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لجنة الأمم المتحدة الاقتصادية والاجتماعية لغربي آسيا



ECA&ITU&UNCTAD Regional Workshop  
on Information Society Measurements  
in Africa

Addis Ababa 7-9 March 2007

## *ESCWA Perspective*

# On Capacity Building for Measuring the Information Society

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## Purpose

To present an ESCWA perspective on capacity building for measuring the Information Society, and an account of its activities and their outcome over a period of nearly two years.

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## Outline

- The Digital/Statistical Divide
- The Dilemma of Capacity Building
- ESCWA Capacity Building Paradigm
- Regional Workshops for Capacity Building Planning
- Critical Dimensions of Capacity Building
- A Perspective on Methodology
- Recommended Tabulations

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## *The Digital/Statistical Divide*

The digital divide, loosely speaking, refers to the gap among individuals, households, businesses at different geographic areas and socioeconomic levels with regard to the opportunity to access and use ICTs..

Reliable statistical data and indicators regarding societal e-readiness, and use and impact of ICT, help policy makers monitor the progress made towards narrowing the digital divide, and formulate strategies for ICT-driven economic growth and social development.





## *The Dilemma of Capacity Building*

Building an information society in which citizens of the region can equally access and use information resources for sustainable economic and social development is a multi-stakeholder process involving multidimensional aspects..

There are a large number of available ICT measurements in the form of indicators, indexes, and benchmarking data. Some of these measurements will lose their relevance with time as the information society evolves and as technology is further developed. In addition, measuring the information society continuously requires collecting and maintaining data in an accurate and timely manner.



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Data collection is not an isolated process; data should be collected within the framework of, and to serve, national policy making, not for its own sake.

Countries should be actively involved in determining what data needs to be collected, but should do so in accord with international guidelines and to allow international comparability and benchmarking.

The United Nations Statistics Department, regional commissions, and specialized agencies and international organizations have the responsibility of developing such guidelines and assisting countries to build sustainable programmes to collect the required data.

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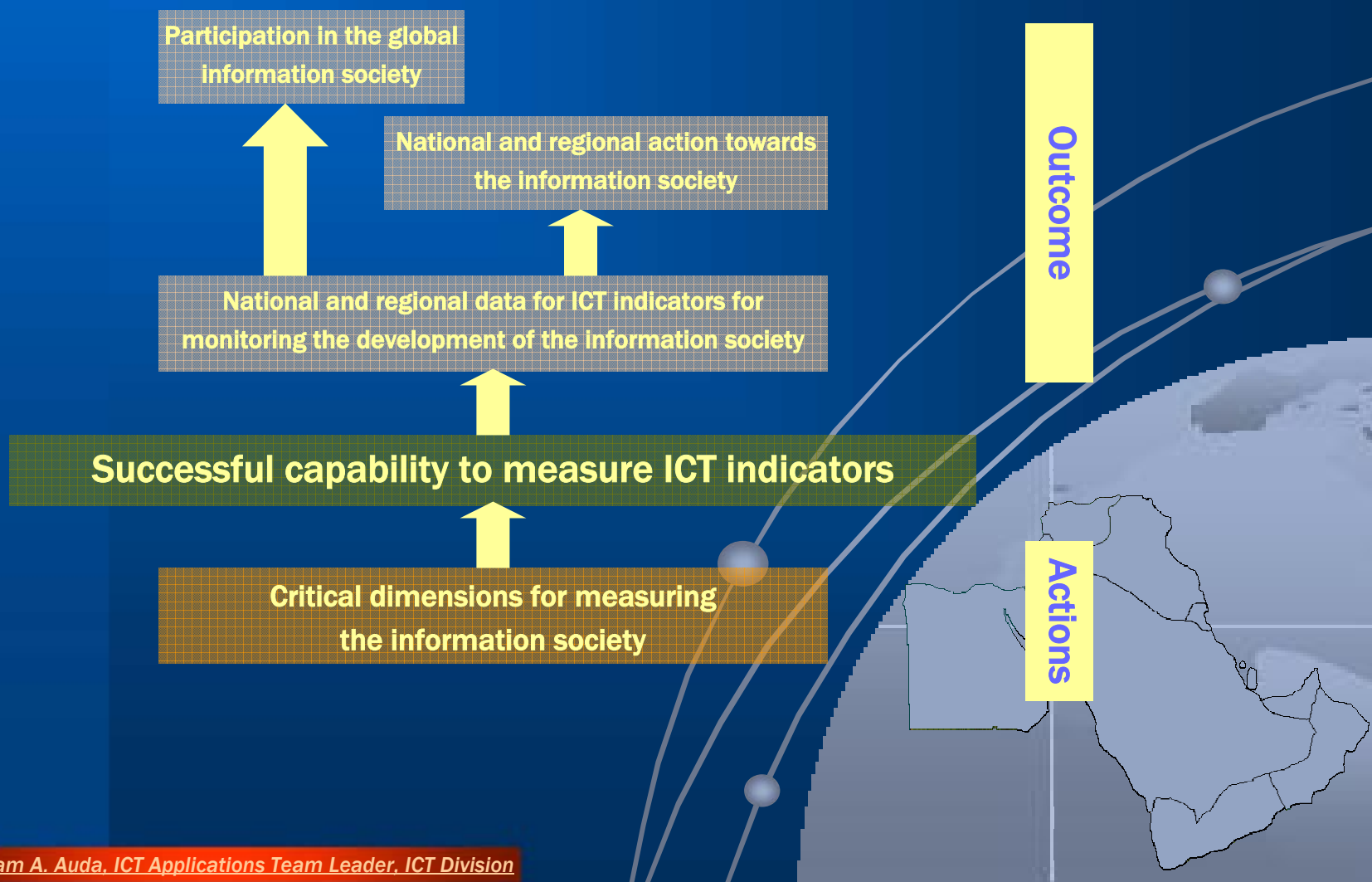


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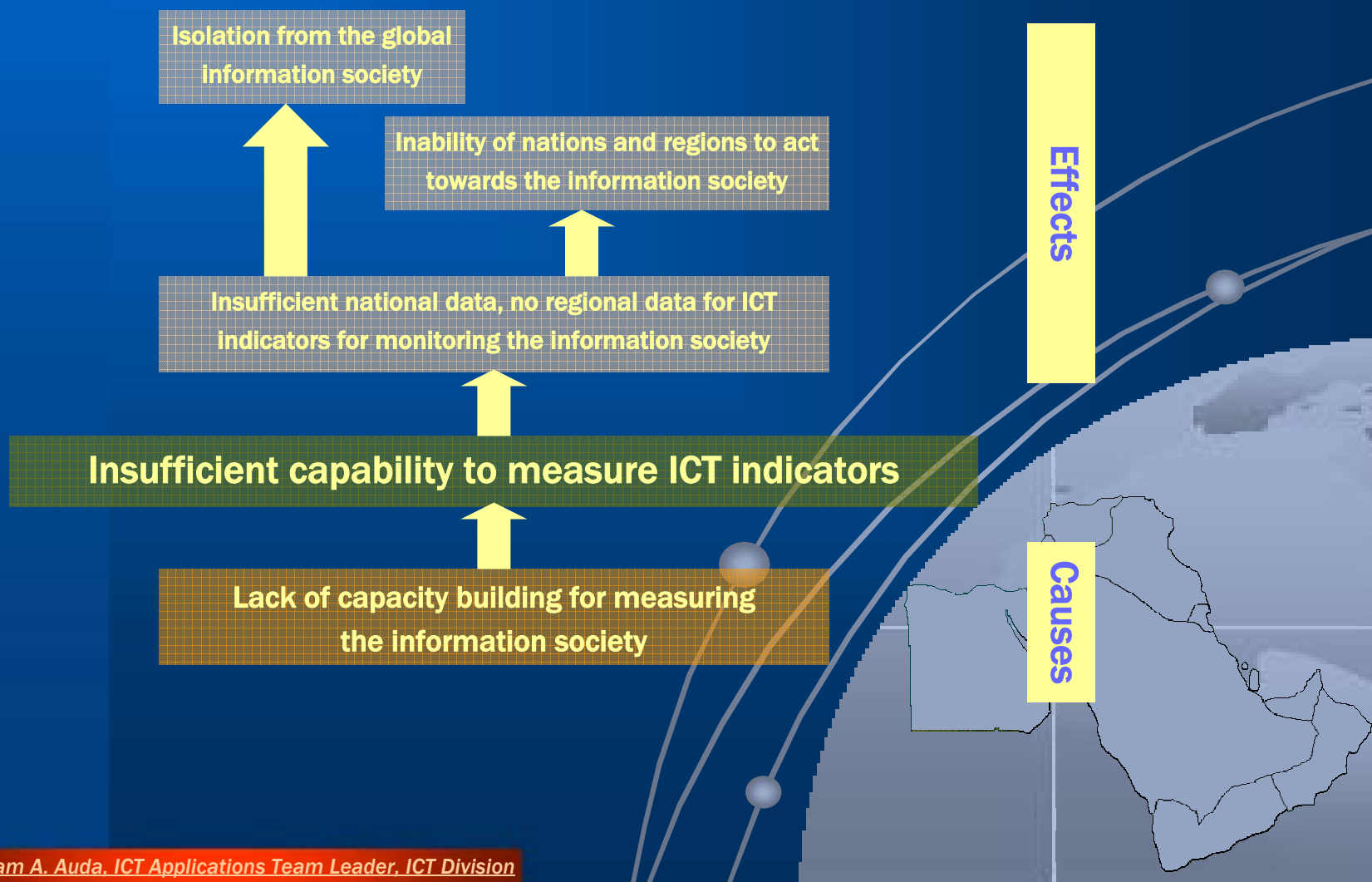
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## ESCWA Capacity Building Paradigm

Capacity building for measuring the information society is based on building national capabilities along certain critical dimensions to measure ICT indicators to make available national and regional data for monitoring the development of the information society, which leads to formulating and carrying out successful national and regional policies and allows for equitable participation in the global information society.







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## Regional Workshops for Capacity Building Planning

ESCWA together with regional partners and members of the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development held two regional workshop on capacity building planning:

- Beirut 7 – 10 June 2005..
- Amman 12 – 14 December 2006..

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The focus of the workshops was on the development of capacity for measuring ICT indicators in ESCWA and Arab countries.

The workshops provided a forum for dissemination of case studies highlighting the successes and challenges of countries engaged in building capacity in indicator collection. The information sharing provided practical insight into actual needs of the Arab countries, and helped identify the critical dimensions and recommended actions for capacity-building planning in Western Asia and the Arab region.

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The recommended actions form a capacity building plan for the stakeholders that aims to promote the adoption and collection of core ICT indicators in support of policy making at both the national and regional levels.





## Critical Dimensions of Capacity Building

- International guidelines
- **Technical assistance programmes**
- Regional cooperation and national coordination
- Definitions, methodology, and model questionnaires
- Future indicators
- **Institutional Capacity and human resources**
- Global/regional/national ICT indicators database



## International Guidelines

The 38th session of United Nations Statistical Commission meeting in New York during 27 February – 2 March 2007 adopted the revised Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, and encouraged countries to begin their implementation. The revised P&R include new ICT topics, which provides an international mandate for the national statistical offices worldwide to collect ICT data related to the included topics in accord with a unified methodology.

It also requested UNSD and other international agencies to increase their technical assistance to NSOs to strengthen national capacity for the implementation of GlobalCensus2010..

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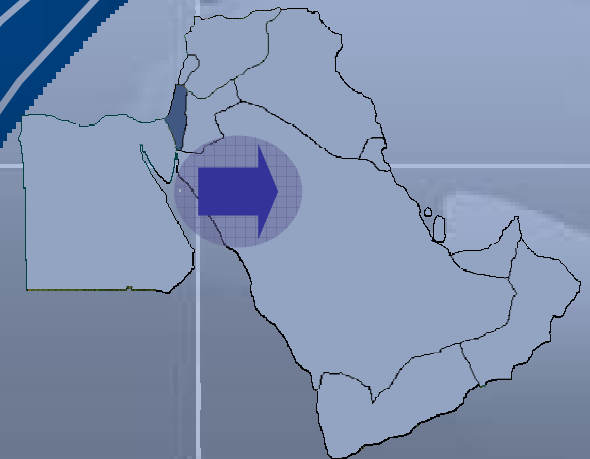


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The United Nations Statistical Commission also endorsed the Partnership list of core ICT indicators and encouraged countries to collect data related to these indicators.



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## Regional Cooperation and National Coordination

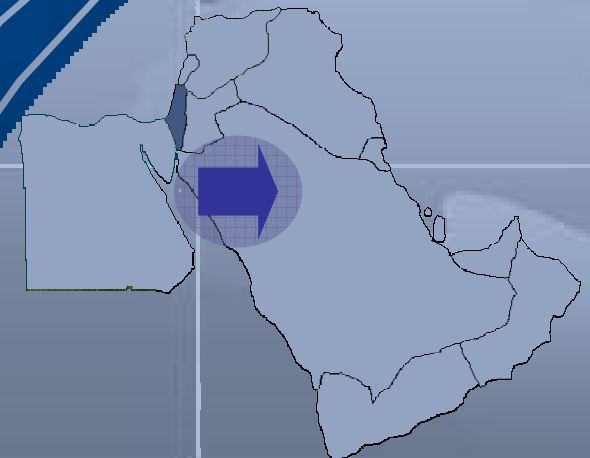
Sharing of expertise, know how, and best practices, together with focused information society research and development are vital to gaining the understanding and developing the knowledge needed for sustaining the evolution of information society and knowledge-based economy. Essential for doing that is the existence of mechanisms for cooperation regionally and coordination nationally.





South Africa established a high-level working group under the banner “Partnership on Measuring the South African Information Society and ICT-for-Development.” It is both a interregional cooperation group and a national coordination body. It has goals that are both short-term and long-term, concrete and visionary, and national and regional.

- Multidisciplinary teams
- National observatories
- Regional working groups
- Interregional cooperation





## Definitions, Methodology, and Model Questionnaires

Development of basic definitions and methodology for computing the core ICT indicators in the Partnership list was urgently requested by the country delegates attending the Geneva thematic meeting in February 2005.

The Partnership methodological manual – Core ICT Indicators – launched during the Tunis WSIS, provides definitions, model questions, and methodological notes relevant to the core indicators, and is based on the methodological works of ITU, OECD, and UNCTAD.

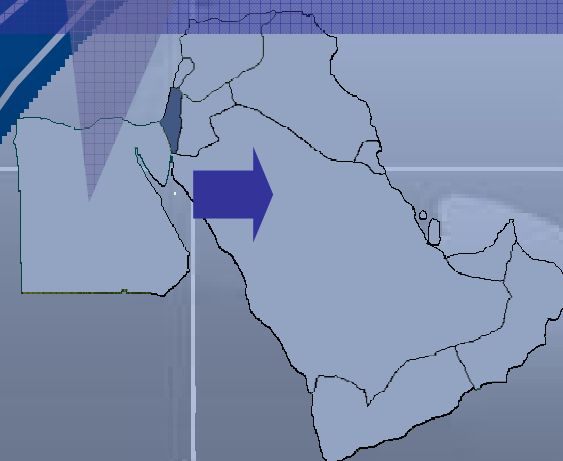


A capacity building workshop on the methodological aspects and actual data collection using ICT household and business surveys is planned by ESCWA, ITU, UNCTAD, and OECD.



The definitions and methodological notes of the ICT topics included in the revised P&R are based on those in the methodological manual of the Partnership.

Development of definitions and methodology is bound to continue as additions, deletions, and/or changes to ICT indicators occur; as countries gain experience with IS measurement; and/or as strategy and policy needs evolve.







The UNESCO Institute for Statistics has proposed a list of core ICT indicators in education based on the on-going school-based surveys it is carrying out worldwide. The Expert Group Meeting on ICT Indicators Adoption and Data Collection in Education and E-Government in Cairo (13 – 15 February 2007) endorsed this list for inclusion in the Partnership list.

### Future Indicators

The current list of core ICT indicators is not intended as a final list. Currently, absent from the list are indicators in significant sectors of the information society, in particular education and literacy, culture, science and technology, labor, health, public administration/government, and agriculture.

The list may still have to undergo periodic reviews and changes. As definitions, computing methods, and data collection methodologies are developed for the proposed list of indicators; as countries gain experience with measuring the information society; and/or as policy needs evolve, further changes to the proposed list are bound to happen.



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Without local relevance and usefulness of content, sustained evolution of the information society is doubtful. Even with such content, ICT itself still may not be able to provide a panacea for the deep-rooted challenges posed by poverty and underdevelopment. In this regard, while it is essential to develop relevant local content and suitable statistics to measure its impact, the impact of ICT on overcoming the development divide in the digital age, in particular in relation and with the aim to achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, must be thoroughly researched.

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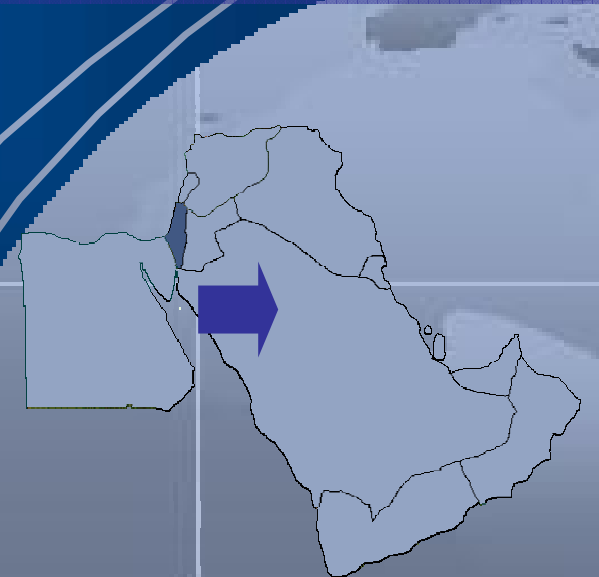


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The United Nations Statistical Commission encouraged the Partnership to continue its efforts to develop new indicators in education, in government, the use of ICT for economic growth and social development, and the barriers to the use of ICTs.



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## Global/Regional/National ICT Indicators Database

Developing a global database on ICT indicators and making it available on the Internet is a major objective of the Partnership.

ESCWA holds the view that the global database is an integral component of capacity building, and, hence, should be designed and administered to operate as such. Specifically, ESCWA views the global database on ICT indicators as a collection of regional components including its own, accessible by the NSOs of the countries in each region through secured web connections to allow for online data update and sharing.

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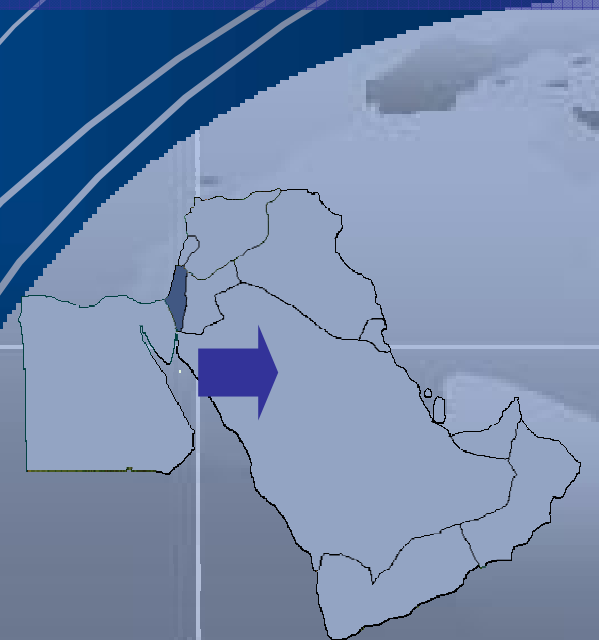


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The ICT indicators database should therefore include national and regional data, as well as comparable international data.





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*Thanks for Your Attention*

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