

ITU Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Arab States

Speech by

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- Assistant to the President of Sudan, H.E Eng Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid,
- Director, ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau, Mr Brahima Sanou,
- Director, ITU Regional Office for Arab States, Dr Ibrahim al-Haddad,
- Director-General, National Telecommunications Corporation, Dr Yahia Abdalla Mohamed,
- Secretary-General, Arab Information and Communication Technologies Organization (AICTO), Mr Mohamed Ben Amor,
- Heads and members of participating Arab delegations,
- Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure and an honour for me to meet you today at the opening of the Regional Preparatory Meeting for WTDC-17 for the Arab States. I extend to you the greetings and appreciation of the Government and people of Sudan for your attendance and participation in this major event. We wish you a pleasant stay in your second homeland. I am delighted to see that all the Arab States are attending and wish your conference every success, particularly at this challenging time, which requires us to strive with diligence, perseverance and determination to develop our countries, looking to the policies and applications of ITU for guidance, and turn challenges into opportunities for achievement.

Permit me to congratulate ITU for its continuing support of the ICT sector. By providing the infrastructure, it has successfully enabled the slogan "Committed to connecting the world" to become a reality. The upsurge in the spread of ICT and Internet use and the enormous contributions these have made to the advancement of human society are clear proof of the success of the Union's leadership in implementing its commitments to the people. The rise of the ICT sector, not only in the Arab region but in the entire world, has contributed to the development of other sectors, including health, education, social media and other vital areas, and is driving development and progress in people's lives. All sections of society now rely upon the tools of modern technology in their daily lives.

The uninterrupted growth of the information and communication society has become an abiding feature of the 21st century, just as the industrial revolution was a prominent feature of the 19th century. Sudan has not been isolated from the information explosion. Indeed, it was one of the States which committed itself to achieving the Telecommunication Development Sector goals of creating an economic and social environment for the optimum use of ICT to benefit all our people in all aspects of life. Furthermore, Sudan has adopted ICT as a key pillar for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. ICT now plays a crucial role in all the country's economic development programmes and is making an effective contribution to alleviating poverty.

To ensure access to telecommunication services in all rural, remote and economically deprived regions, the government has set up universal service projects in partnership with telecommunication companies and more than 34 000 kilometres of optic fibre cable have been laid, enabling us to complete the network link with four neighbouring States.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the same time as Sudan is hosting this important meeting, the economic sanctions that were imposed upon it are being lifted. This will result in real revitalization and growth in all areas, particularly the ICT sector, which will increase Sudan's active participation in ITU regional and international activities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In affirmation of the objectives and initiatives of ITU, which are consistent with the needs of developing countries, we underline Sudan's support for all Union activities and its endeavour to establish security, stability and economic progress on foundations of justice, impartiality and transparency. Accordingly, we urge the Arab States to support resolutions calling for a narrowing of the digital divide between developed and developing countries in the areas of telecommunication standardization and information revolution and to implement regional projects, initiatives and resolutions concerning the use of telecommunications in crises and disasters.

In conclusion, our Arab countries deserve our utmost efforts, untiring labours and unceasing determination to enable them to remain strong, resilient and proud – a beacon enjoying the respect and appreciation of the whole world.

Permit me to extend gratitude and appreciation to the staff of ITU for their help in organizing this event. I would also like to thank participants from the Arab States for taking the trouble to attend this meeting. I hope that you will all have a pleasant and agreeable stay in Sudan. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Zain Sudan for sponsoring today's event.