

## **ITU Regional Preparatory Meeting Forum for Arab States**

### **Speech by**

**Mr Khaled Foda, Manager for ICT Development, League of Arab States**

**Khartoum, Sudan, 30 January 2017**

- Eng. Ibrahim Mahmoud, Assistant of the President of Sudan,
- Dr Tahani Abdallah, Minister of Communications and Information Technology,
- Mr Ibrahim Sanou, Director, ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau,
- Dr Ibrahim al-Haddad, Director, ITU Regional Office for the Arab States,
- Distinguished gathering,

At the outset, I am delighted to convey to you the greetings of Ambassador Dr Kamal Hassan Ali, who has recently assumed the duties of Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs of the League of Arab States, and his wishes for the success of your meeting. Permit me to thank the Government and people of the Republic of the Sudan for hosting this meeting, alongside yesterday's ITU Regional Development Forum for the Arab States, and the meeting of the Arab Working Group charged by the Council of Arab Ministers of Telecommunication and Information with preparing for the upcoming world telecommunication development conference (WTDC-17), which successfully concluded last Saturday at the headquarters of the National Telecommunication Corporation (NTC). Allow me to thank in particular the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and NTC for their excellent organization and the warmth and generosity of the welcome we have received since first arriving. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Republic of the Sudan upon the lifting of the economic sanctions imposed upon it for more than 20 years.

Distinguished gathering,

The world telecommunication development conference is a major event, held by ITU every four years to consider the Telecommunication Development Bureau action plan for the coming period, taking into account the priorities of the various regions and the specific features of each. The forthcoming WTDC-17, which is scheduled to take place in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in the last quarter of this year, perhaps stands out from previous conferences as it is the first to be held after the publication by the United Nations of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These make the ICT sector responsible for fighting poverty, eliminating hunger, raising levels of education and healthcare, ensuring access to energy, conserving the natural environment, achieving ecological balance and promoting equality and justice among all the peoples and nations of the world.

This forum is an important opportunity for ITU, Arab governments and specialized regional organizations working in the ICT sector to liaise with a view to initiating dialogue on the priorities for the Arab region, formulating frameworks with ITU-D in the form of regional initiatives that prioritize SDGs, developing the telecommunication sector in the region and building an Arab information society that is capable of engaging with the wider international information society and keeping up with the pace of technological developments in the knowledge economy, based on information, knowledge and the ability to create, innovate and ensure fast access to information.

Distinguished gathering,

As I mentioned, the Arab Working Group charged with preparing for WTDC-17 concluded its second meeting yesterday, having sown the first seeds of five regional initiatives. We look forward to the usual cooperation with ITU-D, via the ITU Regional Office for the Arab States, and count upon our close friendship with Mr Ibrahim Sanou, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau, and our dear friend Dr Ibrahim al-Haddad, Director of the ITU Regional Office for the Arab States, to work together to put these initiatives into practice and thereby promote the ICT sector and economic growth in the Arab region. The working group has commended what has been achieved within the framework of the initiatives submitted to the last WTDC (United Arab Emirates, 2014) and adopted by the plenipotentiary conference that same year in Busan. The group further affirmed the importance of continuing the cooperation between ITU and the League of Arab States in several of these initiatives.

As regards the WTDC, we look forward to the usual inter-Arab coordination and fruitful cooperation between all the Arab States, as well as coordination with other regional groups, to enable the conference to produce outputs consistent with the needs and specific features of the Arab region, which will help develop the ICT sector for the benefit of the entire Arab nation.

Once more, I would like to thank the Republic of the Sudan and ITU for hosting and organizing this important event. May God crown our efforts on behalf of the Arab nation with success.