



ITU Regional Innovation Forum for the Arab Region

Mainstreaming competitive digital innovation ecosystems in the age of COVID-19

29 October 2020 | Virtual

Organised within the framework of the 2020 ITU Global Innovation Forum and [ITU Regional Initiative for Arab Region on Innovation and Entrepreneurship](#)

More information at <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/ArabStates/Pages/Events/2020/INNOVATION/INNOVATION.aspx>

Language of the conference: Arabic, English and French

CONCEPT NOTE

CONTEXT:

This event is organised within the framework of the [2020 ITU Global Innovation Forum](#). The cascading impact of the COVID-19 pandemic shines a fresh spotlight on the role and the importance of digital technologies in enabling economic growth, entrepreneurship, digital inclusion, and the capacity to respond quickly to new challenges in a time of unprecedented crisis. It has revealed the shortcomings of many systems, has resulted in stress on value chains and countries' readiness for a digital economy, significantly affecting social conditions worldwide, but also accelerated the pace of digital transformation of economies at large.

Digital innovation sector plays a central role in the new pandemic normal: by enabling public sector transformation, creating new and improved services for citizens, and incorporating new technology to respond to the pandemic. It also has transformed the private sector and the economy at large, enabling traditional businesses to rapidly develop ICT solutions in response to changing consumer demand and lifestyles. Innovation in ICTs provides an opportunity to harness the power of technology to address some of the great development challenges that are unique to the regions and the countries concerned. It is an essential part of a thriving ICT sector, enabling businesses to develop ICT solutions and compete on a global scale by creating jobs, wealth, and economic growth.

From identifying problems worth solving to marshalling resources and taking their ideas to market, entrepreneurs worldwide are looking to unlock the economic potential of their communities, policy-makers are working to develop competitive ICT industries and community leaders are looking to create economic growth. Yet, very few communities have access to an enabling environment; as key stakeholders of the ecosystem—responsible for creating nurturing conditions—often fail to understand, act, develop or renew competitive practices that fuel digital transformation.



The challenges that existed before the Pandemic had become more prevalent and prominent. Communities worldwide can feel the impact of a growing digital innovation divide: rising digital inclusions issues, impact on jobs and loss of competitiveness in key sectors. This is why ITU is hosting the 2020 edition of ITU Innovation Week, which the Regional Innovation Forum will be part of it.

OBJECTIVE:

The ITU's Regional Innovation Forum for the Arab region will empower participants and bring a regional dimension with new approaches, insights, tools, frameworks, communities and relevant case studies to understand how to mainstream sustainable ecosystems that accelerate digital transformation in the Arab region. It will also focus on the power of success stories and building communities that fuel innovation and start-up cultures. The event is a one-day programme that will take the participants on regional learning journeys to prepare them to accelerate digital transformation in their communities among Arab countries

This one day forum aims at bringing an Arab regional dimension with insights about how digital innovation policies monitoring and good practices that can be amplified. The programme builds upon the recently launched ITU toolkit on [Bridging the digital innovation divide: A toolkit for strengthening ICT centric ecosystems](#), and will be supported by a series of national and regional best practices and initiatives fostering innovation, entrepreneurship and digital transformation. This event is organized within the framework of the ITU Arab Regional Initiative on Innovation and Entrepreneurship, adopted by the [World Telecommunication Development Conference 2017](#) (WTDC-17), Buenos Aires.

EXPECTED RESULT:

This forum is designed to empower participants with methodology, frameworks, tools and context relevant case studies to accelerate digital transformation through promoting innovation and entrepreneurship. Further to this, participants will also be able to identify and pitch sustainable projects or initiatives that are conducive to a digital innovation ecosystem.

FORMAT

The Forum will run for four hours. It will be conducted in English and French with simultaneous translation, using video conferencing tools Zoom. The follow-up actions, including the summary of the discussion, will be disseminated through the ITU's website.

The programme is structured into three key tracks for maximum learning by participants:

- **A high-level dialogue track** will provide key insights through dialogues and a keynote presentation about nurturing digital transformation, innovation and entrepreneurship;
- **An ecosystem track** will deliver practical power sessions to equip participants with skills, tools and knowhow in nurturing an environment conducive to digital transformation; and



- **A networking and digital experience** track will provide attendees with opportunities to experience the ITU digital communities and network with change-makers.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

The event is targeted at digital change-makers, policy-makers, the private sector, academics, entrepreneurial support organizations, entrepreneurs, financiers, community development managers, international organizations and media in the Arab region. Particularly, this agenda has been customized for the needs of the ICT policy makers, regulators, tech incubators, national innovation agencies, development agencies, entrepreneurs, ecosystem builders, academia as well as institutions willing to undertake a national reviews on the ICT centric innovation ecosystems and develop coherent approaches to move countries towards an innovation and entrepreneurship driven economy.

ORGANISERS

International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is the United Nations specialized agency for information and communication technologies – ICTs. ITU is committed to connecting all the world's people – wherever they live and whatever their means. Through our work, we protect and support everyone's fundamental right to communicate. The Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D), being one of three pillars of ITU, fosters international cooperation and solidarity in the delivery of technical assistance and in the creation, development and improvement of telecommunication and ICT equipment and networks in developing countries.

DRAFT AGENDA

Thursday, 29 October 2020



	Draft agenda (11:00- 15:00 Cairo time)
11:00-11:10	Welcoming Remark by Mr. Adel Darwish, Regional Director for the ITU Arab Regional Office
	High level dialogue track
11:10–12:30	<p>Regional collaboration and partnership — Panel</p> <p>This session covers building collaboration around the regional priorities on innovation, entrepreneurship and ecosystem development.</p>
	Moderator: Mr. Adel Darwish, Regional Director, ITU Arab Regional Office, (TBC)
	<p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Eng. Adnan Samara, Chairman of the Higher Council for Innovation and Excellence, Palestine • Dr. Khaled AlAttar, (TBC), Deputy Minister of Communications and Information Technology for Digital Transformation, Egypt • Dr. Nibal Idelbi, Chief Innovation Division, UN-ESCWA • ARTECNET Representative (TBC) • Codi (TBC) <p><i>Session type: Presentation (15min), panel discussion (30 min) / Q&A 15 min)</i></p>
12:30–14:00	<p>Regional good practices accelerating ecosystem development and digital transformation —Panel</p> <p>This moderated discussion brings together stakeholders to review regional ecosystems’ performance in the three engines of growth: the innovation ecosystem, the entrepreneurial ecosystems and the technology ecosystems.</p> <p>This session builds on insights from regional policy monitors and good practice report to dive deep into case studies for the region in guiding innovation dynamics, building capacity and integrating ICT innovation into national development agendas.</p> <p>Key questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the region performing? • What are the key challenges for the enablers of digital transformation in the region? • What are lessons from good practices that can amplified?



	<p>Moderator: Dr. Munira Aminova, ITU Regional Consultant</p>
	<p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Aziza Sheikha Co-founder and Catalyst at Hadina RIMTIC Incubator, <i>Mauritania</i> (TBC) link • Mr. Mohamed Ali, Director of Iftin Foundation, <i>Somalia</i> (TBC), link • Ms. Nassima Berrayah, Co-founder of Magma Business Accelerator, <i>Algeria</i> (TBC), link • Mr. Mohammed Khair Obaidat, Director at Queen Rania Center for Entrepreneurship, <i>Jordan</i> (TBC), link • Dr. Mahmoud Abdellatif Khalil, Director of Center for Entrepreneurship, <i>Qatar</i>, link <p><i>Session type: Presentations (15 min) and Q&A 30 min)</i></p>
<p>Ecosystem champions track</p>	
<p>14:00–15:00</p>	<p>An innovation journey: stories from the frontlines — <i>Power session</i></p> <p>This is a moderated discussion by a mentor OR a presentation for a practice from the region.</p> <p>This session will invite previous ITU Innovation Challenges winners to share their stories from their regions.</p> <p>Key questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it feel like being an innovator in your ecosystem? • What is missing to help innovators achieve their potential? • What problems are innovators trying to solve?
	<p>Moderator: Ms. Rouda Alamir Ali, Programme Officer, ITU ARO</p>
	<p>ITU Innovation Challenge Winners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Laila Abdullah Khasib Al Hadhrami (TBC) • Mr. Nahel Muhammad Amirah (TBC) • Ms. Dina Aboueillela (TBC) • Ms. Khadija Hamouchi (TBC) • Ms. Khadija Hamouchi (TBC) • Mr. Majid Al Madloum (TBC) <p><i>Presentations & Q&A</i></p>
<p>Networking and digital experience track</p>	



All day	Digital experience corner <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Pre-recorded videos. Recordings are filtered by boot camp, champion stories, partners stories, mentor stories, winners' pitches, sessions and blogs.
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How to get involved

All information on registration and other related information can be found on the following link:

<https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/ArabStates/Pages/Events/2020/INNOVATION/INNOVATION.aspx>

For further information, please contact:

Ms. Rouda AlAmir Ali, Programme Officer, ITU Arab Regional Office (e-mail: Rouda.AlamirAli@itu.int)