Telecommunication Development Sector

INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION

**Regional Development Forum for the Arab Region
(RDF-ARB)
Algiers, Algeria 12-13 February 2018**

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MAIN OUTCOMES

1   Introduction

The ITU Regional Development Forum for the Arab Region (RDF-ARB) was organized by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in Algiers, Algeria, from 12 to 13 February 2018, at the kind invitation of the Ministry of Post, Telecommunications, Technologies and Digitalization (MPTTN) of the Democratic Republic of Algeria. Its overall theme echoed the WTDC-17's focus on "ICT④SDGs: Towards the implementation of WTDC17 outcomes".

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 Buenos Aires 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 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 provided 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, Digital Inclusion, Academia and membership.

2   Participation

The meeting was attended by more than 49 participants representing 11 Member States from the region, plus Palestine (based on resolution 99), 5 recognized operating agencies, 2 regional and international organizations, 1 scientific and industrial organizations, 1 UN Specialized Agency, 1 other entities dealing with telecommunications, 1 Academia, 2 Other Organizations and

Institutions, 1 ITU Expert. The list of participants can be found here.

3 Documentation

RDF-ARB was paperless. 20 presentations were delivered during the meeting. Relevant documentation, including Agenda and Presentations and Reference Materials were made available at the RDF-ARB website.

4 Opening ceremony

The following dignitaries addressed the opening ceremony: Mr. Fouad Belkassam, Secretary General, Ministry of Post, Telecommunications, Technologies and Digitalization (MPTTN) of Algeria on behalf H.E. Mrs. Houda Iman FERAOUN, Minister of MPTTN, and Mr. Brahima Sanou, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU. The speeches are available on the RDF-ARB website. The opening ceremony also included a short video on #ICTS4SDGS "A Brighter Future for All".

5 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 was provided by Mr. Ebrahim Al Haddad, Regional Director of the ITU Arab Regional Office (see Presentation). This review highlighted the implementation of actions carried out by BDT in

the period of time from 2015 to 2017. Furthermore, lessons learned were presented with the aim of benefitting the implementation of the new Regional Initiatives adopted in WTDC 2017. Furthermore, the WTDC-17 outcomes were also presented in the second session by the Regional Director, he also updated the participants on the ITU-D objectives and the WTDC-17 Arab regional initiatives (see Presentation).

6   Regional Initiatives for the Arab Region

Five sessions of RDF-ARB 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. All inputs formed the basis for establishing of a Four Year Implementation Plan for ARB-RI (2017-2021) that has been endorsed by all participants at the end of the Forum.

Implementation plan has been designed with a scalable approach. At the level of each ARB-RI continuous efforts should be made in order to identify additional funding opportunities that would allow scale up the scope of actions and strengthen impact of activities. All stakeholders that were not part of programming phase should be encouraged to join the implementation phase of ARB-RI. It was emphasized that this four year plan would be a living document that would be subject to constant review and evolution based on the developments regarding the implementation of the respective RI.

6.1   Regional Initiative ARB1 – Environment, Climate Change and Emergency Communications

The session aimed at demonstrating how 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 covered 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

The following contributions were presented at the session on ARB-RI1:

- Dr. Keith R Dickerson, Director, Climate Associates Ltd.
- Mr. Mohamed Amine Benziane, Algérie Télécom, Algeria
- Ms. Aryg Ahmed, NTC-Sudan
- Ms. Rouda AlAmir Ali, Programme Officer, ITU ARO, "Regional Initiative ARB1 – proposed four-year action plan for the Arab region"

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

This session showed the importance of building confidence in the use of ICTs and highlighted that information security became the biggest challenge in all sectors in today's emerging knowledge society. Some of the questions the session that tackled were:
- 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?

The following contributions were presented at the session on ARB-RI2:

- Mr. Sid Ahmed Berrani, ICT Expert, Algeria
- Dr. Mohammed A. Alam, Supervisor General of Cybersecurity Program, Dean of ITC, Naif Arab University for Security Science (NAUSS), Saudi Arabia
- Dr. Shiv K. Bakhshi, Vice President, Industry Relations, Ericsson, Inc.
- Ms. Rouda AlAmir Ali, Programme Officer, ITU ARO, "Regional Initiative ARB2 – proposed four-year action plan for the Arab region"

6.3   Regional Initiative ARB3 – Digital Financial Inclusion

This session shed light on some country experiences in the Arab region and focused on the challenges, opportunities and prospects for Digital Financial Inclusion (DFI) in the Arab region, particularly in light of the relevant global initiatives. In specific, it touched 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?

The following contributions were presented at the session on ARB-RI3:

- Mrs. Rajalakshmi Devarajan, ITA, Oman
- Mr. Vijay Mauree, Programme Coordinator, Standardization Bureau, ITU
- Dr. Riad Hartani, International Expert, Algeria
- Mrs. Aziza Khalil, Economic Affairs, NTRA Egypt
- Mr. Fazil Bouaiach, Government Affairs Director, Djezzy (VEON Company in Algeria)
- Ms. Rouda AlAmir Ali, Programme Officer, ITU ARO, "Regional Initiative ARB3– proposed four-year action plan for the Arab region"

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

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

•   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

The following contributions were presented at the session on ARB-RI4:

- Mr. Ali Abbassene, Expert at MPTTN, Algeria
- Dr. Brahim Ghribi, Head of Government Relations, MEA, Nokia
- Dr. Bharat Kumar Khimji Vagadia, Senior Director, Regulatory Affairs, Ooredoo Group
- Mr. Slaheddine Maaref, Senior Advisor, ITU ARO, "Regional Initiative ARB4– proposed four-year action plan for the Arab region"

6.5   Regional Initiative ARB5 – Innovation and entrepreneurship

The session highlighted how 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 discussed:
•   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.

The following contributions were presented at the session on ARB-RI5:

- Dr. Nibal Idlebi, Chief, Innovation Section, ESCWA
- Mr. Yacine Hidouche, Director, Systemes d'Informations, ANPT, Algeria
- Mr. Osama GHANIM, CEO, INNOVABIA
- Mr. Slaheddine Maaref, Senior Advisor, ITU ARO, "Regional Initiative ARB5 – proposed four-year action plan for the Arab region"

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

With the aim of strengthening synergies between regional initiatives and the activities of ITU-D study groups, ITU Digital Inclusion, ITU Academy & Centres of Excellence, ITU Academia Membership, series of presentations were delivered by Mr. Slaheddine Maaref, Senior Advisor, ITU ARO & Ms. Rouda AlAmir Ali, Programme Officer, ITU ARO . (ITU-D Study Groups, ITU Digital Inclusion, ITU Academy & Centres of Excellence, and ITU Academia Membership)

8   Discussions and Recommendations

The RDF participants raised the following points:
- ARO requested to provide a financial plan which illustrates the allocated budget for each action and to provide the mechanisms to implement the regional initiatives

- ARO requested to coordinate with the other ITU sectors when planning for any event.
- ARO requested to organize its activities back to back to SGs meetings or to any activity organized by the other sectors of the ITU in Arab region

- ARO requested to coordinate with relevant working group in the League of Arab States
- To encourage the active participation of SMEs in the BDT work
- To rename of the RDF to be Regional Development meeting in order to ensure the participation of the decisions makers
- ARO requested to provide more assistance to the LDCs
- What is the ITU plan for resource mobilization in case that the requested amount of 30 Million USD to implement the regional initiative during the cycle is not approved by the council
- ITU to request the sector members to nominate Rapporteurs for the study groups
- How the sensors could be used to mitigate the climate change
- To consider the role of social media in the emerging telecommunications and to benefit from the open source platforms as well.
- Climate change is a large umbrella in which IoT could fall under it
- A multi-stakeholder arrangement and partnership should be in place to build trust and security in the use of ICTs
- The human factor is the most important pillar in the cybersecurity, thus all efforts should be concentrate on raising awareness on the cyberthreats and building capacity of all people
- The important role of academia and research centers to train professionals on cybersecurity
- The cybersecurity is a continuous process and not an activity
- To emphasize the coordination between ARO, ARCC and Academia in order to implement the cybersecurity regional Initiative
- To benefit from emerging technologies to develop sustained cybersecurity solutions
- The need to develop a holistic approach to trust the businesses, processes, infrastructures, software, applications, and devices.
- The need to protect the critical infrastructures, patents from industrial espionage.
- Harmonization of the Regulatory Frameworks for cyberscurity in the Arab region should be considered.
- ITU to continue providing assistance to countries to develop their cybersecurity national plans and strategies.
- Digital financial inclusion is a key to creating employment, raising income, and reducing poverty in that Arab region.
- Security issues related to DFI should be considered.
- The need to consider the legislation, regulations, Qos, and security in addition to technical solutions when developing Digital financial services.
- The need to review the regulations in order to include the concept of electronic wallet and mobile payment.
- The impact of developing financial standards to promote the digital financial services
- The need to develop a portal to include all the countries experiences and share the best practices.
- Use ICTs for increasing creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship
- The need to review the business models to reflect the concept that the technology of today is to serve the other sectors and different services
- The need to create synergy across all players to promote innovation in the Arab region

- Innovation could be seen as potential to raise the national economies.
- The need to trust each other, to trust young people, to value expertise in order to enabling environment of innovation.
- The importance of create a specialized college to prepare mentors and entrepreneurship teaching in the Arab World
- Innovation ecosystem is based on the tight relationship between all stakeholders including the administrations, academia, and industry.
- 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 to address the revolutionary technologies such as 5G and IoT.

9   Closing session

The Regional Director delivered closing remarks.

All stakeholders were thanked for their contributions to the process of establishing the implementation plan for the regional initiatives for the Arab Region.

BDT and Participants thanked the Ministry of Post, Telecommunications, Technologies and Digitalization (MPTTN) of the Democratic Republic of Algeria for hosting the RDF for the Arab Region and warm hospitality during stay in Algiers.