Accessible Arab Region: ICT for ALL

13 December 2022

Concept Note

1. Background

The Accessible Arab Region: ICT for ALL is one of the main ITU and ESCWA regional priorities focusing on raising awareness, strengthening capacity and developing resources in ICT /digital Accessibility, as a key requirement to foster implementation and ensure digital inclusion and empowerment through ICTs of everyone, regardless of his/her age, gender, ability, or location in the region.

On 2 December 2021, and for the first time in the Arab region, ESCWA and ITU organized jointly the "Accessible Arab Region: ICT for ALL" event to raise awareness about the importance of digital accessibility and to provide a platform for dialogue, sharing best practices, knowledge and initiatives. Attended by around 100 participants, the event aimed at presenting good practices in digital inclusion, encouraging stakeholders to join efforts, seeking solutions to eliminate barriers of access to ICTs, enabling human development and promoting accessibility policies that will improve the quality of life of all individuals with no discrimination, mainly focusing on people with disabilities.

The 2nd edition of the Accessible Arab Region: ICTs for All is planned to be organized on 13 December 2022, virtually. It is the main event in the region focusing on digital accessibility as a means to ensure digital inclusion and empowerment through ICTs for ALL people, regardless of age, gender, ability or location in the region.

Through this event, ITU and ESCWA are launching an invitation to all Member States and stakeholders to jointly identify the ways forward to foster implementation and mainstream digital accessibility, as a means to provide innovative and equitable solutions that show how technology could contribute to ensure inclusiveness and empowerment of everyone. Moreover, the event invites participants to reflect on how to empower all, from young to older persons, to access the digital world effectively and smoothly. Finally, the Accessible Arab Region: ICT for ALL event aims to share and discuss the work and initiatives carried out to promote and support the implementation of policies, strategies and resources to ensure inclusiveness of all people including persons with disabilities in the framework of the SDGs, CRPD, UNDIS and other related global commitments.

The event will be conducted in Arabic, English, and French to make it accessible for everyone in the region in addition to sign language interpretation and captioning.

2. Beneficiaries

The target audience of this event would be all stakeholders including policy makers, from public and private sectors, and representatives from NGOs, Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) from the Arab region.

3. Objective

The objective of the Accessible Arab Region: ICT for ALL is to serve as a knowledge development platform for an open informative and interactive discussions with all interested stakeholders on the importance of mainstreaming ICT/ digital accessibility principles to achieve digital inclusion for everyone. Therefore, the aim of this event is to raise awareness, share good practices and challenges, leverage capacity and encourage regional engagement in prioritizing digital accessibility to build inclusive digital societies and environments in which no one is left behind in the Arab region.

Best practices in digital inclusion would be presented and discussed to encourage stakeholders joining efforts to eliminate barriers by promoting ICT/Digital accessibility policies and strategies aiming at improving the quality of life of all individuals, with no discrimination.

13 December 2022, Online, 10:00 –13:00 Cairo Time

Agenda

10:00 – 10:10	**Welcome Remarks**
	
	  - **Mr. Ahmed Raghy, Senior advisor, ITU**
	  - **Mr. Haidar Freihat, xxx, ESCWA**

10:10-10:20	**Keynote speech: Emerging technologies and accessible designs in benefit for quality of life of people with special needs as integrated part towards digital transformation** - **Ms. Sara Minkara, US Special Advisor on International Disability Rights (video message)**

Session 1:
10:20 – 11:05
	Government Role in promoting digital accessibility to accelerate the achievement of 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
	
	Under the "Arab Digital Inclusion Platform" initiative launched in 2020, ESCWA aims to promote digital accessibility in the Arab region, Through the ADIP project, ESCWA developed templates for national policies and technical guidelines on e-accessibility. Currently, ESCWA is conducting national rollouts, and working with three member countries to develop their national e-accessibility policies, namely Syria, Palestine and UAE.
	
	Moderator:
	    Mr. Mohamad Nawar Al-Awa, Regional Adviser on Technology for Development, ESCWA
	Speakers:
	  - **"Digital Accessibility Strategy in Syria", Ms. Fadia Solaiman, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Communication and Technology Syria**
	  - **"Digital Accessibility in UAE", Ms. Manal Al-Afad, Digital Transformation Team Leader, Telecom and Digital Government Regulation Authority (TDRA), UAE**

	- **"Palestine Experience in Digital Accessibility", Mr. Maher Al-Ahmad, Digital Accessibility Coordinator, Ministry of Telecom and Information Technology, Palestine** **Q & A**

Session 2: **11:05 – 12:00**	### ICT accessibility innovation ecosystem in the Arab region Good practices and innovative solutions to promote ICT/digital accessibility will be discussed to encourage stakeholders joining efforts to improving the quality of life of all individuals and building inclusive digital societies and environments in which no one is left behind in the Arab region. **Moderator:** **Mr. Mohammad Loutfy, Global Initiative for Inclusive ICT (G3ICT)** **Speakers:** - **Ms. Abeer Shakweer, Assistant Resident Representative, Inclusive growth and Innovation team leader, UNDP, Egypt Country Office** - **Mr. Mr. Ahmed Abdelhady, Head of Accessibility and Digital Inclusion - Axessall Ltd.** - **Ms. Aya Jibreal, Inclusive Design & Accessibility Consultant G3ict/Smart Cities for All Country Representative for Saudi Arabia** **Q &A**

Session 3: **12:00 – 12:50**	### Digital Inclusion in the Education sector A good and quality education system includes all students and welcomes and supports them to learn regardless of their abilities or requirements. This session will describe the opportunities, challenges, and emerging initiatives for using information and communication technology (ICT) to create more inclusive learning environments. Presentations will include recommendations to boost the role of technology in supporting learners with disabilities. **Moderator:** **Mr. Raed M. Sharif, MENA Senior Regional Manager at the SecDev Foundation** **Speakers:**

	- **Mr. Mohamed Koutheair Khribi, Head of Training Section, MADA, Qatar** - **Mr. Ahmed Fathy, CEO Kalmnyishara EDU Platform** - **Ms. Maha Zouwayhed, Associate Director, Zein AUB iPark** **Office of Innovation and Transformation, AUB** **Q &A**

12:50- 13:00	**Closing Session**
	ESCWA & ITU: closing remarks and steps forward