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| **Regional Preparatory Meeting  for Arab States for WTDC-25 (RPM-ARB)**  **Amman, Jordan, 4-5 February 2025** | A close up of a sign  Description automatically generated |
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| Chair, RDF-ARB | |
| Final Report of ITU Regional Development Forum for Arab Region (RDF-ARB) | |
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**ITU Regional Development Forum for Arab Region**

**(RDF-ARB)**

***Information and Communication Technologies for attaining***   
***Sustainable Development Goals***

Organized by the ITU, Telecommunication Development Bureau

Hosted by Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Jordan

**3 February 202****5**

**Amman, Jordan**

**FINAL REPORT**

# Introduction & General Overview

The ITU Regional Development Forum for the Arab States (RDF-ARB) 2025 was organized by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and hosted by the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Jordan. The Forum was held on 3 February 2025 in the Jordan, Amman and held back-to-back with the ITU Regional Preparatory Meeting (RPM) for Arab Region (4-5 February 2025).

The RDF-ARB offered a platform for high-level dialogue, collaboration, and partnerships among telecommunications/ICT policymakers, regulators, industry leaders, academia, and regional and international development organizations. These forums played a pivotal role in evaluating strategic priorities that shaped the regional work plan of the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) between World Telecommunication Development Conferences.

The Regional Development Forum for the Arab States provided 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 served as a platform for an exchange of views on how to achieve meaningful connectivity and sustainable digital transformation in the region. The RDF-ARB focused on Partner2Connect (P2C) matchmaking between Member States needs and partner pledges under the P2C Digital Coalition.

# Documentation

# The meeting documents are published on the RDF website at ([click here](https://www.itu.int/itu-d/meetings/rdf/arb/documents/)).

# Participation

The event was attended by a total of **111** participants (35 female and 76 male), including **89** (85%) attending in person and **22** (15%) participating remotely. **17** Member States were represented by 54 delegates, along with participants from various stakeholder groups, 4 from Resolution 99, 13 from ITU-D Sector Members, **3** from Academia, **15** from UN agencies, **20 Non-members and 2** from Regional Organizations. The final list of participants is available at ([click here](https://www.itu.int/itu-d/meetings/rdf/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2025/02/RDF-ARB-25-List-of-Participants.pdf)).

# Appointment of the Chair of the Regional Development Forum for the Arab States

H.E. Eng. Bassam Al-Sarhan, Chairman of the Board/CEO, Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC), Jordan, was appointed as the Chair of the Regional Development Forum for Arab States.

# Opening Ceremony

The event's first segment featured the Opening Ceremony, moderated by Mr. Adel Darwish, Regional Director of the Arab Regional Office. The opening remarks were delivered by the following high-level speakers:

* **H.E. Eng. Sami Smeirat**, Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
* **Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava**, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT), ITU
* **Dr. Khalid Wali**, Director, ICTs Development Dept., LAS
* **Ms. Barbara Manzi**, Regional Director for Arab States, UN Development Coordination Office
* **H.E. Eng. Bassam Al-Sarhan**, Chairman of the Board/CEO, Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC), Jordan

The opening ceremony session of the ITU’s Regional Development Forum for the Arab Region (RDF-ARB-25) commenced with welcoming remarks from distinguished dignitaries, emphasizing the pivotal role of digital transformation, innovation, and regional cooperation in advancing sustainable development.

**H.E. Sami Smeirat, Minister of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship of Jordan**, highlighted Jordan's pioneering role in fostering innovation since the 1980s and the country’s success in implementing local and regional digital projects. He stressed the importance of digital skills development, particularly focusing on youth and women, as a fundamental pillar for sustainable development. He also emphasized the forum's role as a platform to exchange expertise, share achievements, and discuss progress related to regional initiatives endorsed at WTDC-22. In his remarks, he expressed gratitude to the ITU and the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) of Jordan for their significant efforts in organizing the forum.

**Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau at ITU**, reflected on ITU's 160-year history of continuous evolution and innovation, celebrating its diverse membership comprising 194 member states and over a thousand industry and academic institutions. He underlined the challenges and opportunities presented by emerging technologies such as AI, quantum computing, big data, and IoT, noting that while technological advancements move rapidly, regulations and policies often struggle to keep pace. Dr. Zavazava stressed the necessity of building capacity across nations to ensure that both advanced and less developed countries can equally benefit from digital technologies. He highlighted the importance of inclusivity, emphasizing that access to information and communication technologies should not be limited by geography, economic status, gender, age, or physical ability. Dr. Zavazava also addressed global challenges such as climate change, natural disasters, and cybersecurity threats, pointing out that these issues are interconnected with the digital world. He underscored the vulnerability of ICT infrastructures to cyber threats and emphasized the collective responsibility of governments, the private sector, and international organizations to create secure, resilient digital environments. He advocated for stronger South-South cooperation and triangular partnerships to bridge digital gaps and foster sustainable development globally. Additionally, he emphasized the role of the private sector in driving innovation and the importance of academia in shaping future leaders capable of navigating the complexities of the digital age. Dr. Zavazava reaffirmed ITU's commitment to the implementation of the Kigali Action Plan, focusing on universal connectivity, resource mobilization, and child online protection, and expressed optimism that the forum would contribute to formulating innovative solutions for enhancing digital capabilities in the Arab region.

**Dr. Khalid Wali**, **Director, ICTs Development Dept., League of Arab States (LAS),** acknowledged the Kingdom of Jordan for hosting the forum and commended its recognition as the Arab Digital Capital for 2025. He expressed sincere gratitude to the ITU for its unwavering support and to the Government of Jordan for its hospitality and leadership in advancing digital development in the region. He discussed the significant progress of Arab countries in ICT development, with particular recognition of KSA, UAE, Bahrain, and Jordan. Dr. Wali encouraged leveraging the outcomes of WTDC-22 and fostering regional collaboration to bridge the digital divide and promote sustainable digital growth.

**Ms. Barbara Manzi, Regional Director for Arab States, UN Development Coordination Office**, representing the UN System in Arab Region, emphasized the rapid pace of technological advancements and the need for collaborative efforts to achieve digital transformation aligned with the aspirations of global communities. She highlighted the importance of building digital infrastructure, promoting entrepreneurship, and empowering youth to drive future innovations. She reiterated the UN's support for regional digital initiatives and the critical role of digital technologies in accelerating the achievement of the SDGs. She also acknowledged the ITU and the TRC of Jordan for their excellent organization and commitment to fostering regional cooperation through this forum.

**Eng. Bassam Al-Sarhan, Chairman of the Board and CEO of the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) in Jordan and chair of the RDF-ARB 2025**, reaffirmed Jordan's commitment to advancing the ICT sector and supporting regional cooperation to foster innovation and digital transformation. He highlighted the forum as a vital platform for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and the development of a roadmap for the Arab Region’s digital future. He extended his gratitude to the ITU and all participating organizations for their valuable contributions to the success of the forum. Following his speech, a video presentation was shown, providing an overview of Jordan's Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC), its history, achievements, and significant milestones since its establishment in 1995. The video highlighted TRC's role in promoting competition, supporting partnerships with the private sector, advancing digital infrastructure, and enhancing telecommunications services, with a focus on key initiatives such as the implementation of 5G technology and efforts to improve connectivity in remote areas.

The opening ceremony set a collaborative tone, underscoring the shared vision of harnessing digital technologies to drive sustainable development, enhance regional connectivity, and promote inclusive growth across the Arab Region.

# Roundtable Discussions:

# 6.1 ROUNDTABLE ONE: State of Digital Development and Trends - Challenges & Opportunities:

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| **10:00 – 11:00** | Moderator: **Regional Director, ITU Regional Office for Arab States** |
| **Setting the Stage:** ITU Presentation by ITU, BDT |
| Panelists:   * **H.E. Dr Mohamed Al Kuwaiti**, Head, Cybersecurity, United Arab Emirates * **Mr Mustafa Y. Sheik**, Director General, National Communications Authority (NCA), Somalia * **Mr. Mohamed Ben Amor**, Director General, Arab ICTs Organization (AICTO) * **Mr. Muath S. ALRUMAYH**, General Manager of International Affairs, Communication, Space and Technology Commission (CST), Saudi * **Mr. Jawad Abbassi**, Head of MENA, GSMA * **Dr. Chafic Chaya**, Regional Manager for Public Policy and Government Affairs – Middle East, Regional Internet Registry for Europe, Middle East and Central Asia (RIPE NCC) |

The first roundtable session of the ITU RDF ARB 2025 focused on the state of digital development, highlighting key trends, challenges, and opportunities within the region. The panel discussion, moderated by **Mr. Adel Darwish**, featured distinguished speakers from various countries and organizations and introduced **Ms. Sofie Maddens** from ITU to present the "State of Digital Development and Trends - Challenges & Opportunities" report. Ms. Maddens provided an overview of the Arab region's digital landscape, emphasizing both the remarkable progress made and the persistent barriers to universal and meaningful connectivity. She noted that 95% of the region’s population is covered by a mobile broadband network, positioning the region close to achieving universal access. However, challenges such as infrastructure limitations, affordability issues, digital literacy gaps, and regulatory barriers continue to hinder optimal connectivity.

Ms. Maddens highlighted the importance of shifting focus from mere connectivity to meaningful access, which encompasses affordability, digital skills, and quality of online experiences. She emphasized the need for robust data collection and analysis to identify gaps and drive informed policy decisions. The session also addressed the diversity within the region, noting significant discrepancies in digital development between countries and demographic groups, including gender, urban-rural divides, and income disparities.

Following the presentation by ITU, **Mr. Mohamed Al Kuwaiti** from UAE delivered a video message underscoring the critical role of digital transformation in achieving sustainable development goals. He highlighted the UAE's leadership in smart cities, AI-driven governance, and cybersecurity, presenting the country as a model for digital progress in the Arab region.

**Mr. Mustafa Sheik** from Somalia discussed the unique challenges faced by his country, such as limited infrastructure, low digital literacy, and regulatory gaps, while also highlighting opportunities through regional initiatives and youth engagement.

**Mr. Mohamed Ben Amor** from AICTO shared insights on the space economy and AI, emphasizing their transformative potential and the need for ethical and regulatory frameworks to guide their development. He also discussed successful models in space telecommunications and the integration of satellite technology with terrestrial networks.

**Mr. Muath Alrumayh** from Saudi Arabia highlighted the priorities for digital development, including Space technology and regulation, AI, cybersecurity, and sustainability and importance of having agile regulation. He stressed the importance of national, regional collaboration, policy alignment, and investment in human capital to harness the benefits of emerging technologies.

**Mr. Jawad Abbassi** from GSMA focused on bridging the digital usage gap, pointing out that while coverage has improved significantly, actual usage remains a challenge due to affordability, digital literacy, and policy barriers. He advocated for policy reforms, infrastructure sharing, and public-private partnerships to address these issues.

**Mr. Chafic Chaya** from RIPE NCC emphasized the need for tailored policy recommendations to address barriers to digital adoption, particularly in marginalized communities. He highlighted the importance of data-driven decision-making, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and the development of inclusive regulatory frameworks to foster digital growth.

The session concluded with a collective call for action, emphasizing the critical role of digital transformation, space technology, AI, sustainability, and regional cooperation in shaping the future of the Arab region. The panelists and moderator posed for a group photo, marking the conclusion of a dynamic and insightful discussion aimed at advancing digital development across the region.

Following the conclusion of the first roundtable session, a significant signing ceremony took place featured the signing of a Joint Declaration between the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the RIPE Network Coordination Centre (RIPE NCC).

**Mr. Hans Petter Holen**, CEO of RIPE NCC delivered remarks, expressing gratitude to ITU, and to all stakeholders for their dedication and close cooperation over the years. He highlighted the importance of this collaboration in accelerating ICT deployment, bridging the digital divide, and ensuring capacity building worldwide. Mr. Holen emphasized that the Declaration was not merely a formal agreement but a commitment to concrete actions aimed at achieving sustainable development goals.

**Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava** also addressed the attendees, expressing pride in the expanding partnership with RIPE NCC. He underscored the significance of full inclusion across the globe and highlighted the ITU's success in fostering diverse memberships, including industry leaders, academic institutions, and other key entities. Dr. Zavazava acknowledged the substantial resources provided by partners since 2023, which have significantly contributed to the development sector's achievements. He emphasized that the partnership with RIPE NCC was timely, focusing on resilience, inclusion, and security as core pillars of their collaboration.

The Joint Declaration highlights the mutual commitment of ITU and RIPE NCC to promote and enhance internet infrastructure, accelerate IPv6 deployment, IPv6 transition strategies and strengthen capacity-building initiatives. Furthermore, the Joint Declaration reflected the shared dedication of both organizations to fostering digital development and enhancing global connectivity. Both Mr. Holen and Dr. Zavazava, in their remarks, underscored the vital role of collaboration in building a secure, resilient, and inclusive internet ecosystem, especially in underserved regions.

The ceremony concluded with the formal signing of the Joint Declaration by Dr. Zavazava and Dr. Chaya, symbolizing a strengthened partnership aimed at driving digital transformation and ensuring equitable access to the opportunities of a connected world.

**6.2 ROUNDTABLE TWO: Matchmaking Roundtable on Fostering Partnerships on Infrastructure Development for Universal Connectivity**

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| **11:30 – 12:30** | Moderator**: ITU Regional Office for Arab States** |
| Panelists:   * **H.E. Dr. Nooh Alshyab**, Member of the Board of Commissioners, Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, Jordan * **Ms. Maysa Monayer**, General Director for Spectrum and Transmission Administration at the Ministry of Telecommunications & Digital Economy in State of Palestine * **Mr. Jawad Abbassi**, Head of MENA, GSMA * **Mr. Mohamed Boubacar**, Technical Advisor, Ministry of Digital Transformation and Modernization of Administration, Mauritania * **Mr. Khaled Naguib Ahmed**, Advisor, Djibouti Telecom, Djibouti |

Roundtable two of the RDF ARB 2025 focused on fostering partnerships for infrastructure development to achieve universal connectivity. The session, moderated by ITU Regional Office for Arab states, aimed to facilitate an interactive dialogue among stakeholders from governments, the private sector, and international organizations to discuss strategies and initiatives that support meaningful and universal connectivity.

**H.E. Dr. Nooh Alshyab**, Member of the Board of Commissioners at the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority in Jordan, highlighted the country's commitment to public-private partnerships (PPPs) as a cornerstone for digital infrastructure development. He emphasized Jordan's 2020 law on PPPs, which provides a clear roadmap for collaboration with the private sector. Dr. Alshyab detailed the broadband network project as a key example of successful cooperation, which has significantly expanded high-speed internet access. He also discussed incentives, such as tax exemptions and reduced fees, to encourage private sector investment, aiming to cover 50% of the population with 5G services by 2026.

**Ms. Maysa Monayer**, General Director for Spectrum and Transmission Administration at the Ministry of Telecommunications & Digital Economy in State of Palestine, outlined the unique challenges faced by State of Palestine due to political constraints, particularly regarding frequency spectrum access and infrastructure deployment. Despite these hurdles, she stressed the importance of international cooperation through initiatives like Partner2Connect (P2C) to mobilize resources, enhance digital inclusion, and support regulatory reforms. She called for increased global advocacy to secure Palestine's digital rights and accelerate infrastructure development.

**Mr. Jawad Abbassi**, Head of MENA at GSMA, emphasized the role of mobile operators in bridging the digital divide, advocating for competitive markets, infrastructure sharing, and efficient spectrum management. He highlighted innovative models such as commercial infrastructure sharing and extended spectrum licenses, which facilitate rapid deployment of mobile networks, especially in underserved areas. Mr. Abbassi also underscored the importance of satellite communications in reaching remote regions and ensuring network resilience during natural disasters.

**Mr. Mohamed Boubacar**, Technical Advisor at the Ministry of Digital Transformation and Modernization of Administration in Mauritania, discussed his country's efforts to expand fiber optic networks through partnerships with the World Bank and private entities. He highlighted projects aimed at connecting state capitals and rural areas, leveraging surplus infrastructure from mining and energy sectors to enhance digital connectivity.

**Mr. Khaled Naguib Ahmed**, Advisor at Djibouti Telecom, showcased Djibouti's strategic role as a regional hub for undersea cables, connecting Africa, Asia, and Europe. He emphasized the importance of data centers and international partnerships in improving regional connectivity and reducing costs. Mr. Ahmed also discussed Djibouti Telecom's collaborations with organizations like UNICEF and the World Bank to promote affordable broadband access in underserved areas through innovative financing models and regulatory incentives.

The roundtable concluded with a collective recognition of the critical role of partnerships, digital literacy, financial mobilization, and technical support in achieving universal connectivity. Panelists agreed on the need for continuous collaboration among governments, the private sector, and international organizations to bridge the digital divide and foster sustainable digital development in Arab region.

## 6.3 NETWORK OF WOMEN (NoW) ARAB STATES: Building Connections, Empowering Futures

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| **12:30 -13:30** | Moderator: **Eng. Noha Gafar, Chair, NoW Arab States and Head of International Policies Department, National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (NTRA), Egypt** |
| Panelists:   * **Ms. Ava Nadir**, Chairperson, GEN Iraq * **Ms. Zena Bo-Harb**, Head of International Cooperation, OGERO, Lebanon · * **Ms. Naima Hassan Dimbil**, Director of, Interconnection, Wholesale and Universal Access and Services Department, National Communications Authority of Somalia * **Ms. Huda Rabayia**, Cloud Solution Sales Lead, Microsoft, Jordan * **Ms. Reem Al-Shammari**, Chairperson, Women in Cybersecurity Middle East (WiCSME), Kuwait * **Ms. Maha Ziad Mouasher**, Studies and Research Engineer, TRC, Jordan |

The session was moderated by **Mrs. Noha Gaafar**, Chair of NoW Arab States and Head of the International Policies Department at Egypt's National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (NTRA). She welcomed the panelists and emphasized the importance of empowering women in the ICT sector as a critical driver for sustainable development.

The NoW discussion highlighted the critical role of policy makers, cultural change, and capacity-building initiatives in empowering women in the ICT sector.

**Ms. Ava Nadir** underscored the need for strong governance and policies to support women's inclusion, sharing her experiences from Iraq where she faced challenges advocating for positive discrimination policies.

**Ms. Zena Bo-Harb** discussed international initiatives, referencing the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 5 on gender equality. She emphasized Lebanon's efforts in capacity building through OGERO, despite the absence of a national strategy for gender equality in the digital domain.

**Ms. Naima Hassan Dimbil** from Somalia highlighted Government-led programs supporting women in ICT, including workshops and policies to promote digital literacy and protect women from online harassment. She commended ITU for its continuous support in these areas.

**Ms. Huda Rabayia** from Microsoft Jordan shared insights on private sector initiatives, noting that Microsoft employs over 35% women, with leadership representation at 30%, thanks to dedicated programs like "Empower Her."

**Ms. Reem Al-Shammari** from Kuwait presented the successful model of Women in Cybersecurity Middle East (WiCSME), which has grown to over 500 members across 20 Arab countries. She stressed the importance of mentorship programs, partnerships with ITU, and creating role models within local cultures to inspire young women.

**Ms. Maha Ziad Mouasher** emphasized the value of mentorship, role models, and supportive policies in empowering women to overcome challenges in the ICT sector.

The session concluded with closing remarks by **Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava**, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau. Dr. Zavazava highlighted the significance of the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and the 10th anniversary of the SDGs, reinforcing ITU's commitment to gender equality. He praised the network of networks model and encouraged the creation of similar networks across regions to amplify impact. He stressed the importance of male allies in gender mainstreaming efforts.

Dr. Zavazava also called for increased participation of young women and girls in the upcoming Global Youth Summit in Cuba, urging stakeholders to sponsor their involvement. He underscored that digital inclusion should extend beyond urban centers to rural and disadvantaged communities, where many women and girls face barriers to access. Reflecting on the transformative power of ICT, he shared stories of how digital tools have enabled women from remote areas to participate in global platforms, such ITU and global Youth without leaving their communities.

He concluded by challenging participants to showcase the real impact of their initiatives at the upcoming WTDC-25 in Azerbaijan, advocating for testimonials from women whose lives have been transformed through ICT. Dr. Zavazava’s appeal emphasized that digital development must be inclusive, transformative, and rooted in real-world impact, leaving no one behind.

## 6.4 ROUNDTABLE THREE: P2C Matchmaking Roundtable on Fostering Partnerships for Capacity Development

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| **14:30 – 15:30** | Moderator: **ITU Regional Office for Arab States** |
| Panelists:   * **Mr. Ahmed Said** – Sector Head, International Policies & Relations Department, National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (NTRA), Egypt * **Ms. Naima Hassan Dimbil**, Director of, Interconnection, Wholesale and Universal Access and Services Department, National Communications Authority of Somalia * **Mr. Syed Mohammad Shaharyar Jawaid**, Senior ICT Specialist, Economic & Social Infrastructure Dept., Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) * **Mr. Samer Qubain**, Senior Advisor, GovTech Program, World Bank (WB) * **Ms. Nora Abdalla Hassan Basher**, Director, Infrastructure and Interconnection Department. Telecommunication and Post Regulatory Authority (TPRA), Sudan * **Mr. Fahd Batayneh**, Stakeholder Engagement Director - Middle East, ICANN |

The third roundtable served as a dynamic platform to facilitate meaningful collaboration and strategic partnerships aimed at skills development across the Arab region. The session focused on aligning resources with real-world needs, highlighting innovative approaches to building sustainable, high-value partnerships that unlock transformative opportunities. It aimed to catalyze impactful initiatives to accelerate the region's skills development agenda, supporting digital transformation and regional growth.

The session was moderated by the ITU Regional Office for Arab States, run though match making format with Pledger’s makers announcing tehri Pledges as offerings for membership to benefit from and Pledgers receivers with list of national needs to be filled and featured a different panelist from governments, donors, UN and non-profit organizations.

The panelists shared their insights on the implementation of the Partner2Connect (P2C) initiatives, focusing on the capacity-building needs of least developed countries in the Arab world.

**Mr. Ahmed Said** elaborated on Egypt's national commitment to digital transformation, highlighting initiatives such as the "Decent Life" project and partnerships with the ITU. Mr Said highlighted Egypt’s P2C pledges to support ITU membership on areas of capacity building.

**Eng. Naima Hassan Dimbil** discussed Somalia's promising progress in digital transformation, emphasizing the potential of P2C initiatives to enhance connectivity and foster collaborative partnerships to address the country's unique challenges specifically on capacity development and digital skills and how P2C could fill the capacity building gaps.

**Mr. Syed Mohammad Shaharyar Jawaid** from IsDB underscored the bank's key role in developing ICT infrastructure and supporting capacity-building projects across member states. He announced a quarter-billion-dollar commitment for financing digital public infrastructure projects in the next three years. Mr Syed shed light on a list of activities for ITU membership to benefit from and how IsDB is aligning its Pledges with P2C approach.

**Mr. Samer Qubain** from the World Bank highlighted the bank's alignment with P2C goals, detailing initiatives like "Skilling Up" programs targeting youth employment and digital literacy in the MENA region. Mr Samer, shared the list of the World Bank initiatives that are perfectly aligned with ITU’s P2C.

**Ms. Nora Abdalla Hassan Basher** addressed Sudan's current challenges, emphasizing the urgent need for resource mobilization, partnerships, and capacity building to support digital inclusion and recovery.

**Mr. Fahd Batayneh** from ICANN discussed ICANN's role in promoting digital inclusion through technical training, awareness programs, and support for internet governance initiatives.

The session concluded with a call for continued collaboration, urging panelists and participants to engage in bilateral discussions to explore specific partnership opportunities. The moderator encouraged attendees to capitalize on the matchmaking platform to translate discussions into actionable projects, fostering sustainable growth and digital development across the region.

## ROUNDTABLE FOUR: Roundtable on the Implementation of ITU Regional Initiatives for the Arab States

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| **15:30 – 16:30** | Moderator: **ITU Regional Office for the Arab States** |
| **Presentation of the Implementation of RIs by Regional Director, ITU Regional Office for Arab States** |
| Panelists:   * **Eng. Jaafar Al Manaseer**, Head of International Cooperation & Strategic Partnerships, Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship, Jordan * **Mr. Abdulla Jaber**, Broadcasting Service Engineer, Telecommunications and Digital Government Authority, UAE * **Eng. Ahmed Abdel Aziz**, Executive Vice President for National Projects, National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority, Egypt * **Eng. Mustafa Al – Bahbahani**, Head of International Relations Affairs Department, Communications and Media Commission (CMC) of Iraq * **Eng. Qusai Saleem**, Acting Executive Director – MeemAin |

The session on the Implementation of ITU Regional Initiatives for the Arab States was moderated by Mr. Karim Abdelghani, Programme Coordinator in the ITU Arab Regional Office. The session focused on the implementation of the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2022 Arab Regional Initiatives which are namely:

**ARB1**: Sustainable digital economy through digital transformation

**ARB2**: Enhancing confidence, security and privacy in the use of telecommunications/information and communication technologies in the era of new and emerging digital technologies

**ARB3**: Developing digital infrastructure for smart sustainable cities and communities

**ARB4**: Building capacities and encouraging digital innovation, entrepreneurship and future foresight

**ARB5**: Developing means of digital regulation

The Regional Director for the ITU Regional Office for Arab States presented an overview of the ITU Regional Office's activities over the past two years to implement the WTDC-22 Regional Initiatives. In addition, **Mr Darwish** referred to the outcomes of the first Regional Strategic Foresight Analysis that was developed in a regional workshop hosted by the Telecommunication and Digital Government Regulatory Authority of the UAE in November 2024.

The session featured interventions from stakeholders in the Arab region to indicate their implementation of the WTDC-22 Regional Initiatives as follows:

**Mr. Jaafar Al Manaseer** from Jordan showcased two significant studies conducted in collaboration with the ITU: the first was on a Digital Innovation Profile developed to assess the digital innovation ecosystem in Jordan. The second study was an assessment study on the enabling environment for immersive technologies in Jordan. Mr. Al Manaseer emphasized the studies’ role in fostering digital economy transformation, bridging gaps, and enhancing innovation hubs in Jordan.

**Mr. Abdulla Jaber** from UAE, shared insights into the UAE's collaboration with the ITU, particularly on the International Center for Digital Innovation (i-Codi). He highlighted the importance of inclusive, flexible, and sustainable strategies developed through multi-stakeholder workshops. It is important to highlight that the regional strategic foresight analysis presented at the beginning of the session was developed in a regional i-Codi workshop in November 2024 in Dubai, UAE.

**Eng. Ahmed Abdel Aziz** from Egypt presented the "Decent Life" initiative, a national program aligned with the UN SDGs, aiming to bridge the digital divide in rural areas. He detailed Egypt's efforts to expand 4G coverage to over 1,400 villages, achieving 90% coverage so far, with plans to reach 100% by 2025. The initiative’s focus on accessibility and affordability was highlighted as a model for other countries.

**Eng. Mustafa Al – Bahbahani**, from Iraq, spoke about Iraq’s pioneering experience as the first country to collaborate with the ITU on a national program to develop its ICT sector. This program focuses on digital transformation, regulatory frameworks, and capacity building, with a strong emphasis on supporting youth and women in ICT.

Eng. Qusai Saleem from MeemAin Edu presented a pilot project aimed at enhancing financial literacy among children, part of a broader initiative to train 10,000 children across the region. This project, developed in collaboration with the ITU, uses digital games to measure and improve financial inclusion skills among young learners.

The session concluded with an interactive poll where participants identified key priorities for future regional initiatives. The results highlighted skills development and job creation, infrastructure and connectivity and innovation ecosystems and emerging technologies as to priorities. Moreover, advancing cyber resilience, digital inclusion and sector specific transformation as lesser priorities. The moderator thanked the panelists and participants, emphasizing the importance of continued collaboration with the ITU to support the Arab region's digital transformation and sustainable development goals.

## GENERATION CONNECT EVENT: Intergenerational dialogue on challenges and opportunities in the field of digital development in the Arab Region

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| **17:00 – 17:30** | Moderator: **Mr. Ali Reyad Ali Dwairi, Generation Connect Youth Envoy, Arab Group, Jordan** |
| Panelists:   * **Mr. Ibrahim Al-Shibli**, Spectrum Monitoring Engineer, Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC), Jordan * **Mr. Hosam Atef Mohmmad Shawaqfeh**, Generation Connect Youth Envoy, Arab Group, Jordan * **Ms. Nada Bennouri**, Generation Connect Youth Envoy, Arab Group, Tunisia * **Mr. Sayed Husain Mohamed**, Generation Connect Youth Envoy, Arab Group, Bahrain * **Mr. Sami Mohammed Sa'ed**, Generation Connect Youth Envoy, Arab Group, Jordan |

As part of the ITU Regional Development Forum for the Arab States (RDF-ARB), the Generation Connect Event brought together Arab youth, policymakers, and industry leaders to discuss the future of digital development in the region. The session emphasized the critical role of youth in shaping the digital world, ensuring their perspectives are included in policy discussions and strategic planning. Arab Generation Connect Youth Envoys (GCYEs) highlighted their active participation in drafting a regional document identifying key ICT priorities, challenges, and proposed solutions from their unique perspectives.

During the discussion, **Mr.** **Ibrahim Al-Shibli**, a young professional from Jordan's TRC, delivered an engaging intervention on the importance of digital inclusion, future-ready education, and fostering an innovation-driven culture. He stressed that while the Arab region is home to immense talent, connectivity gaps remain a fundamental barrier to digital participation. **Mr.** **Al-Shibli** called for education systems to adapt to emerging technologies like AI, cybersecurity, and blockchain, ensuring young professionals are equipped with relevant, hands-on skills. Additionally, he underscored the need to cultivate innovation ecosystems—including incubators, hackathons, and investment in youth-led startups—to empower the next generation of digital disruptors.

The youth panelists further shared their aspirations and challenges, emphasizing their commitment to driving digital transformation and urging policymakers to create enabling environments for young entrepreneurs and tech leaders.

The session underscored the importance of intergenerational collaboration in shaping digital policies and fostering innovation in the Arab region. It reinforced the need for inclusive digital strategies, enhanced youth engagement in policymaking, and stronger support for tech-driven entrepreneurship. The discussions set the stage for continued youth involvement in regional ICT development, ensuring that Arab youth are not just beneficiaries of digital transformation but active contributors and leaders in its future.

**Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava**, Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau at ITU, delivered the closing remarks, expressing his sincere appreciation to the panelists for their valuable insights and contributions. **Dr. Zavazava** encouraged youth to challenge themselves, embrace innovation, and learn from experienced professionals. He reiterated ITU’s commitment to youth empowerment He emphasized that digital development is not solely about technology, but about people, ideas, and partnerships that drive meaningful progress. Highlighting the critical role of youth in shaping the digital future, Dr. Zavazava stressed that their engagement is not optional—it is essential. With 36 Generation Connect Youth Envoys from the Arab Region, representing 20% of the global Youth Envoy network, the region’s young leaders are demonstrating their capacity to drive digital innovation and transformation. **BDT Director** extended an invitation to young leaders to participate in the **Global Youth Summit in Cuba from 11–13 March 2025**, encouraging them to seek support from their respective governments to attend. The Summit will provide a platform to connect with peers globally, shape the digital agenda, and contribute to meaningful change. Dr. Zavazava concluded by urging all stakeholders to work collectively in accelerating an inclusive and sustainable digital future for the Arab region and beyond.

# Summary of RDF

Prior to the closing ceremony, **H.E. Eng. Bassam Al-Sarhan, Chair of RDF ARB**, provided high summary of the key discussions and outcomes of the forum. It was also agreed that the RDF report would be published within a week, ensuring all participants have access for future reference. The key takeaways from the RDF included:

* **Digital Development Trends:** Universal and meaningful connectivity remains a policy priority, with mobile broadband coverage reaching 95% in the Arab States.
* **Bridging the Digital Divide:** Internet penetration in the region has surpassed the global average, reaching 70%, yet disparities persist, particularly in rural-urban access and gender inclusion.
* **Regulatory Advancements:** Over 55% of Arab States have progressed to third- and fourth-generation ICT regulations, fostering collaborative governance and sustainable digital growth.
* **Emerging Technologies:** AI, machine learning, and blockchain were at the forefront, with countries like the UAE leading through national strategies for Smart Cities and AI-driven governance.
* **Partnerships & Regional Cooperation:** Strengthened collaboration through initiatives such as the ITU-RIPE NCC agreement on IPv6 deployment and capacity-building, as well as the utilization of the P2C platform.
* **Success Stories:** Case studies highlighted impactful digital transformations, including Somalia’s progress in digital literacy despite infrastructure challenges and Djibouti’s strategic role in regional data connectivity.
* **Commitments to Gender Inclusion:** Discussions emphasized empowering women in ICT, enhancing digital literacy, and addressing cybersecurity threats through inclusive policies.
* These discussions and commitments reflect a strong regional drive toward inclusive and sustainable digital transformation.

# Closing Ceremony

The closing ceremony of the Regional Development Forum for the Arab Region 2025 was marked by reflections on the significant outcomes achieved throughout the event. **H.E Eng. Bassam Al-Sarhan, Chairman of the Board and CEO of the Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC) Jordan and Chair of the ITU’s RDF ARB 2025**, commenced the closing ceremony session with heartfelt appreciation for the panelists, participants, and stakeholders whose valuable contributions enriched the Forum. He emphasized the Forum's role as a platform for high-level dialogue, strategic partnerships, and cooperative initiatives that addressed critical challenges such as the digital divide and highlighted opportunities for innovation and creativity in advancing Digital Development across the Arab Region. H.E Al-Sarhan underscored the importance of mobilizing resources, commitments, and pledges to foster digital transformation and sustainable development. Special attention was given to the empowerment of women through the Arab Women Network, emphasizing gender inclusivity as an essential component rather than an option. Additionally, the involvement of youth was celebrated, with Generation Connect initiatives promoting intergenerational dialogue and equipping young people with the necessary skills to drive future advancements.

H.E Eng. Bassam Al-Sarhan shared the key highlights from the RDF which included, the notable achievement of 95% mobile broadband coverage in Arab States, significant progress in Internet penetration reaching 70%, and advancements in ICT regulations, with over 55% of Arab States adopting third or fourth-generation regulatory frameworks. Partnerships discussions and the need for match-making were strengthened through initiatives like the partner 2 connect (P2C) and signing of joint declaration between ITU and RIPE NCC, focusing on IPv6 deployment and capacity building.

**Dr. Cosmas Zavazava, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau**, expressed profound gratitude to all participants, highlighting the diverse representation from 16 countries and over 114 participants, including those attending virtually. He praised the forum for fostering a collaborative environment that bridged different perspectives and emphasized the critical role of least developed countries in the dialogue.

Dr. Zavazava acknowledged the substantial pledges made under the Partner2Connect Coalition, noting that the Arab Region secured commitments worth 24.7 billion USD out of a global total of 54.27 billion USD. He stressed the importance of operationalizing these pledges to ensure tangible impacts. He also extended special thanks to the TRC for hosting the event, the sponsors, and the ITU colleagues for their seamless support in organizing the forum.

The ceremony concluded with an invitation to a gala dinner hosted by Jordan, reflecting the rich cultural traditions of the host country. Participants were also encouraged to join the upcoming Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting, 4 to 5 February 2025, continuing the momentum towards achieving universal and meaningful connectivity in the Arab Region.

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