICT services, but it is also a region of stark contrasts, with hyper-connected countries like Qatar contrasting with nations where connectivity is significantly below world averages.
- For every 100 people in Saudi Arabia, there are around 188 mobile phone subscriptions. In Djibouti, there are fewer than 20.
- More than 80 per cent of the population in Qatar uses the Internet, but the figure is below five per cent in Mauritania, Iraq and Somalia.
- Finding ways to get those unconnected people online is one of the purposes of this summit. We are honoured to have with us 5 Heads of State, 26 government ministers, and more than 600 industry leaders representing over 20 national delegations from right across the region and beyond.
- Over the next two days, they will meet to develop strategies to drive broadband deployment and mobilize the human, financial and technical resources needed to promote universal digital inclusion in countries throughout the Arab world.
- Replicating the 'mobile miracle' in the area of broadband roll-out is this region's next big challenge.
- At present, while cellular penetration is sky-high, fixed broadband penetration averages only 2.2% in the Arab States overall, compared with 6.2% in the Asia & Pacific region, 15.5% in the Americas and 25.8% in Europe.
- In a few minutes, my colleague Cosmas Zavazava will be presenting ITU's very latest figures on ICT penetration and access in the Arab Region.
- Before he does so, I would like to extend my special thanks to His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani for hosting this important Summit, and my counterparts at ictQATAR and the League of Arab States, Dr Hessa Al-Jaber and Dr Mohammed At-Tuwaijri, for their outstanding collaboration in making this event a resounding success.
- We have US\$46 billion dollars' worth of investment opportunities on the table, and over the next two days we can look forward to a number of important 'connectivity commitments' from government, industry and the academic community, bringing together partners and donors looking to participate in the implementation of new Arab-focused ICT projects that will help accelerate deployment of high-speed networks, applications and services.
- I'd now like to hand the floor to my esteemed colleague, Dr Mohammed At-Tuwaijri, and I thank you all for joining us here today.

Thank you.