



Accessible Arab Region: ICT for ALL – 2023

28 - 30 November 2023

Rabat – Kingdom of Morocco

1. Background

ICT/digital accessibility is a key requirement in fostering the implementation of digital inclusion globally and regionally and in ensuring digital inclusion and empowerment through ICTs of everyone, regardless of age, gender, ability, or location. Digital inclusion is a priority for ITU and ESCWA and both organizations are committed to support the regional efforts of member States and stakeholders to achieve this overarching goal.

To support these regional efforts, ITU and ESCWA annually organize “Accessible Arab Region: ICT for ALL” as the flagship knowledge and networking platform for equal and equitable digital inclusion. In 2023, the event will celebrate its third edition¹ and will focus on raising awareness, strengthening capacity, and sharing resources developed to support member States and stakeholder initiatives in ICT/digital accessibility. In its outcome, the event offers Arab States and stakeholders, advice on the empowerment of all people, including persons with disabilities, to use digital tools, platforms and applications.

Through this event, ITU and ESCWA invite all member States and stakeholders to collaboratively identify the way forward to implement and mainstream ICT/digital accessibility, and thus showcase technology as a means for innovative, equal and equitable solutions that can contribute to the inclusion and empowerment of everyone in Arab region.

The third edition of “Accessible Arab Regional- ICT for ALL”, will be hosted by the Digital Development Agency (ADD) of Morocco from 28 to 30 November 2023 in Rabat – Kingdom of Morocco. It will stretch over two days with the third day dedicated for capacity-building. Aiming to eliminate all types of barriers in communication, the event will be conducted in the Arabic, English, and French languages to facilitate participation of all Arab countries. Sign language interpretation and captioning will be available to make the event fully accessible.

¹ On 2 December 2021 ITU and ESCWA jointly organized the first “Accessible Arab Region: ICT for ALL” event to raise awareness on the importance of digital accessibility and to provide a platform for dialogue and sharing of best practices, knowledge and initiatives. About 100 participants attended the event. The second event of the “Accessible Arab Region: ICTs for All” was organized virtually on 13 December 2022 and was attended by about 126 participants from 21 countries.

2. Beneficiaries

The target audience of this event are all member States, stakeholders and policy makers, from the public and private sectors, as well as representatives from academia, NGOs and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) from the Arab region.

3. Objective

The Accessible Arab Region: ICT for ALL serves as a knowledge development platform for open, informative and interactive discussions with all interested stakeholders on the importance of mainstreaming ICT/digital accessibility requirements, standards and universal design principles to achieve the overarching goal of digital inclusion for everyone.

Therefore, the event will focus on raising awareness and sharing lessons learnt and trends to strengthen capacity and promote networking among participants. A dedicated track on knowledge development and capacity building will be implemented as part of this event.

To strengthen collaboration among the stakeholders and end-users, good practices on involving persons with disabilities in planning and designing appropriate solutions will be showcased. The event will also reflect on how to empower all people in accessing the digital world effectively and smoothly.

4. Format

The Accessible Arab Region 2023 will offer several formats for sharing information and connecting participants. These include:

- a) **Panel discussions:** these will focus on various themes, including, the role of policy makers, industry leaders, start-ups and representatives from education and health sectors in the design, development and delivery of digitally accessible products, services and applications.
- b) **Training to build capacity on how to ensure inclusive digital societies:** This optional event will include knowledge development presentations and executive training on topics related to ICT accessibility for digital inclusion. The purpose is to strengthen the knowledge of interested member States, stakeholders and other participants on the subject, that could aid their decision-making during the digital transformation implementation process.
- c) **Networking:** In addition to the panel discussions and exhibition, dedicated spaces will be available for networking and connecting opportunities among the event's participants. Networking is critical in the context of ICT/digital accessibility implementation to facilitate dialogue between developers/suppliers and end-user representatives, who are the best positioned to validate the accessibility criteria of the equipment, services and solutions made available by the public and private sectors.

5. Draft agenda

Day 1	
Time	Session
9:00 – 9:20	Welcome Remarks

<p>9:20 – 9:30</p>	<p>Keynote speech: Unlocking the potential of technology for disability inclusion</p>
<p>9:30-10:00</p>	<p>Executive session to leverage knowledge on the ICT accessibility</p> <p>The goal of this executive session is to leverage knowledge on the ICT accessibility and enhance participants' understanding of the critical role that ICT accessibility plays in creating an inclusive digital society, economy, and ecosystem, to be applied in the context of Arab Region. The session aims to provide the participants including the ITU membership, policy and decision makers as well as all interested stakeholders with information on: global trends and how these influence people’s digital inclusion, explain the building blocks of an inclusive digital society, and the differences between access, affordability and accessibility, accessible technology and assistive technologies, comprehensive guidelines on both what measures should be taken and how to implement them, ensuring that digital products and services are accessible to all end users, including those with disabilities. Ultimately, the session is designed to empower participants to the Accessible Arab Region – ICT for all, to engage actively in the event's various sessions, maximizing the benefits of their participation.</p>
<p>10:00 – 11:30</p>	<p>Session 1: Policymaking for Digital Accessibility: Policies, Impact and Measurement</p> <p>The session on "Policymaking for Digital Accessibility: Policies, Impact, and Measurement" aims to explore the importance of effective policies in ensuring digital accessibility for all individuals, with particular focus on people with disabilities. In this context, this session will feature case studies from the Arab region, shedding the light on challenges and opportunities offered through these policies to enhance digital accessibility. These case studies will provide valuable insights into policy development, implementation, and the resulting impact on the lives of people with disabilities in these societies.</p> <p>Furthermore, an additional case study from a different region, such as Latin America or Europe, will be presented. This diverse case study will broaden the scope and offer a comparative analysis of policies and approaches to digital accessibility, highlighting lessons learned and best practices that can be applied globally.</p> <p>Through this session, participants will gain a comprehensive understanding of the policymaking process for digital accessibility, witness the impact of successful initiatives, and learn from diverse case studies across different regions.</p>
<p>11:30 – 11:45</p>	<p><i>Coffee break</i></p>
<p>11:45 – 13:15</p>	<p>Session 2: Role of Industry Leaders in Accelerating Digital Accessibility</p> <p>This session aims to explore the role of global industry leaders in the field of technology in accelerating digital accessibility. It seeks to examine several key inquiries such as: How do renowned global entities like Microsoft, Amazon, Apple, Google, and others contribute to the advancement of digital accessibility? What are the primary drivers motivating these companies to invest in e-accessibility, and what are the latest trends, products, and services they offer in this domain?</p> <p>Additionally, it aims to explore how the efforts of these global players are perceived in the Arab region, whether through their worldwide services or their regional and local offices, and how these companies customize digital accessibility per the local</p>

	needs of the Arab region., taking into account diverse government regulations and requirements pertaining to the Arabic language.
13:15 – 14:30	<i>Lunch break</i>
14:30 – 16:00	<p>Session 3: Partnerships for ensuring an inclusive digital transformation through implementation of digital accessibility: Public-Private partnerships and collaboration with UN agencies</p> <p>In today's rapidly advancing digital landscape, it is essential to ensure that technological innovations and digital services are accessible to everyone, including persons with disabilities and other marginalized communities. This session aims to address the challenges and opportunities related to digital accessibility and inclusive digital transformation.</p> <p>The session will bring together representatives from public and private sectors, as well as UN agencies and non-governmental organizations, to discuss strategies and best practices for promoting digital accessibility. The participants will explore the potential of forming public-private partnerships to achieve meaningful progress in this area and collaborate with UN agencies to leverage their expertise and resources.</p>

Day 2	
Time	Session
10:00 – 10:10	Recap from Day (1)
10:10 – 11:30	<p>Session 4: Digital inclusion through provision of accessible products and services developed by the Arab start-up community.</p> <p>This session highlights selected achievements of startups and SMEs in the realm of digital accessibility in the Arab region. Entrepreneurs and representatives from various industries will share their success stories, showcasing how they have incorporated accessibility into their products and services while driving business growth. It aims to provide practical solutions, best practices, and collaborative initiatives that have been developed by those startups and SMEs to create inclusive digital experiences.</p>
11:30 – 12:50	<p>Session 5: Digital Inclusion through accessible digital services and applications to support vital services to all citizens, including health, emergency telecommunications, transport, etc.</p> <p>In an increasingly interconnected world, digital inclusion has become paramount to ensure that vital services are accessible to all citizens, without exception. This session focusing on digital inclusion through the lens of accessible digital services and applications, offering essential support in areas such as healthcare, emergency telecommunications, transportation, and beyond.</p> <p>This session will explore the multifaceted landscape of digital inclusion and the pivotal role technology plays in making vital services available to a diverse population. It will highlight key areas of emphasis, where digital inclusion can make a significant difference in healthcare access, emergency services, inclusive</p>

	transportation , and more from a perspective of policy and advocacy as well as collaborative initiatives.
12: 50 – 14:00	<i>Lunch & Networking</i>
14:00 – 15:15	<p>Session 6: Digital Inclusion and accessible education platforms to ensure education and EdTech for all.</p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic prompted a global shift to remote learning, highlighting the potential and limitations of digital inclusion in education. While positive developments have been made to enhance accessibility in e-learning platforms, challenges persist in providing inclusive education for everyone including persons with disabilities.</p> <p>This session focuses on the latest advancements in e-accessibility in education. It addresses the needs of students with diverse disabilities by developing specialized educational tools and adapting curricula. In addition, it emphasizes the importance of teacher support through online communication, assessments, and support tools, and it examines various e-learning experiences in the Arab region.</p>
15:15- 15:30	<p>Closing Session</p> <p>ESCWA, ITU & Host Country: closing remarks and steps forward.</p>

Day 3	
Time	Session
09:30 – 11:00	Training to build capacity on how to ensure inclusive digital societies. ITU
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee Break
11:30 – 13:00	Training on using the ESCWA tools on e-accessibility policy and technical guidelines, ESCWA
13:00 – 14:30	Lunch & Networking