

ITU CONNECT ARAB SUMMIT

OPENING CEREMONY

10.00, TUESDAY 6 MARCH
DOHA, QATAR

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

DR HAMADOUN TOURÉ

SECRETARY-GENERAL,
INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION

Excellences,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me especially express my gratitude on behalf of ITU - and indeed on behalf of all the participants - to His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani for hosting this important Summit, and for honoring us with his presence here today.

Our special thanks go to H.H Checkha Mosa for honoring us with her gracious presence.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me at this point thank the Heads of State and Government here present, who thanks to their unwavering commitment to the subject at hand, have taken the time to grace this event. You will agree with me that the world could have all the skills and resources imaginable, in the absence of political will, very little could come out of the deployment of those skills and resources.

We are also very grateful to our counterparts at ict-QATAR and the League of Arab States, Dr Hessa Al-Jaber and Dr Nabil ElAraby, for their outstanding collaboration in making this event possible.

The participants at this Summit represent a whole cross-section of society. This reinforces the undisputable, undeniable and inescapable truth that, a truly global information society can only emerge out of well-thought, multi-stakeholder-based approach paving way for facilitative cooperation, coordination and collaboration.

This is exactly what we are witnessing today and another reason why this region is so special. And yes, this in part, explains why the ICT figures are healthy and are sky-rocketing in some countries like here in Qatar, our Host. And yet there is still much to do in some other countries. There are still many millions of people in the region without a mobile phone subscription or an Internet connection, and in some countries the numbers still fall well below worldwide averages.

We need to find ways to get these unconnected people connected, because in the 21st century connectivity has become a vital indicator - and driver - of social and economic growth.

Excellences,

Today, my message to you is that of hope. Hope, because the torch bearers; the leaders here present and those leaders that for reasons beyond their control could not make it here today, have demonstrated that political will is the fuel and oil that keep the ICT engine running.

A suggestion from me though: it is time for us to switch gears and race towards a brand-new technological era. I am talking about Broadband. But, why broadband? Broadband because it will revolutionize the lives of everyone, everywhere. It will help deliver radical improvements in healthcare, education, transportation, utility suppliers and government services - in fact everything, all the time and everywhere!

I must hasten to say, this region has great potential and provides great investment opportunities. I say this based on the fact that the region's fixed wired-broadband penetration is recorded at 2.2% with active mobile-broadband subscriptions remaining at 13%. The good news is: all the ingredients are in place for us to experience the same leap that we have seen with mobile-cellular growth. To my friends from the private sector, "You can see for yourselves that there are great opportunities in the region for you to invest."

This Summit presents a unique opportunity on the region's journey to the 100% broadband penetration destination. Broadband is such an important technology to the extent that ITU and UNESCO established the Broadband Commission for Digital Development. Recently, the Commission issued a set of four new targets that countries around the world should strive to meet in order to ensure their populations fully participate in tomorrow's emerging knowledge societies. As the region makes efforts to fully embrace broadband technologies, these targets could serve as reference:

- Making broadband policy universal: By 2015,.
- Making broadband affordable: By 2015,
- Connecting homes to broadband: By 2015,.
- Bringing more people online: By 2015,

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very impressed by the volumes of project proposals amounting to nearly 50 billion dollars in market opportunities, submitted by stakeholders to this Summit under the six themes: Arab ICT Highway, E-Services Everywhere for a Better Life,

Empowering People: Capacity Building Initiative, Employment Creation: Unleashing Future ICT Generations, Securing the Cyber-Highway: Protecting People, and Memory of the Arab World: Preserving Arab Heritage.

It demonstrates that we certainly all know where the gaps are. But again, in this world it is not what you know that matters. Rather, it is what you do with what you know that counts. As we often say: Information is valuable - action is invaluable. It is what we will do at this Summit and after, that really matters. I draw comfort from the fact that our Leaders are here and that they are fully committed. As we embark on this journey to get broadband become the technology of choice and deliver it to each city, each home, and each citizen, we should not fail to act because of our fear to fail: Mistakes will be made with some projects not hitting their targets. Expect it, anticipate it, and accept it, because it will happen. But the ultimate satisfaction comes from our boldness to take action, innovate, make corrections and still have the stamina and enthusiasm to march on. As we often say, "Success isn't final, and failure isn't fatal!"

Excellences,

Distinguished Guests,

Colleagues,

For this region, future prospects are very good. The right technology is readily available. However, we should caution ourselves that technology alone is not the answer. All stakeholders should have a shared vision and should work together pooling resources and energies. This is essential in order to achieve the requisite synergies, complementarities, mutual re-enforcement and efficiencies of scale and scope. Speaking for the ITU I lead, I assure you here today that we are determined to do our part not only to fulfill the needs, aspirations, expectations and demands of the people of the world in the 21st century, but also to work with industry to produce even smarter, and low-cost technologies that will fast-track us into the

Knowledge Society. I greatly feel empowered, encouraged and assured by the commitment of the Leadership in this region. Excellences, you have demonstrated the will to deliver digital dividends to all your citizens. I congratulate and salute you! For me, History has been made.

I thank you.