

**Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Arab
States
Region for WTDC-10
Damascus, Syria, 17-19 January 2010**

**Document RPM-ARB10/22-E
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Report by the Chairman

Part I: RPM Proceedings

1. Introduction

The ITU Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Arab States (RPM-ARB) was organized by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in Damascus, Syria, 17-19 January 2010, at the kind invitation of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The objective of the RPM-ARB was to identify priorities, at the regional level, for the development of telecommunications and information and communication technologies (ICTs), taking into account contributions made by Member States and Sector Members from the region. The meeting arrived at a set of proposals on the priority issues for the region to serve as a basis for the formulation of contributions to the World Telecommunication Development Conference to be held in 2010 (WTDC-10) which will determine the future of activities of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) over the next four-year period.

This report gives an account of the work and results of the meeting.

2. Participation

The meeting was attended by 76 participants representing 18 countries, 7 operating agencies, and other entities dealing with telecommunications, 4 regional and international organizations, 3 observers from other regions and one other observer. The list of participants can be found [here](#).

3. Meeting of Heads of Delegations

Following ITU's long standing practice, the meeting of Heads of Delegations was held on 16 January 2010. The meeting recommended that the host country Syria nominate the Chairman of the RPM. The Director General of the Syrian Telecom Establishment (STE), Mr Nazem

Bahsas was nominated as the Chairman of the RPM. The meeting also agreed to propose three Vice-Chairmen from the Sultanate of Oman, Egypt and Morocco respectively.

The Heads of Delegations endorsed the proposed agenda and the time management plan.

4. Opening Ceremony

The Director General of the Syrian Telecom Establishment (STE), Mr Nazem Bahsas, welcomed all participants to the meeting and thanked the ITU for organizing the event. Noting that this would be the last RPM before the WTDC, he encouraged the active participation of the Arab States in providing inputs to this 6th RPM. He emphasized the importance of ICTs as an effective tool for development and the role of the ITU to strengthen its deployment. In conclusion, he hoped that the results of this meeting will bring an impact on this region and the world at large.

The Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT), Mr Sami Al Basheer Al Morshid, welcomed all participants to the meeting and thanked the host country for its hospitality and excellent arrangements. He emphasized the importance of the RPM for bringing to the attention of BDT the issues, priorities and needs of the Arab States for ICT development. He stated that discussions held here would provide input for WTDC-10 which would shape the future of the ITU Development Sector's work in the Arab States and globally. The BDT Director highlighted that since the last WTDC in 2006 the world has seen many changes including a financial crisis that has affected all the world's regions, countries, private sector entities, and individuals. New telecommunications providers have emerged as was clearly demonstrated at ITU WORLD TELECOM 2009 held last October. New telecommunication networks, devices, and services have emerged bringing better choice and new opportunities for all. It is, therefore, of key importance that the ICT needs and priorities of all regions of the world are reflected in the outcome of the 2010 WTDC in the light of the changing environment. He also remarked that the region has experienced an increase in mobile and Internet penetration with a good forecast.

Mr Al Basheer said that he was counting on contributions and continued support from the Arab States in implementing BDT projects and initiatives. Mr Al Basheer cited examples of ITU's successful work in Arab States during the last few years, and requested participants to express their views on where BDT should focus its attention during the next four-year period for the region. The full text of his speech is available [here](#).

ITU Deputy Secretary-General Mr Houlin Zhao thanked the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic for hosting the meeting. He remarked that in spite of the financial downturn, ICTs continue to play a significant role in social and economic development and this has been recognized by ITU members. In his opening remarks he also highlighted the successful outcome of a series of key ITU events having taken place in 2009 including Telecom World, Council 2009, GSR, etc. Mr Zhao encouraged Arab countries to take up the opportunity offered by this RPM to assess how the future development activities of ITU can best serve the interests of members in the Region. The full text of his speech is available [here](#).

In his remarks, Syria's Minister of Communications and Technology, H.E. Dr Imad Sabouni, noted that it was a pleasure for Syria to host this ITU RPM for the Arab States and thanked ITU and the Arab countries for trusting Syria with the organization of the event. In this regard he highlighted the need for Arab countries to play an active role in the preparation for the WTDC-10. This 6th RPM will complete the activities undertaken in the previous 5 RPMs to reflect the needs of the development world and of the Arab Region, in particular. He acknowledged the role of the ITU-D in the realization of WSIS goals and the support of the Arab States to the ITU during the WSIS process and follow up. He recalled that Syria plays host to many events for the Arab States to enhance ICT development and telecom services in this region.

5. Agenda and Time Management Plan

Following the recommendation made by the Heads of Delegations, Mr Nazem Bahsas, Director General of the Syrian Telecom Establishment, was nominated as Chairman of the RPM. The three nominated Vice-Chairmen were: Mr Mohammed Al Wahaibi, Deputy Minister from the Sultanate of Oman, Mr Ahmed Gamal El-Mekkawy from Egypt and Mr Abdelghani Loutfi from Morocco.

The nominations were unanimously endorsed by the participants.

The Chairman expressed his gratitude for his nomination and his anticipation of a productive meeting. He also said he was looking forward to working closely with the nominated Vice Chairmen and to the discussions of the meeting over the course of the two and a half days.

The draft agenda ([Document 01](#)) and the time management plan ([Document DT01Rev3](#)) were endorsed by the meeting.

6. ICT Development Status in the Region: Challenges and Opportunities

BDT introduced **Document 8** entitled [Information Society: Statistical Profiles 2009 – Arab States](#) that presented an overview of current telecommunication/ICT trends, highlighted ICT and broadband status in the Arab States, including the growth of mobile and Internet penetration, and benchmarked telecommunication/ICT developments within and outside the Arab States. The new ICT Development Index (IDI) was also introduced.

The meeting took note of Document 8 and thanked ITU for its excellent work in preparing the report. The meeting recommended that the indicators used for the report be updated more frequently as well as expanded upon to cover more details. BDT explained that the methodology for this report had been adopted at the World Telecommunications/ICT Indicators Meeting in Cairo in 2009 and invited countries to participate in the work of BDT in this regard.

Palestine requested BDT to consider the possibility of including its data in future statistical reports on the Arab Region. It further requested BDT to continue and strengthen the operational plan and long term technical assistance programme based on the relevant resolutions and needs, to provide assistance in all the different fields of Telecommunications and ICTs. Within the activities of BDT, to provide assistance and support to Palestine and implement projects aiming to establish international access networks, including terrestrial and satellite stations and marine cables, and the re-construction infrastructure, as well as to build human capacities and provide all other types of assistance with special attention to e-Health, e-Learning, e-Government and planning, monitoring and management of spectrum frequencies.

The request for assistance by Palestine was noted and unanimously supported by the meeting recommending the reconduction of the updated resolution.

The meeting agreed that the updated resolution on the assistance to Iraq, Lebanon and Somalia will be submitted to WTDC to be carried forward.

7. Implementation of the Doha Action Plan

The following documents were presented by BDT:

Document 03: The document entitled [Report on Implementation of the Doha Action Plan – Programmes, Study Groups, Activities and Initiatives in the Arab States region](#) provided a

status report on the implementation of the Doha Action Plan in the region. It included a summary of the various activities undertaken by BDT in implementing WTDC-06 Programmes, Study Groups, Activities and Special Initiatives during the last two and a half years with a particular emphasis on the Arab States region.

The meeting thanked BDT for the report summarizing the main BDT achievements in implementing the DAP activities.

Document 04: The document entitled [Report on Implementation of the Doha Action Plan \(WSIS Implementation\)](#) provided an overview of the activities undertaken by BDT within the context of the WSIS Action Plan and relevant Action Lines. It underlined ITU's dual role as implementer and facilitator for a number of Action Lines. In this regard, WSIS in 2005 identified ITU as the lead moderator/facilitator for Action Lines C2 (information and communication infrastructure), C5 (building confidence and security in the use of ICTs) and, as from 2008, C6 (enabling environment) of the Tunis Agenda, and as a potential partner for a number of other Actions Lines. Within this framework, WTDC-06 adopted Resolution 30 (Rev. Doha, 2006) on the Role of the Telecommunication Development Sector in implementing the outcomes of the WSIS that recognizes ITU-D as a key partner in the implementation of the WSIS outcomes in view of its core competences and experiences. The document also provided a roadmap on ITU's follow-up to WSIS and invited inputs from the participants. Administrations were encouraged to provide comments on the draft roadmap for Action Line C2 and activities undertaken.

The meeting took note of the document.

Document 02: The document entitled [Report on Implementation of the Doha Action Plan \(Resolution 17 – ARB Regional Initiatives\)](#) provided an overview of the implementation of the Regional Initiatives (RIs) as per Resolution 17 (Rev. Doha, 2006) on the Arab States. BDT provided details on some of the projects that are being implemented. The participants were encouraged to support the proposed regional initiatives resulting from other RPMs for the next four year period and consider possible RIs for the Arab States.

The meeting thanked BDT for the useful document and emphasized that the RIs are vital to the region. During the discussions, concerns were raised on the level of implementation of the ARB RIs which could be improved in the future.

As a result, the meeting concluded that in addition to the ITU seed funds, the region will support the implementation of these RI projects with greater financial and political commitments. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia expressed its willingness to support the ARB RIs.

The meeting also requested BDT to help members carry out economic feasibility studies to facilitate the implementation of RI projects.

Document 05: The document entitled [Summary of ITU-T Action Plan for WTSA-08 Resolutions \(Johannesburg, 2008\)](#) includes 17 Resolutions that relate to ITU-D activities. The participants were asked to consider the content of these 17 WTSA resolutions while preparing their proposals to WTDC-10.

The meeting took note of the document and emphasized, while addressing the topics included in these 17 WTSA Resolutions, that duplication between the Sectors' activities should be avoided.

Document 07: The document entitled [Report on Implementation of WTDC-06 Resolutions \(from 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2009\)](#) provided information on the implementation of WTDC-06 Resolutions through Programmes, Study Groups, Activities and Special Initiatives and in particular, on activities carried out for the implementation of each Resolution.

The meeting took note of the document.

8. Topics for BDT Future Work

Document 06: The purpose of the document entitled [A Fresh Look on ITU-D Activities](#) presented by BDT, at the request of TDAG, was to trigger discussion, especially on the programming of BDT activities and potential for consolidation in preparation for the 2010 World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-10). The document proposes to consolidate and cluster activities so that resources can be allocated in a more efficient way. The BDT Director emphasized that the proposal in the document was given as an example and members were invited to submit further contributions as they deemed fit.

The meeting thanked BDT for the information presented in Document 06 and considered this as one of the important inputs to this RPM. After a general discussion, the meeting supported in principle the approach proposed in Document 06. The BDT Director provided further information on the outcomes of the previous RPMs with regard to this document at the request of the meeting.

Documents 10, 11, 12 and 13 were introduced by AITCO as proposed Regional Initiatives on:

- Future Internet Arab Forum
- Promotion of e-accessibility within the Arab Region
- Migration from IPV4 to IPV6
- e-Certificate Structures

AITCO also presented [Document 21](#) proposing a project to support the introduction of Digital TV and Mobile TV in the Arab Region.

The representative from AITCO informed the meeting that the five proposals were endorsed by AITCO membership. Lebanon reiterated its support to the above-mentioned proposals. The meeting noted the proposals.

Document 09: The document entitled [Syrian contribution to the RPM-ARB](#) was introduced by Syria. It proposed the revision of over 20 existing WTDC Resolutions (Doha, 2006) as well as 3 Recommendations and the inclusion of 6 new resolutions which will be submitted to the Arab Group in their forthcoming meeting for consideration. In the absence of the revised texts, the meeting noted the document.

The meeting also noted the proposal to consolidate the 6 existing programmes into 4, as presented in Document 06 as well as the inclusion of land-locked countries among the countries in special need.

Document 15 was introduced by Egypt. It includes a list of proposals to the meeting related to RIs on Memory of the Arab World, Migration from Analogue to Digital Broadcasting, Broadband Internet, Modification of Resolution 8 of Doha and the Creation of programmes to support CIRT.

The meeting requested that further details and explanation on the proposed modification of Resolution 8 of Doha be annexed to this document. Therefore, Egypt submitted the requested information, which was included as an addendum to Document 15.

Documents 16, 17, 18 and 19 were introduced by STE proposing the following draft resolutions:

- Access to ICTs by Persons with Disabilities

- Migration from IPV4 to IPV6.
- ICTs and Climate Change in Developing Countries
- Creation of national CIRTs and their cooperation.

The meeting took note of these draft resolutions proposed for the next WTDC in Hyderabad.

Document 20 was introduced by CITC of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia proposing the use of open source and free software available for SMEs in the Arab Region as a means to facilitate the implementation of WSIS outcomes. He also requested the enhancement of public-private partnerships to support this project.

The meeting encouraged the establishment of these centres and supported the consideration of this project as a possible Regional Initiative for the Arab States region.

Document 14: The document entitled [Proposal for a National Cybersecurity Management System: Framework, Maturity Model, Roles & Responsibilities, Indicators and Implementation Guide](#) was introduced and presented by Morocco.

The meeting stressed upon the urgent need to fight cybercrime at national and regional levels. The content of this document was agreed by the meeting to be taken into consideration within the respective ITU-D programme and projects.

Based on the documents presented to the RPM and projects under discussion in the region, the meeting agreed on the priority areas for the ARB Regional Initiatives found in Part II.

9. General Observations

The participants stated that they are working in the updating of the resolutions regarding special assistance to Palestine, Lebanon, Somalia and Iraq. These resolutions will be directly submitted to WTDC.

At the request of Mauritania, the Chairman invited Mauritania to make a presentation on the modernization of its telecom sector.

PART-II: Proposal for Future Work from the Arab States Region

After considering the introduction of documents and interventions, the RPM-ARB identified the following as priority areas for programmes, regional initiatives and Study Group Questions for the future work of the ITU-D sector.

Priority Areas for Programmes

The participants to the RPM-ARB endorsed the prioritization of topics suggested in document [RPM-ARB10/06](#) and agreed that these topics, which are global in nature, could be operationalized through programmes supported by the following four modes of delivery: the creation of tools, development of training materials, information dissemination through workshops and seminars as well as direct assistance.

The proposed topics could be consolidated into programmes based on the linkages or similarities between them, as follows:

Programme 1 Information and communication infrastructure

Fixed, mobile, broadband network development, including broadcast networks and spectrum management, rural communications and emergency telecommunication and disaster relief
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Programme 2 Cybersecurity and ICT applications

Particular applications of the use of ICTs, including, inter alia, e-government, e-health, e-environment and climate change, etc, and promotion of security and confidence in the use of ICT, including the protection of youth and children
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Programme 3 Enabling environment

Telecommunications/ICT policy and regulatory matters, including ICT economics (market analysis, cost modeling and tariffs) and statistics (indicators, measuring the information society)

Programme 4 Capacity building and other initiatives
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To facilitate access to information and knowledge for all, in particular for the engagement of women, youth and children, indigenous people and communities living in underserved areas, and other disadvantaged groups, including people with disabilities, through e-inclusion and e-accessibility activities.
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Addressing the unique needs of LDCs, SIDS, land-locked countries and countries in special need

Objective: Provision of special assistance to LDCs, SIDS, land-locked countries and countries in special need (countries emerging from war, struck by natural disasters etc.) to meet their priority ICT requirements.

To achieve the above-mentioned objective, the following mechanisms will be used:

1. Special Programme for LDCs, SIDS, land-locked countries and countries in special need
2. Global Initiatives for LDCs, SIDS, land-locked countries and countries in special need

Arab Regional Initiatives

The Arab Regional Initiatives are intended to address the specific ICT priority areas through partnerships and resource mobilization to implement small- medium- and large-scale projects. Under each Regional Initiative, projects will be developed and implemented to meet the region's needs.

1. Broadband connectivity

Objective: To assist Member States in the development of broadband access in urban and rural areas

Expected results:

1. National ICT master plan in meeting the requirements of developing countries;
2. Improved broadband infrastructure (including migration to NGN) and access to affordable ICT services in urban and rural areas;
3. Development of ICT applications that can support multilingualism and address local needs;
4. Enhanced skills on broadband communication network for the relevant human resources.

2. Digital broadcasting

Objectives: To assist ITU Member States towards a smooth and timely transition from analogue to digital broadcasting to take advantage of the digital dividend.

Expected results:

1. Guidelines adapted for the Arab Region on transition from analogue to digital broadcasting;
2. Policy and regulatory frameworks for digital terrestrial broadcasting including Mobile TV;
3. Digital broadcasting master plans for smooth transition from analogue to digital broadcasting including Mobile TV;
4. Provision of assistance in the field of interactive multimedia services to broadcasters of the Arab region;
5. Enhanced human resources skills on digital broadcasting technologies.

3. Open Source Software

Objective: to develop free and open source software and ensure its availability for SMEs in the Arab region, as a means to facilitate WSIS outcomes.

Expected results:

1. Establish open source software support centers in the Arab region;
2. Determine best practices of open-source software and its application;
3. Develop guidelines and mechanisms for cooperation and coordination among open source software support centers.

4. Arab Digital Content

Objective: to contribute to a better presence of Arabic Digital Content.

Expected results:

1. Improve the introduction of Arabic Domain Names in Arabic;
2. Develop sites that offer relevant content for the economic and social development of the Arab region;
3. Improve the accessibility to the cultural Arab heritage;
4. Appropriate mechanisms for conversion from analogue to digital archives.

5. Cybersecurity

Objective: to enhance coordination in building confidence in the use of Information and Communication Technologies within the Arab region

Expected results:

1. Encourage the adoption of national frameworks and coordinated national and regional strategies against Cybercrime in the Arab region;
2. Enhance the establishment of national CIRTs in the Arab region;
3. Ensure proper coordination between national CIRTs;
4. Ensure the protection of children and youth when surfing on the Internet.

Draft Resolutions to be submitted directly by Members to WTDC

1. Draft new resolution on "Access to ICTs by Persons with Disabilities"
 2. Draft new resolution on "Migration from IPV4 to IPV6"
 3. Draft new resolution on ""ICTs and Climate Change in Developing Countries"
 4. Draft new resolution on "Creation of national CIRTs and their cooperation"
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