

ITU CONNECT ARAB SUMMIT

CLOSING CEREMONY

16.30, WEDNESDAY 7 MARCH
DOHA, QATAR

CLOSING REMARKS

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Excellencies,
Distinguished Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

- It is with both pride and regret that we reach the closing of this summit.
- Pride in what we have achieved... and regret that the summit should have to end.
- This summit has brought together so many like-minded people, in a warm, positive spirit of friendship and commitment – and I am sorry that we shall soon be going our separate ways.
- We will be going away, however, with a strong sense of purpose, and a clear vision of what needs to be done to connect the unconnected, here in the Arab region.
- Before I close, and sum up some of the key achievements of the summit, I would like to say a few words about the main sessions we have held here in Doha over the past two days.
- The **first** session – billed under the theme '*Educate, Create, Employ*' – looked at the relationship between education and employment.
- The session focused on the application and innovative use of ICTs in education, aimed at empowerment through the creation of jobs – with the top priority being employment opportunities for young people.
- A call was made to introduce ICT education at every level – from kindergarten and primary school right through to secondary and tertiary levels.

- With this truly all-inclusive approach, we will see a true *Knowledge Society* emerge in the region.
- The **second** session – with the title '*Harmonize, Build, Access*' – focused on harmonizing policies to attract investment.
- The session recognized that investing in ICTs – and broadband in particular – was key to social and economic development.
- This was demonstrated by number of specific examples and success stories from the Arab region – from Bahrain to Morocco.
- Sound and effective regulatory frameworks were shown to be key to encouraging potential investors and investments in the region – and further regulatory harmonization will facilitate regional integration and the creation of common markets allowing for economies of scale.
- The **third** session – billed under the theme '*Cooperate, Secure, Protect*' – addressed the growing issues related to cybersecurity in the region.
- As the ITU Secretary-General said just a few minutes ago, we live in a hyper-connected world. That is helping to bringing the world's wealth of information to all the world's people – but it is also opening up new opportunities for cyber attacks and cybercrime.
- It was clear during discussions that there was general agreement on the need for cooperation in the face of such threats, and that this is a global issue which must be addressed with global solutions.
- Proposals were brought to the table to enhance regional cooperation and develop regional cybersecurity plans – and I would encourage all stakeholders to pursue this good work with all speed: for the sake of our states; our enterprises; our education and healthcare establishments; and our people – and especially our children.
- The **fourth** session – titled '*Imagine, Digital, Culture*' – discussed the importance of content in the digital future.
- Digital content is absolutely crucial for the region, and will provide the basis for the future development of the Arabic language.
- There are many initiatives in the region to preserve Arab heritage and countries in the region have worked together on this. The 'Memory of the Arab World' project is a regional initiative, led by Egypt.

- However, this is not enough. Further work to develop content and incubators for content creation will be a necessary step to ensure the spread of Arabic content.
- In this regard, ITU is working with the League of Arab States on the registration of Dot Arab in the Arabic and English languages. This will assist in access to digital content by the people of the region.
- The **fifth** session – under the theme of '*Youth, Innovation, Entrepreneurship*' – looked at the power and importance of ICT innovation.
- Innovation is clearly a powerful engine for addressing economic and social challenges – particularly when combined with the talents of a young, digitally-literate, population.
- It was very interesting to see a number of policy initiatives in this region which have contributed to building national innovation capabilities.
- Projects combining the power of public-private partnership with the potential of youth will help governments to build innovative capacity across the region.
- This will be accelerated by improved access to broadband infrastructure – which itself helps drive innovation and entrepreneurship.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- This has been an extraordinary summit, bringing together a record number of participants, including seven Heads of State or Heads of Government from the Arab world; 24 government ministers; and over 500 leaders, delegates and participants representing the public and private sectors as well as international and regional organizations, along with civil society.
- Together, the participants here in Doha have seized on over 47 billion US dollars in market opportunities in ICT projects to meet the needs of the region, and in particular new broadband networks and new applications and services in Arabic.
- This demonstrates the true power of partnership – and I would like to very briefly recap on some of the ITU agreements fostered here at the Connect Arab Summit.

- These include:
 - The project I mentioned earlier with the League of Arab States to establish the Dot Arab domain name. The United Arab Emirates has announced that it will host this important service;
 - An Arab Women's Literacy project with ALESCO and the UAE to empower women in the region with Arabic-language ICT skills;
 - Over 20 projects highlighted by Egypt, including three announcements with ITU to: help expand access to Arab digital content through the 'Memory of the Arab World' project; strengthen Arab indicators to inform policy-making in the region; and to leverage the power of ICTs to help persons with disabilities;
 - And a project on open source software training and certification with the Linux Professional Institute.
- In addition, partners announced various other initiatives during the event, including:
 - A broadband toolkit and various other projects, from the World Bank;
 - Telecentre projects, in collaboration with India, from Sudan, along with a number of other projects;
 - Three projects, including a regional cybersecurity initiative, from the Arab ICT Organization;
 - A fast Internet link from South Africa to France, among other projects, from Mauritania;
 - Five projects, including three infrastructure projects to address fibre backbone shortcomings, from Djibouti.

Distinguished guests,

- Let me close by reaffirming ITU's commitment to connecting the unconnected in all regions of the world, and particularly to this region, which offers so much extraordinary human and business potential.
- As the Director of the ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau, BDT, I am personally committed to this, and let me assure you that I myself, and my Bureau, will do everything in our power to help achieve these noble goals.
- Finally, let me give my own special thanks to all those who have participated in this event, and especially to those speakers who have joined us in this closing session: the honourable ministers of Jordan,

Azerbaijan and Somalia; Dr Hessa Al-Jaber, Secretary-General of ictQATAR; and of course ITU's Secretary-General Dr Hamadoun Touré.

Thank you.

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