Telecommunication Development Sector
INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION

Regional Development Forum for the Arab Region (RDF-ARB)
Rabat, Morocco 28-29 March,2016

MAIN OUTCOMES

1. Introduction

The ITU Regional Development Forum for the Arab Region (RDF-ARB) was organized in Rabat, Morocco 28-29 March 2016, at the kind invitation of the Agence Nationale de Réglementation des Télécommunications (ANRT) in Morocco. Its overall theme focused on "ICT for Sustainable Development".

The objective of the ITU Regional Development Forums is to provide an opportunity for high-level dialogue between the BDT and decision-makers, governments and regulators, of ITU Member States and Sector Members. RDFs serve as a platform for assessing strategic orientations that may have an impact on BDT's regional work plan in between World Telecommunication Development Conferences. In this context, these Forums aim at reporting on the activities of the Dubai Action Plan, with particular emphasis on regional initiatives in order to get feedback from membership to adjust BDT's work in the regions.

A major aim of the RDF-ARB was to present the ITU Arab Regional Office operational plan proposals for the next two-years (2016 and 2017) as well as review and discuss what has been achieved in the five Arab Regional initiatives during 2015 and the proposed projects to be implemented under these initiatives. The activities of ITU-D Study Groups, ITU Academy, ITU Centres of Excellence, Academia and membership were presented as well.

The Forum also focused on finding mechanisms to finance and implement these Regional Initiatives and projects, and also on strengthening the partnership between the ITU and the interested stakeholders.

2. Participation

The meeting was attended by more than 80 participants representing 14 Member States from the region, including Palestine (based on resolution 99), 5 recognized operating agencies, 4 regional and international organizations, 2 scientific and industrial organizations, 3 private sector entities and other national organizations, 1 UN Specialized Agency, 1 other entities dealing with telecommunications, and 7 others. The list of participants can be found at the RDF-ARB website.

3. Documentation

RDF-ARB was paperless. 32 presentations were delivered during the RDF. Relevant documentation, including Agenda, Presentations and final report are made available at the RDF-ARB website.

4. Opening ceremony

Mr. Azzedine El Montassir Billah, Director General, Agence Nationale de Réglementation des Télécommunications (ANRT), Morocco, and Mr. Brahima Sanou, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU addressed the Forum with opening speeches, which are available on the RDF-ARB website.

5. Key Note Speech

Mr. Mohamed Ben Amor, the Secretary General of Arab Information and Communication Technologies Organization (AICTO) delivered a keynote speech focusing on innovation, partnership and the role of the regional stakeholders in the development of the ICT sector in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

6. Update on the implementation of the Arab Regional Initiatives and activities

Eng. Ebrahim Al Haddad, Regional Director of the ITU Arab Regional Office provided a comprehensive review of the implementation of the WTDC-14 Regional Initiatives for the Arab region (see Presentation). This review highlighted the implementation of actions during 2015. Furthermore, the planned activities of the office for 2016 and 2017 were also presented. The Regional Director updated the participants on the RDF-15 decision on the creation of Regional Focus Groups (RFGs) for each regional initiative by providing support and advise to the regional office.

7. Projects for Achieving Arab Regional Initiatives (RIs)

Eng. Rouda Alamir and Eng. Mustafa Al Mahdi from ITU Arab Regional Office presented proposed projects by the ITU Arab regional Office. These proposed projects fall under the implementation of and achieving the Arab five RIs objectives and their expected results.

8. ITU-D Study Groups, ITU Centres of Excellence, Membership and Academia

With the aim of strengthening synergies between the Regional Initiatives and the activities of the ITU-D Study Groups, ITU Academy and ITU Centres of Excellence, a series of presentations were delivered by Eng Rouda Alamir (ITU-D Study Groups) and Eng Mustafa Al Mahdi (ITU Academy and ITU Centres of Excellence). Mr. Abd Elrahman Rafi and Mr Zied Rouissi representing ITU Arab CoE Network to Global Capacity Building Initiative (GCBI) presented the works and mandate of this group.

9. Opportunities for Partnerships & Resource Mobilizations

During this session, which aimed at focusing on priority areas for development and funding mechanisms in ICTs in the Arab region and on exploring synergies and opportunities for partnerships between all stakeholders. Mr. Ali YAHIAOUI, Former Chief ICT AfDB chaired the session with contributions of the following speakers:

- Eng. Suleiman Zuhairi, Deputy Minister, MTIT, Palestine
- Mrs. FAL Yacine, Resident representative, African Development Bank
- Mr. Tomas Lamanauskas, Group Director Public Policy, VimpelCom Ltd.
- Mr. Karl U. Stanzick, Managing Director, MTDS, Morocco
- Mr. Roman Savvin, Vice President, Intech Global

Mr. Muluk Turhan, Global Public Policy Group, MENA, INTEL participated remotely.

As outcome of this session, experiences and practices on opportunities for partnerships & resource mobilizations were shared. Within this, the participants called for more partnerships for the implementation of the RIs and projects.

10. The Arab Regional Initiatives (RIs) beyond 2017 (Regional Organizations 'perspectives)

The ITU Arab regional Office presented new ideas for the new Arab regional initiative beyond 2017. Mr. Hassan Talib, Chief Technical Control Division, ANRT, Morocco chaired the session with contributions of the following speakers:

- Mr. Khaled Foda, Head of ICT Department, League of Arab States
- Mr. Mohamed Ben Amor, Secretary General, AICTO
- Mr. Lotfi Seboui, Infrastructures Directeur, Arab Maghreb Union (UMA)
- Mr. Jawad Abbasi, Head of MENA, Government & Regulatory Affairs, GSMA

Dr. Koutheair KHRIBI, Program Specialist, Educational Technologies, ALECSO and Dr. Yousef Torman, Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN) participated remotely.

In addition to the new ideas presented by ARO, below are some new ideas proposed by the panelists of this session:

- Digital Economy

- Innovation and entrepreneurship

- Digital Financial Inclusion: Mobile Money and Mobile Banking

- Internet of Things (IoT) for Development

- ICTs infrastructure for Smart Sustainable Cities

- Infrastructure sharing for promoting the competition in ICTs and implementing the SDGs

11. The Arab Regional Initiatives (RIs) beyond 2017 (Members' perspectives)

Mr. Nasser Al Marzouqi, TRA, UAE chaired the session with contributions of the following speakers:

- Mr Zied Rouissi, Project Manager of m-Development Initiative, Tunisia
- Dr. Sherif Hashem, Vice President for Cybersecurity, NTRA, Egypt
- Mr. AlAnsari AlMashaqbah, Vice Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, TRC, Jordan
- Mr. Sidi Mohammed Drissi Melyani, Technical Director, ANRT, Morocco
- Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Mohamed Mahmoud Abderahmane, Ministry of ICT, Mauritania
- Eng. Abdin Ahmed Elhaj, Director of General Directorate of Planning and International Relation, NTC, Sudan
- Mr. Mohamed Hassi Rahou, Project Director ANRT, Morocco

New ideas proposed by the panelists of this session:
- Mobile Apps for Development
- Big Data

- Broadband
- HCB on Mobile for Development
- Counterfeit devices and theft of devices
- Type approval labs
- Smart learning
- Strategies for cyber security

12. Conclusions and Recommendations

The RDF participants made the following recommendations:
- ITU requested to provide more assistance to Maghreb countries
- A multi-stakeholder arrangement and partnership was recommended to enhance cooperation and coordination at national, regional and international levels
- A regional Fund to support the implementation of the RIs and regional activities should be created.
- Within the context of the new regional initiatives, RDF Participants are asked for new RIs that touch the people lives directly
- The new regional initiatives should be attractive to bring new partners.
- Each regional initiative should be formulated in the form of a project document fully committed by a sponsor(s).
- The new regional initiative should focus specifically to the Arab LDCs
- The effort towards bridging the digital divide and the creation of a truly global information society should be closely linked with actual needs of the people and the people.
- A regional comparison reports with statistics should be available for members
- Harmonization of the Regulatory Frameworks in the Arab region should be considered including updating the regulatory authorities to regulate the OTT services
- Exchange of expertise between the Arab countries in different aspects of using ICTs for development should be promoted
- The legal and regulatory regimes have to be continuously reviewed in the region, and other barriers to the use of telecommunication resources for achieving the SDG exist, these should be addressed.
- Strengthen the cooperation between the Arab countries and sub regions.
- ARO requested to provide a financial report which illustrates the annual budget of the region office including contribution from members
- ARO requested to organize a back to back meeting with RDFs in the next study cycle to review and approve the operational plan of ARO and to discuss ARO projects, HCB activities and invite members to send their contribution in this regard
- ARO requested to provide a presentations on the activities organized by the other sectors of the ITU in Arab region
- ARO requested to organize its activities back to back to other ITU regional activities
- For the new ideas of the new RIs, its recommended to consider the SDGs carefully when drafting the new initiatives for Arab region
- Helping to achieve the SDGs in line with the aspirations of the people
- Use ICTs for increasing creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship
- USE the ICTs as major tool for learning implementation towards the SDGs

13. Closing:

A representative of the ANRT delivered the closing speech on behalf of the ANRT Director General.

The Regional Director also delivered closing remarks.

All stakeholders were thanked for their contributions to the RDF session and their active participation in the discussions.

ITU staff and participants thanked the ANRT for hosting the Arab RDF and for their warm hospitality during their stay in Rabat.