Brief Summary of e.Oman Achievements:

Upon the inception of the National Strategy for Oman - Oman Digital Society (e.Oman) in 2003 and its revision in 2010, Oman has taken concrete steps to fulfill her national and international obligations towards streamlining ICT, transforming communities and integrating societies. The Information Technology Authority of Oman (ITA), a dedicated body to oversee the implementation of national IT infrastructure projects and supervise all projects related to e.Oman, has been a catalyst of synergy and augmentation of all stakeholders in the e.Oman.

In this context, WSIS Action Lines have served as an invaluable framework for e.Oman and provided pivotal milestones to its goals. Of particular note is the WSIS forum and its components, which provide a remarkable opportunity to learn and exchange how common human needs are attended to in diverse human experiences. In this sense WSIS action lines dovetail the MDG framework. Enormous efforts have been exerted by several governments to achieve these MDGs.

In Oman, conscientious efforts have been consistently rendered to utilize the benefit of the MDGs framework and the WSIS towards achieving tangible results and transforming lives. Oman has made significant strides along fruition of all MDGs most notable in Health and Education.

Moreover, Oman has been observing WTISD since 2006 and celebrates the yearly theme nationally.

Oman's institutional co-operation with the ITU experienced a boost in 2013 with the launch of the Regional Cyber Security Centre (RCSC) for the Arab region. This is the first ITU Regional Centre and it aims to provide Arab countries with the required support to establish their national cyber-security centres and assist them with cyber services at regional and international levels. The RCSC will assist in capacity building, bolster the cyber defence preparedness of regional countries, help in setting up Computer Emergency Readiness Teams (CERT), and assist with the adoption of the ITU Global Security Agenda framework.

Political will, as expressed by HM the Sultan and demonstrated in creating HM National Award for Excellence in eGovernment, has been instrumental in fostering various initiatives in Oman (governmental, private and civil) enabling Oman to achieve the current level of penetration and readiness.

Moreover, in October 2012, under the directions and auspices of the Council of Ministers, the ITA launched the eGovernment Transformation Plan with specific stages and timeline. This plan aims to increase the effectiveness of government services and automation available to citizens, businesses, and government agencies electronically, with a focus on the development of the integration of electronic services, provided seamlessly on the Internet, so that they are available at all times, in a safe and easy manner.

Transparency, accountability and responsibility are all key characteristics of good citizens enabled by ICT. In Oman, the government, as in the case of the State Audit Institution, has sought to engage the wider public by providing a two way system for communication and reporting suspected transactions leading to recovery of public funds and protecting national interests. Information on this and other aspects of Oman's ICT related efforts are available online.

People remain the core of development and their ownership of e.Oman strategy and ICT skills are keys to streamlining ICT in their lives and success of e.Oman initiatives. To serve this end, Oman launched initiatives that targeted bridging the digital divide and enabling citizens to be actively involved in the affairs of their own communities. Community Knowledge Centres (CKCs), Women Community Knowledge Centres (WKCs), the National PC Initiative and other community based-initiatives have proven to be a great success in promoting ICT as a corner stone to empowering citizens and bridging the digital literacy divide.

The following statistics demonstrate how digital gap was eliminated;

First: According to ICT survey in Oman, published in December 2012:

- 61% of government employees now have ICT skills
- Around 66% of all PCs in surveyed government entities are connected to the internet.
- Over 73% of these entities have fixed broadband.

Second: the telecom sector in Oman saw 92.4% increase in the number of mobile phone subscribers, the absolute majority of which are smart phones accessing online all kinds of services enriching in the process e-content. Moreover, according to the 2010 census, PC penetration in Oman reached just over 52%. According to recent statistics it has reached around 66%.

Third: till date around 105,000 males and females have been trained through Community IT Training initiatives, Government IT Training & Certification programs; and special IT training as part of the Community Capacity Building initiatives. Those include persons with disabilities and Women Community Knowledge Centers.

Fourth: since the launch of National PC Initiative until now, more than 116,000 PCs and more than 65,000 free modems for the internet have been provided to families, students and teachers.

In the same vein, the Oman Government Network (OGN), which is a national communication infrastructure linking all government entities to support all e.Oman projects and enhance public services, attained further achievements this year. To date, the total number of OGN connections reached 800 government sites.

Moreover, through e.Oman strategy, the ITA brokered cooperation among several stakeholders as well as established multi stakeholder partnership involving private sector and civil society organizations for the provision of training and access to ICT.

Furthermore, over the past few years, the ITA hosted several international conference, workshops, symposium and seminars addressing issues related to the information society and e-government.

SMEs have been recognized as a key player in economic development at large and ICT sector in particular. ITA twofold interest in the SMEs can be best summarized as follows:

a) SMEs, especially high growth and innovative enterprises have been proven to be essential for growing the ICT sector contribution into the GDP and the economy at large.

b) SMEs play an important role in enhancing ICT penetration through the delivery of ICT goods and services to the wider public.

Incubator support in different forms for SMEs that engage in ICT and knowledge management have been provided. Moreover, we have been engaging SMEs in the implementation of our projects and initiatives, where applicable, to ensure a double feedback cycle to the ICT sector. Most recently, ITA launched the Sas Programme. Sas in Arabic (colloquial to Oman) means foundation. Sas already has 12 projects; 9 of which are being fully incubated and 3 projects in the pre-incubation phase. Sas is an ICT business development initiative and a state-of-the-art business designed to help promote small and medium enterprises (SMEs) build a robust

ICT sector in Oman. Sas aims to create a business eco-system which will help to develop globally competitive ICT businesses here in Oman, particularly as ICT use has been on the increase.

Mobile penetration increased by 9% in 2012 to reach 190% per 100 inhabitants and the active mobile broadband penetration per 100 inhabitants increased to 52% at the beginning of 2013 compared to 39% at the beginning of 2012.

ITA is observing trends, awaiting further research and verification, where generational gap is being addressed through ICT, particularly social media and open government data, whether this gap is cultural, social or knowledge based.

International Relations & Information Dept