



## **OPENING REMARKS**

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ITU Arab Regional Development Forum

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Excellencies,

Mr. Mohammed Bubshait, Director General of the TRA,

Mr. Peter Grohmann, UN Resident Coordinator, Bahrain

- Mr. Ebrahim Al-Haddad, Regional Director, ITU
- Honorable Ministers, Deputy Ministers
- CEO, Presidents and Chairmen of the Regulatory Agencies
- Representatives of Regional and International organizations
- Other Heads of delegations
- Distinguished delegates

- Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good morning to you all and welcome!

It gives me great pleasure and honor to be here in Manama. Before going any further, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the Government and the people of Bahrain for the very warm welcome, the hospitality extended to all of us, and for the excellent facilities put at our disposal.

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Regional Development Forum (RDF) is an event aimed at providing a platform for information and best practices sharing on opportunities and challenges in the region with respect to policy, regulatory, investment and business issues. This is why I will, use this opportunity later on this morning, to officially launch the Arab Regulators Report which contains important information on the general regulatory trends in this region. To date, 76 per cent of the

Arab States have established a separate telecom/ICT regulator. The publication will inform governments and investors on the regulatory and market gaps that need policy and investor interventions.

Distinguished Colleagues,

In the 21st century, coordinated efforts are needed as no single organization could single-handedly develop society, particularly in the field of ICTs. Equally important, is the fact that no individual, no community, and no nation should be left out of the information society. Universal Access for equal opportunity for all should be our guiding principle.

I am very pleased that Secretary General of ITU and the Administrator of UNDP co-signed a letter sent to all UNDP Resident Representatives to prioritize and reflect ICTs in their development programmes.

I am happy that Mr. Peter Grohmann the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bahrain joined us here today. I would like to thank you for his participation. This shows that we are all committed to the One UN principle. It is important

to note that across the UN family, we all seek to help countries meet the MDGs for poverty alleviation, providing primary healthcare, universal education, and for the overall sustainable development of countries.

What we seek is impacting people's lives. Everything that we do should be about **people. People**, because without personal and institutional relationships, there is very little that we could achieve.

Financing and partnerships are possible when **people** talk to each other.

Sharing of knowledge and know-how requires **people**. To make that knowledge meaningful and beneficial to countries, communities and households, it must be **people-oriented**.

**Let us therefore together put a human face on ICTs.**

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme of this RDF is: ICT = I C Tomorrow. This theme says it all. Our primary goal is not just to develop and deploy technologies. Our aim is to make a difference to the ordinary people and ultimately establish networked Knowledge Societies for future generations.

While broadband infrastructure development remains a priority today, we are also focusing on making sure that ICTs are used as a delivery vehicle for health, education, banking, and business in order to achieve sustainable social and economic growth, not just in the rich world, but in every country, and for every citizen.

But again, this has to happen in a safe environment. Securing the information highway remains a big challenge for us all.

We now all live in a world with over six billion mobile cellular subscriptions. The Arab region has witnessed remarkable growth in terms of mobile-cellular uptake, with an average penetration rate of 105 per cent which stands above the

global average of 96 per cent. Mobile-broadband services have shown strong growth.

The private sector is very active across the region. The regulatory regime is quite impressive too.

All these factors point to the fact that the strategic IDEA of Development and Empowerment of the Arab region through ICT is possible, attainable, and achievable.

For this to happen, we also need to promote a generation of content developers, particularly the local content developers, to serve the needs of the productive sectors such as agriculture, fishing, small industry, import and export of products, financing and education.

In this regard I am pleased to inform you that I launched three initiatives to support such efforts: the m-Powering Development initiative, the Smart Sustainable Development Model initiative and the ITU Academy initiative. Two of these initiatives will be presented during the panels.

We will also launch together this morning at Arab Region level an initiative that addresses one of the key priority areas of the region namely; the Arab Digital Content Competition. This initiative seeks to involve young people whom we now call, in ITU language, digital natives. The Regional Director will engage with you to work out how this initiative will add value to your on-going efforts, projects and initiatives for the digital natives.

In conclusion, I would like once again, to welcome you to this Regional Development Forum for Arab Region. For those who will be with us in the RPM tomorrow, we will have another opportunity to continue with our conversation, exchange of ideas.

I C Tomorrow with ICT. I am sure we all see tomorrow with ICT. For this common vision to become a reality we need to go beyond the ICT sector and address the ICT ecosystem in order to put a human face on ICT. This RDF will certainly contribute to that.

I thank you