



Regional Development Forum For the Arab States(RDF-ARB) 2018

ICT④SDGs: Towards the implementation of WTDC17 outcomes

**Algiers, Algeria
12, 13 February 2018**

Concept Note

Background

In the framework of the implementation of Resolution 25 (Rev. BUSAN, 2014) on strengthening the regional presence and Resolution 71 (Rev. DUBAI, 2014) on strengthening of cooperation between Member States , Sector Members, Associates and Academia of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector, including the private sector; the Regional Development Forum for the Arab Region (RDF-ARB) 2018 will be organized by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in Algiers, Algeria, from 12 to 13 February 2017, at the kind invitation of the Ministère de la Post, des Télécommunications, des Technologies et du Numérique of the Republic of Algeria. The theme for this years' RDF aligns with WTDC-17's focus: "ICT④SDGs: Towards the implementation of WTDC17 outcomes".

Objectives:

The objective of the ITU Regional Development Forum 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 unique 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, and considering that this is the first RDF in the Arab region after WTDC-17, the forum this year aims at presenting regional plans for the implementation of the Dubai Action Plan, with particular emphasis on regional initiatives. This is done with the purpose of getting feedback from membership and the participating stakeholders to validate and tweak the plans in line with the constructive feedback and regional priorities of membership and key stakeholders presented throughout the RDF.

A major aim of the RDF-ARB 2018 is to develop a four-year implementation plan (2018-2021) for the five Arab regional initiatives adopted by WTDC-17 in the areas of Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Communications, Building Confidence and Security in the Use of Telecommunications/ICTs, Digital Financial Inclusion, Internet of Things (IoT), Smart Cities, and Big Data, and Innovation and entrepreneurship. The implementation plan is based on a series of proposals and commitments from Secretariat, Member States and other stakeholders. The forum also provides an opportunity for extensive dialogue on strengthening synergies between regional initiatives and the activities of ITU-D study groups, ITU Academy, ITU Centres of Excellence, Academia and membership.

Session Format and Objectives

The sessions will take the form of an interactive panel discussion by diverse stakeholders groups involved in supporting the implementation of the WTDC-17. The exchanges will serve to raise awareness of upcoming initiatives, highlighting the global trends, and emphasize areas that stakeholders should focus on for the advancement of the SDGs using ICTs.

Review of the Implementation of the WTDC-14 Regional Initiatives for the Arab region

Comprehensive review of the implementation of the WTDC-14 Regional Initiatives for the Arab region. This review will highlight the implementation of actions carried out by BDT in the period of time from 2014 to 2017. Furthermore, lessons learned will be presented with the aim of benefitting the implementation of the new Regional Initiatives adopted in WTDC 2017.

Five sessions of RDF-ARB 2018 will be served as a platform for presentation of proposals and commitments from all stakeholders willing to contribute to the implementation of the regional initiatives for the Arab Region. A Four Year Implementation Plan for ARB-RI (2018-2021) will be presented in order to be endorsed by all participants at the end of the Forum.

Arab Regional Initiatives 2018-2021

Regional Initiative ARB1 – Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Communications

Climate change and disasters pose serious adverse impacts on the environment. The impact of human activities on the environment and on climate change in particular are issues of growing concern confronting life on Earth. However, ICTs offer new opportunities to mitigate and adapt to climate change. ICTs help to monitor and analyze short- and long-term climate trends, raise awareness, help protect the environment and reduce carbon emissions and disasters. Among other issues related to environment, emergency telecommunications and climate change, the session will cover the following issues:

- What are the environmental framework in the areas of ICTs and climate change?
- The critical role of Emergency Telecommunications in all phases of disasters.
- The positive contribution of ICTs in climate change mitigation and adaption

Regional Initiative ARB2 – Building Confidence and Security in the Use of Telecommunications/ICTs

The Internet evolved from an information exchange platform to the backbone of business engines, critical services and infrastructures, social networks, and the global economy. In today's emerging knowledge society, information security became the biggest challenge in all sectors. Some of the questions the session will tackle are:

- What are the emerging security threats that will surface in the near future?
- How to enhance dialogue and coordination among Member States, as well as engage private sector, academia, civil society and relevant international organizations on mechanisms to enhance cooperation on cybersecurity?
- How to secure national critical infrastructures in order to instigate confidence for the world citizens and unleash the potential of the safe use of ICTs?
- What are the new trends in cybersecurity?

Regional Initiative ARB3 – Digital Financial Inclusion

Globally, impressive gains in the development of digital financial services (DFS) for financial inclusion have been made in recent years. However, progress has been slow in most of the Arab region for various reasons including legal and regulatory challenges, lack of awareness on the opportunities among stakeholders, and lack of coherent coordination among the financial and ICT sector. This session will shed light on some country experiences in the Arab region and focus on the challenges, opportunities and prospects for Digital Financial Inclusion (DFI) in the Arab region, particularly in light of the relevant global initiatives. Moreover, a four-year plan for the period 2018-2021 will be presented as the ITU Arab Regional Office's proposal to implement the new Arab Regional Initiative on DFI as adopted in the last WTDC 2017. In specific, the session will touch upon the following issues:

- What is Digital Financial Inclusion? And how can access to financial services through ICTs benefit societies?
- What is the Financial Inclusion Global Initiative and how can the Arab region benefit from it?
- How have some Arab countries benefited recently from Digital Financial Services and what are some of the challenges they are facing hindering further benefits?

- What are the prospects for Digital Financial Inclusion globally and regionally?

Regional Initiative ARB4 – Internet of Things (IoT), Smart Cities, and Big Data

As the Internet of Things expands, its potential is being explored to boost the urban ecosystem. The huge volumes of generated data from different classical and new sources have given rise to big data technologies and data science techniques.

In this regard, the concepts of IoT and Big Data are being promoted as a key enabler for paving the way to smart sustainable cities. Smart sustainable cities are able to reap the benefits of a secure Internet of Things infrastructure to create safer, more efficient and environmentally conscious living corridors for the growing urban population.

This session will reimagine the implementation of the IoT and Big Data paradigm and address the current urban challenges by creating countless smart and sustainable solutions for advantage of the future generations. Main Discussion Points:

- Adopting the IoT Paradigm: Challenges and Opportunities
- Introduction to ITU-T Study Group 20 “IoT and its applications”
- Fostering IoT innovation in smart sustainable cities
- Resilience of the IoT Infrastructure in smart sustainable cities
- Impact of IoT on Development in the Arab region
- Technology trends in big data and data science
- Big data case studies in different developmental projects and verticals
- The big data transformations

Regional Initiative ARB5 – Innovation and entrepreneurship

Youth unemployment is one of the world’s key development challenges.

It is pertinent how ICTs can contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 entitled “Promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all” as a key objective.

ICTs offer promising solutions-digital jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities. The ongoing information technology revolution is transforming established sectors from agriculture to health and creating new ones from microwork to apps development. This requires people with the skills to both use and develop the computer, mobile phone and internet applications that are powering these changes. This session will discuss:

- The opportunities that digital skills represent for employment in all sectors as ICTs continue to infiltrate nearly all aspects of our lives.

- Which regional mechanisms and strategies to stimulate and enrich the culture of innovation in the ICT in the region.
- The opportunities for partnerships between all stakeholders.

ITU-D Study Groups, ITU Centres of Excellence, Membership/Academia

With the aim of strengthening synergies between regional initiatives and the activities of ITU-D study groups, ITU Academy, ITU Centres of Excellence. This session will shed light on the main activities carried out by the ITU Capacity Building Initiative “The ITU Centres of Excellence” in Arab region as well as the works outcomes of the ITU-D Study Groups “SGs”.