Ref.: BDT/DDR/ARB/DM/015-Rev   Geneva, 28 September 2023

To:

- Administrations of ITU Member States
- ITU-D Sector Members
- Academia
- Regulators
- Regional and International Organizations in the Arab Region
- Regional chairs and vice chairs of the Advisory Groups (TSAG, TDAG, RAG) and Study Groups

Subject: ITU Regional Development Forum for the Arab States (6-7 November 2023) and Digital Regulation Workshop (8 November 2023), Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am pleased to invite you to participate in the **Regional Development Forum for the Arab States (RDF-ARB)**, organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)) and hosted by the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications of the Kingdom of Bahrain. The forum will take place from 6 to 7 November 2023 in Manama and will be held in hybrid format with interpretation in Arabic and English. The RDF will be followed by the Digital Regulation Workshop for the Arab States on 8 November 2023 and it will only be in person training.

RDF-ARB will report on the outcomes, and ongoing implementation of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-22) held in Kigali, Rwanda in June 2022. Emphasis will be given to the five Regional Initiatives for Arab Region approved at WTDC-22 as well as other activities under the five thematic priority areas adopted at WTDC-22.

This year's RDF-ARB will focus on Partner2Connect (P2C) matchmaking between Member States needs and partner pledges under the **P2C Digital Coalition** that have so far attracted over 780 pledges (as of today), at a value of over 31.8 billion US Dollars. The aim will be, together with partners, to operationalize these pledges and implement impactful projects across the Arab Region. New pledges could also be announced on this occasion.

The Annual Regional Development Forum for the Arab States provides an opportunity for the exchange of views between ITU and its stakeholders including ITU Member States, Sector Members as well as other stakeholders in the Arab Region. It serves as a platform for an exchange of views on how to achieve meaningful connectivity and sustainable digital transformation in the region.

RFD-ARB will also feature a dedicated session for the Network of Women (NoW) in the Arab Region to showcase the progress and the strategy of the NoW Arab Regional group as well as its future plans.

Following the RDF-ARB, the "Digital Regulation Workshop" is organized on 8 November at the same venue, with the kind support of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as part of the collaboration between the Saudi Communications, Space & Technology Commission and ITU.

The ITU Regional Office for the Arab States is launching a **Regional Consultation** that presents an opportunity for ITU Member States to highlight their priority needs over and above the regional priorities as expressed in the Regional Initiatives, and other stakeholders based on the Partner2Connect Coalition pledges to express their commitments to contribute and support the implementation of projects and activities financed by the over USD 31.8 billion pledged so far.

Stakeholders who will attend the Partner2Connect matchmaking roundtables during this RDF-ARB are invited to submit their written contributions to be used as basis for discussions, by filling in the RDF-ARB Contributions Template (**Annex 1**) and submit to: itu-ro-arabstates@itu.int, no later than 15 Octobre 2023. This template is also available on the website of the event.

Finally, our Regional Development Forums are open to all stakeholders involved in digital development and digital transformation with an interest in forging multistakeholder partnerships. Key participants include telecommunication/ICT policymakers, regulators, industry, academia, United Nations Agencies, regional and international development agencies, and banks.

To participate, please register online using the link available at RDF ARB no later than **1 November 2023**. For more details on the agenda and for updates on the event, please refer to the ITU Regional office website at www.itu.int/ArabStates.

To encourage participation of developing countries and subject to availability of funds, a limited number of full fellowships may be granted to eligible Member States within the Arab Region only. Priority will be given to Least Developed Countries. Full fellowships will cover the air ticket (one return economy class ticket by the most direct/economical route from the country of origin to the meeting venue), and appropriate daily subsistence allowance intended to cover accommodation, meals and incidental expenses. Member States shall cover the remainder of the cost of the participation.

In line with Plenipotentiary Resolution 213 (Dubai, 2018), it is encouraged that fellowship nominations take into consideration gender balance and inclusion of persons with disabilities and with specific needs. The criteria to grant a fellowship include: available ITU budget; active participation; equitable distribution among countries; application by persons with disabilities and specific needs; and gender balance.

The duly validated fellowship request form and its annexes, if any, must be returned to the Fellowships Service by e-mail to fellowships@itu.int and itu-ro-arabstates@itu.int by 10 October at the very latest. Registration prior to submitting the fellowship request is mandatory.

For any additional enquiry, please contact the ITU Regional Office for the Arab States (email: itu-ro-arabstates@itu.int - Telephone: +202 3537 1777).

I look forward to meeting you at this important event.

Yours faithfully,

[Original signed]

Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava
Director