

ITU CONNECT ARAB SUMMIT

CLOSING CEREMONY

16.30, WEDNESDAY 7 MARCH
DOHA, QATAR

CLOSING REMARKS

DR HAMADOUN TOURÉ

SECRETARY-GENERAL,
INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

- What an extraordinary Summit this has been.
- In the space of just a few days we have shown the world that the Arab region is a place that continues to be full of optimism, hope, vitality, youth and entrepreneurship.
- We have met – and indeed exceeded – our stated targets and goals. This is a result of your contributions. There are no big or small contributions. It is important to note that: **Action**, no matter how small it is can make a huge difference in people's lives – a true case of small initiatives causing big ripples. In the post-Summit period, let us keep on reminding ourselves that for there to be meaningful change, I MUST play my part!
- We recommitted ourselves to work **for** and **with** the future generation. The contribution of the youth in this Summit has been exemplary.
- We have helped to mobilize the financial, human and technical resources needed to expand ICT networks and access as a means of spurring investment, employment and broader social and economic development across the Arab region.

- We re-affirmed our commitment towards realizing the vision of an all-inclusive Arab information society and of leveraging the power of ICTs to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.
- So we can leave here proud of the work we have done.
- And we can be confident that the Arab region is heading in the right direction – and that ubiquitous, affordable connectivity for all the peoples of the region will soon be a reality.
- We arrived in a dust storm and we are leaving under glorious blue skies. I think that is a good metaphor for the work this summit has achieved – clearing the air, acting in a positive and transparent way, and giving us an unencumbered view of the bright horizons ahead.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- The communiqué we have issued must be counted among the many positive outcomes of this summit, and I would very briefly like to highlight the specific goals that were highlighted:
 - Firstly, **innovation**.
 - I think we all agree on the importance and value of ICT innovation, and we recognize the need to integrate it into national policy and development goals, with clearly-expressed political support.
 - Innovation is the cornerstone of ICT development, and we must ensure that young people develop the right skills in order to innovate for the future.
 - Secondly, **cybersecurity**.
 - In an increasingly connected – indeed hyper-connected – world, we need to improve and consolidate national, regional and global cooperation to effectively address the growing problem of cyber attacks, cybercrime, and the threats faced online by children and young people, while ensuring privacy and freedom.

- In this regard, I would like to draw your attention to ITU's work in this area – and to thank you for the vocal support which has been shown for the ITU's Child Online Protection initiative in particular this week.
- Thirdly, ***access and infrastructure***.
- I think that it is very clear that for everyone to benefit, networks need to be in place, and that access needs to be equitable and **affordable for all**.
- In rolling out broadband infrastructure, we also need to take into account the special needs of women and those with disabilities, so that we can ensure full digital inclusion.
- And last but not least, ***digital content***.
- This particular region benefits from tremendous and unique bonds of shared culture, heritage and language, and we must work hard to ensure that Arab digital content proliferates and flourishes during the coming years.
- As Brahima Sanou, the Director of ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau said yesterday in his speech, Arabic is the sixth most widely-spoken language in the world, and yet it ranks just 113th of 140 languages used online. This we must change!

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

- In closing, let me once again thank His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani for hosting this important summit, and for honouring us with his gracious presence in person.
- We have also been honoured by the participation of many other VVIPs, including heads of state, heads of government, ministers and other political leaders, as well as leading lights from industry, international and regional organizations and civil society – I thank you all.

- Let me give a special mention to our counterparts at ictQATAR and the League of Arab States, Dr Hessa Al-Jaber and Dr Nabil ElAraby, for their outstanding collaboration in making this event possible.
- And let me thank the hardworking local and ITU staff, whose work – often in the background, invisible to us here – has contributed so much to the success of Connect Arab States.
- ITU has a great history, and I am sure that we have a great future. Let me assure you here and now, you can always count on our support. My conviction is that in the next five to ten years, this will be the most written about region and it will earn its **Cyber Region** title.
- Before concluding, I now want to call upon you singularly and jointly, in your respective domains and institutions to throw down the **gauntlet and contribute in earnest** to the attainment of the outcomes of this Summit which are clearly outlined in the Communiqué. I also know that we provided an excellent platform for networking. If it takes time to cultivate partnerships, do not despair because **partnerships** are not a quick fix. They are built over a long period of time and require patience on the part of all concerned. We can take heed of the wise words of Aristotle in the 4th century who said, *"Wishing to be friend is quick work, friendship is a slow ripening fruit."*

I thank you.