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|  | **Document** **RPM-ARB21/15** |
|  | **April 2021** |
|  | **Original : English** |
| Chairman, RPM-ARB |
| Report by the RPM-ARB Chairman |

# Introduction

The Regional Preparatory Meeting for Arab region (RPM-ARB) was organized online by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), from 7 to 8 April 2021.

The objective of RPM-ARB was to identify priorities at the regional level, for the development of telecommunications and information and communication technologies (ICTs), taking into account contributions submitted by Member States and ITU-D Sector Members from the region. The meeting concluded with a set of proposals on priority issues that will serve as a basis for the formulation of contributions to the World Telecommunication Development Conference, to be held in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), from 8 to 19 November 2021 (WTDC-21). WTDC-21 will consider the ITU-D activities to be carried out over the next four-year period (2022-2025).

This report gives an account of the work and results of the RPM-ARB.

# Participation

The meeting was attended by 113 participants, including 71 delegates representing 17 Member States from the Arab States region, 14 participants from six Sector Members, 15 participants representing 10 Observer Member States and 6 guests. There were 52 female and 61 male participants.

The list of participants can be found [here](https://www.itu.int/online/mm/scripts/s/gensel23?_lang=&_event=C-00009411&_event_type=ZSED).

# Opening ceremony

The opening ceremony included several high-level interventions, all of which are posted on the [RPM-ARB website](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/WTDC/WTDC21/Pages/RPM-ARB.aspx). The speakers of the opening ceremony included the following:

**Ms Doreen Bogdan-Martin**, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU [[Speech](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMARB-INF-0001/en)]

**Dr Ahmedin Mohammed,** State Minister at Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Ethiopia [[Speech](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMARB-INF-0002/en)]

**Eng. Alansari Almashagbah,** Senior Adviser, Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC), Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Vice-Chairman of TDAG, and Vice Chairman of the League of Arab States’ (LAS) Working Group for WTDC-21 Preparations**.** Eng. Al Ansari’s speech was delivered on behalf of the chairman of the LAS Working Group for WTDC-21 Preparations.

**Dr Khaled Wali,** Minister Plenipotentiary, Director of ICTs department at the League of Arab States.

# Election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen

Following in-region consultations, Mr Mansour S. Alqurashi, Chairman of the League of Arab States’ (LAS) Working Group for WTDC-21 Preparations, Councillor & Focal Point for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and General Manager for International Affairs, Communications, and Information Technology Commission (CITC), Saudi Arabia, was unanimously elected as the Chairman of RPM-ARB for WTDC-21.

The meeting also endorsed the proposal for the four Vice-Chairmanships of RPM-ARB: Eng. Alansari Almashagbah from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan , Eng. Salim Al-Mawali, Manager, Department of International Representations, Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (TRA), Sultanate of Oman and the Vice-Chairman of the LAS’ Working Group for WTDC-21 Preparations, Eng. Samira Belal, Manager of the Technical Office of CEO, Kuwait’s Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority, and Vice-Chairman of LAS’s Working Group for WTDC-21 Preparations, Ms Shahira Selim, Expert, International Policies, National Telecom Regulatory Authority (NTRA), Egypt and Vice-Chairman of LAS’s Working Group for WTDC-21 Preparations.

# Adoption of the agenda and time management plan

The meeting approved the agenda as presented in [Document 1](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMARB-C-0001/en).

The secretariat noted that RPM-ARB had received thirteen contributions: three from Member States and ITU-D Sector Members, seven from the secretariat and three from the TDAG working groups.

The RPM agreed to accept all late contributions, with the understanding that this approach is applied on an exceptional basis.

Having examined all the inputs related to ITU-D action areas, the meeting adopted the proposed draft time management plan ([Document DT/1](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMARB-210407-TD-0001/en)). All the meeting documents are available on the [RPM document management website](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMARB-210407/sum/en).

# Digital trends in Arab region

[**Document 2**](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMARB-C-0002/en) : The document titled “**Digital trends in Arab region“** was presented by Mr Adel Darwish, Regional Director of the ITU Arab Regional Office.

This document provides an overview of the trends and developments in ICT infrastructure, access and use in the Arab region, which includes 22 Member States and is home to a population of 423 million people. The document highlights the changes in ICT adoption since the last World Telecommunication Development Conference in 2017 (WTDC-17) and during the COVID-19 pandemic, tracks the evolution of regulation, and reviews progress and challenges in the area of the ITU regional initiatives for Arab countries. Its objective is to serve the ITU membership as a reference for reviewing progress and identifying ICT development priorities in Arab region.

[**Document 12**](https://www.itu.int/md/meetingdoc.asp?lang=en&parent=D18-RPMARB-C-0012) : the document titled “**Gap Analysis on the Status of Thematic Priorities of the Development Bureau of the International Telecommunication Union in the Arab Region**“ was presented by Mr Adel Darwish, Regional Director of the ITU Arab Regional Office.

This document provides an overview of the current gaps and required actions to be addressed within the Member States in relation to the ten thematic priorities that the Development Bureau of the International Telecommunication Union is currently working on. The report is based on a desk study research, using publicly available online data through websites of policy makers and regulators in the Arab Member States, as well as data available from reports produced in the past by ITU. This is the first time that ITU has conducted such an analysis and ITU understands that there is room for improvement in this report. It kindly requests Member States to engage with the regional office in order to enhance the improvements suggested to overcome gaps with regards to the various thematic priorities of the ITU Development Bureau.

During the discussion the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman, Mr Al Ansari, thanked the ITU Arab Regional Office for the excellent work in developing the gap analysis report and invited ITU to share this information with other ITU field offices. Moreover, Member States are invited to provide feedback on the report to ensure that the analysis depicts an accurate status of the gaps pertaining to the thematic priorities in all the countries of the Arab region.

RPM-ARB welcomed the documents and noted the contribution.

# Reporting on the implementation of the Buenos Aires Action Plan (including the Regional Initiatives), and contribution to the implementation of the WSIS Plan of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

[**Document 3**](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMARB-C-0003/en): The document titled “**Results-Based Management (RBM) implementation in BDT**” was introduced on behalf of the Director of BDT by Mr Stephen Bereaux, Deputy to the BDT Director. In 2019, BDT embarked on a comprehensive overhaul of its use of results-based management (RBM) to equip the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) for the challenges of a rapidly changing development landscape and make it Fit4Purpose. This reform introduces RBM for the implementation of all work programmes, as a managerial decision and monitoring tool, and to provide the evidence to demonstrate BDT's impact. RBM also serves as the platform to engage with internal and external partners, and to replicate and scale up successful projects and work programme initiatives.

[**Document 4**](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMARB-C-0004/en): entitled “**Reporting on the implementation of the Buenos Aires Action Plan (including the Regional Initiatives), and contribution to the implementation of the WSIS Plan of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”** was presented by Mr Stephen Bereaux, Deputy to the BDT Director. Annex 2 entitled **“Detailed information on work towards the achievement of the Regional Initiatives for Arab countries”**was presented by Mr Adel Darwich, the Regional director for the ITU Arab Regional Office.

WTDC-17 convened in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and adopted the [Buenos Aires Action Plan](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/WTDC/WTDC17/Documents/WTDC17_final_report_en.pdf) (BaAP). The plan, which includes the ITU-D programmes, a set of regional initiatives, and new and revised resolutions, recommendations and study group Questions, defines the mandate, objectives and priorities of the ITU Development Sector (ITU-D) for the period 2018-2021. It also aligns the Development Sector work with the strategic objectives of ITU to allow countries to harness the full benefits of ICTs.

Document 4 reports on the implementation of the BaAP, and its contribution to the implementation of the WSIS Plan of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also highlights the change that the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT), the executing arm of ITU-D, has undergone to ensure that it is able to keep pace with the fast-changing environment in which it serves.

[**Annex two**](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMARB-C-0004/en)outlines all activities undertaken by ITU between 2018 and 2020, as a direct response to the expected results of the ITU regional initiatives for the Arab region, which consists of 22 countries. Activities presented in this document depict outcomes and generated impact per regional initiative as well as per activity. They are grouped in chronological order, per topic. All activities carried out under the ITU regional initiatives for the Arab region are directly linked to and coordinated within the corresponding BDT thematic priorities, strengthening ITU’s delivery and impact at the regional and national level. Simultaneously the document identified the contribution of activities to the work of the ITU study groups, as well as ITU’s contribution to the implementation of the WSIS Action Lines and Sustainable Development Goals.

Regional initiatives are the five priority areas that were elaborated and agreed by the Members of the Arab region and approved by WTDC-17 and are described in the Buenos Aires Action Plan. Regional initiatives are intended to address specific telecommunication/ICT priority areas that require the special action of ITU at the regional level. Under each regional initiative, a set of activities, initiatives, partnerships, and projects have been developed to meet the region's needs. Annual ITU Regional Development Forums have been serving as coordination mechanisms, facilitating implementation of the regional initiatives. The ITU regional initiatives for the Arab region are as follows:

* ARB 1: Environment, climate change and emergency telecommunications.
* ARB 2: Confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/information and communication technologies.
* ARB 3: Digital financial inclusion.
* ARB 4: Internet of Things, smart cities and big data.
* ARB 5: Innovation and entrepreneurship

During the discussion, the Secretary of the meeting, Mr Adel Darwish, clarified that a more in-depth analysis of the achievements and gaps in implementing the regional initiatives could be conducted in partnership with the membership. Moreover, membership is invited to contribute financially and in-kind to the implementation of future regional initiatives as financing them during the current period was found to be a challenge. Furthermore, membership is also invited to engage in the formulation of the new regional initiatives with the goal of making sure that they are inclusive of the needs in all countries of the region. In addition, it was clarified that the current ongoing projects will continue in accordance with their time plans.

RPM-ARB welcomed and noted the contribution.

# Report on the implementation of outcomes of other ITU Conferences, Assemblies and meetings related to ITU-D work: PP-18, WRC-19, RA-19, and WTSA-16

[**Document 5**](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMARB-C-0005/en): The document entitled **“Report on the implementation of outcomes of other ITU Conferences, Assemblies and meetings related to ITU-D work: PP-18, WRC-19, RA-19, and WTSA-16”** was introduced on behalf of the Director of BDT by Mr Marco Obiso, a.i. Chief of the DNS Department.

The document provides a comprehensive view of the implementation of the ITU conferences relevant to the work of ITU-D, based on a mapping exercise conducted by BDT to link the BDT thematic focus areas with the relevant ITU resolutions, the WSIS action lines, the BDT study groups, SDGs and the targets of the Connect 2020 Agenda.

RPM-ARB welcomed and noted the contribution.

# Preparation for WTDC‑21

* 1. **Report of the TDAG Working Group on WTDC Preparations (TDAG-WG-Prep)**

[**Document 6:**](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMARB-C-0006/en) The document entitled “**Final report of the TDAG Working Group on WTDC Preparations (TDAG-WG-Prep)”** was presented by Mr Santiago Reyes-Borda, Chairman of the TDAG-WG-Prep. It contains a final report on the work of the TDAG Working Group on WTDC Preparations (TDAG-WG-Prep), including those items where the group had not reached a consensus and on which TDAG took a decision. TDAG-WG-Prep submitted its final report, along with recommendations on the preparatory process for WTDC and on conference arrangements, including content, thematic tracks, themes and stakeholders to the TDAG meeting of 23 November 2020, where it was approved. Moreover, the TDAG-WG-Prep Chairman pointed out that the working group has now fulfilled its terms of reference, having submitted its final report TDAG-20/3.

The Chairman reminded participants about two important initiatives the Arab region is involved in, namely: meaningful Youth engagement through [the Generation Connect – ARAB Youth Group](https://www.itu.int/generationconnect/generation-connect-arab-states-youth-group-gc-arb/) and [the Network of Women (NoW)](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/WTDC/WTDC21/NoW/Pages/default.aspx) for the Telecommunication Development Sector, officially launched on 7 April 2021. For the first time, these initiatives are part of the preparatory process for WTDC.

RPM-ARB welcomed and noted the contribution.

* 1. **Report of the TDAG Working Group on WTDC Resolutions, Declaration and Thematic Priorities (TDAG-WG-RDTP)**

[**Document 7:**](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMARB-C-0007/en) The document entitled ”**Report of the meeting of the TDAG Working Group on Resolutions, Declaration and Thematic Priorities (TDAG-WG-RDTP)”** was presented by Dr Ahmad Reza Sharafat, Chairman, TDAG-WG-RDTP. It contains the progress report of the meeting of the work so far of the TDAG-WG-RDTP. The group will continue its work and submit its final report to TDAG-21.

During the session, participants voiced their opinion that the thematic area of cybersecurity and trust and confidence in the use of ICTs should be considered as one of the thematic priorities. Moreover, they emphasized that study groups should be linked to all thematic priorities as opposed to the current proposals to keep it within the thematic priority on resource mobilization and national cooperation. Furthermore, some participants highlighted the need to consider rural areas and their connectivity and the ability to use ICT in the thematic priorities relevant to connectivity and digital inclusion. The participants of the meeting stressed that these issues along with others will require further meetings to build a consensus. The Chairman of TDAG-WG-RDTP welcomed those suggestions and extended an invitation to the next meeting of the working group planned to take place on 9 April 2021. He also emphasized that the working group would assess if it will need further meetings in order for the working group to be able to present a timely final report to TDAG-21.

Participants of the meeting indicated that they will be submitting contributions on the declaration to the coming meeting of the TDAG-WG-RDTP.

RPM-ARB welcomed and noted the contribution.

* 1. **TDAG Working Group on Strategic and Operational Plans (TDAG-WG-SOP)**

[**Document 8:**](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMARB-C-0008/en) The document entitled “**Report on the meeting of TDAG Working Group on Strategic and Operational Plans (TDAG-WG-SOP)”** was introduced by Ms Blanca González, Chairman of this group and Head of Unit, Cabinet of the Secretary of State for Telecommunications and Digital Infrastructures, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation, Spain. It contains a report on the activities of the TDAG Working Group on Strategic and Operational Plans (TDAG-WG-SOP) since its creation. It also contains some recommendations on the way forward, that TDAG endorsed, at its 23 November 2020 meeting.

With regard to streamlining the review of the SOPs and lessen the administrative tasks during the WTDC by assigning the task of reviewing ITU-D’s contribution to the ITU Strategic Plan to TDAG, in advance of the upcoming Plenipotentiary Conference in 2022, participants of the meeting raised their concerns given that many developing countries do not participate in the meetings of the working group. In addition to this, it was pointed out that there is a need to amend WTDC Resolutions 1 (Res. Buenos Aires, 2017) and 24 (Rev. Dubai, 2014) and that paragraph 16 of point 211 of the ITU Convention states that the development conference is responsible for updating the strategic objectives in an equitable way. Moreover, in light of the above issues, participants inquired if the work of the working group will continue after the WTDC or whether there will be a contribution to present to the upcoming WTDC.

Ms González emphasized on the need for a holistic approach to ensure the participation of all stakeholders in the preparation process of the ITU Strategic Plan, for improving the linkages between the ITU-D Action Plan and the ITU Strategic Plan. She encouraged participants to actively engage in the work of the working group particularly on SharePoint in order to try to resolve all of these issues within the working group.

RPM-ARB welcomed and noted the contribution.

# 8 Priority setting for Regional Initiatives, related projects and financing mechanisms

Ms Shahira Selim, on behalf of the Chairman of the RPM-ARB, invited the contributors to present their inputs on regional initiatives. The following contributions were presented:

[**Document 9**](https://www.itu.int/md/meetingdoc.asp?lang=en&parent=D18-RPMARB-C-0009) entitled ***“*Arab countries' views on draft regional initiatives*”*** was introduced by Eng. Salim Al-Maawali, Chairman, LAS’ Arab Working Group on Strategic and Operational Plans including Regional Initiatives, on behalf of Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates. The document contains a proposal advocating for the importance of revising the regional initiatives and their goals in a way that reflects the progress made in telecommunications/ICTs in a manner that ensures that the aspirations and needs of the Arab region are met while contributing to the achievement of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The contribution includes a proposal for regional initiatives by the submitter Arab administrations, as follows:

1) Promote digital transformation and enable digital inclusion, particularly for rapid response to epidemics and emergencies;

2) Building confidence and security in the use of telecommunications/ information and communication technologies in the era of new and emerging digital technologies, including child online protection;

3) Developing digital infrastructure, promoting universal access and supporting smart cities and communities;

4) Digital innovation and entrepreneurship;

5) Developing digital collaborative regulation and harmonization of policy and regulatory frameworks for information and communication technology and the digital economy.

[**Document 10**](https://www.itu.int/md/meetingdoc.asp?lang=en&parent=D18-RPMARB-C-0010) entitled ***“*Notes and proposals on regional initiatives for the Arab region*”*** was introduced by Mr Abdelaziz Al Zarooni, Telecommunication Regulatory Authority, United Arab Emirates. It contains the proposal for a number of regional initiatives for the Arab region. The document also addresses recommendations that the United Arab Emirates suggests to take into account when formulating and implementing regional initiatives for the Arab region.

[**Document 11**](https://www.itu.int/md/meetingdoc.asp?lang=en&parent=D18-RPMARB-C-0011) entitled ***“*Crystallizing Regional Priorities in the Arab Region to prepare for the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-21)*”*** was introduced by Mr Adel Darwish, Regional Director of the ITU Arab Regional Office. This document presents the report of the event Crystallizing Regional Priorities in the Arab Region to prepare for the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-21), that took place online on 30 and 31 March 2021.

[**Document 13**](https://www.itu.int/md/D18-RPMARB-C-0013/en) entitled **“Creating an Enabling Environment for 5G in Terms of Feasibility studies and the Relevant Applications in Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things and Radiocommunication Spectrum”** was presented by Mr Mustafa Al Bahbahani, Communication and Media Commission, Iraq. The contribution affirms Iraq’s support for the regional priority proposed in the meeting and further suggests the addition of a new regional priority as depicted in the title of the contribution. It is noteworthy to point out that, although this contribution was received during the RPM-ARB, the meeting approved its inclusion as a contribution to the meeting.

The Vice-Chairman thanked membership for the contributions received and the ITU Arab Regional Office for the efforts deployed to inform the discussions regarding regional initiatives using innovative ideas and methodologies as presented through the I-CoDI platform. Moreover, the Vice-Chairman requested the Arab Preparatory Working Group for WTDC-21 to consider in their work the contributions received in the RPM, specifically under agenda items 4 and 8, with the view to elaborate and enhance the Arab regional initiatives. In addition, consensus was reached to adopt the regional initiatives identified in [Document 9](https://www.itu.int/md/meetingdoc.asp?lang=en&parent=D18-RPMARB-C-0009) as a the initial draft for the regional initiatives in the Arab region. Moreover, the working group should elaborate and enhance the regional initiatives by identifying clear KPIs and targets, including identifying the targeted countries to implement each of the agreed regional initiatives. Also, as this has demonstrated to be a good working methodology, the Vice-Chairman also suggested that the Arab Preparatory Working Group for WTDC-21 consider the suggestions made by the ITU Arab Regional Office to organize deep-dive workshops for each of the identified priority areas using the proposed I-CoDI methodology. This suggestion is to be considered one of several options available to the working group in their efforts to formulate the regional initiatives.

RPM-ARB noted the documents and agreed to further discuss in order to achieve consensus on a common proposal for the regional initiatives and to deep-dive by developing the expected results and KPIs, taking also into consideration these contributions.

# 9. Other Business

During the RPM-ARB two side events were organized as follows:

***Network of Women (NoW)***

RPM-ARB established the [Network of Women (NoW)](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/WTDC/WTDC21/NoW/Pages/default.aspx) for WTDC-21 as the fourth regional network to be launched by ITU/BDT. This initiative aims at building a community to support female delegates, expand their network, and advocate and share experiences and knowledge with other female delegates. The Network of Women also aims at promoting the active participation of women in ITU activities and in the tech sector, in general.

The side event was moderated by Ms Shahira Selim, Expert, International Policies, NTRA, Egypt, and Vice-Chairman of Arab Group for the preparation for WTDC-21.

Ms Doreen Bogdan Martin delivered opening remarks as she introduced the Network of Women that aims to build a support structure for talented female delegates in the lead up to WTDC-21 and beyond. Moreover, she stressed the need for more women in leadership roles in the structures that make up ITU-D, such as study groups and committee chairmanships, vice-chairmanships, for a more inclusive WTDC-21. In addition, she pointed out that women play a crucial role in making progress towards leveraging digital development by bringing innovative solutions to the challenges they face. She also highlighted that the number of female delegates in the Arab region has risen significantly from 18.8 per cent to 21 per cent, and to around 50 per cent in 2013, 2017 and 2021, respectively.

The keynote speech was delivered by Dr Deemah al Yahia, Secretary General of the Digital Cooperation Organization. In her speech she stressed the importance of this initiative and the need for women to be job creators not job seekers in the digital era. There is a need to nurture innovative role models that have made a change in digital economy, she explained, and then continued to highlight that it is important to amplify the effect to make changes in culture, identify the gaps in the market, and bridge these gaps through innovative solutions either in the public or private sector. She ended by pointing out how Internet connectivity is important to empower women to find jobs, initiate start-ups, access quality education, and expose them to other cultures.

Ms Noha Gaafar, Expert, International Policies, TRA, Egypt briefed the audience on the NoW4WRC process and to what extent this experience has had a positive impact on her personally and on other female delegates, allowing women to feel: “You are not alone”, “You can do it”. It is also important to note that such initiatives encourage decision-makers to fulfil their obligations in the same direction. Ms Gafar invited participants to this initiative to be its ambassadors to achieve its ultimate goal.

The following panelists shared their personal experiences as female leaders and role models in the WTDC process:

* Ms Reham ElMayet, Telecommunications Expert, ICT Development Department, League of Arab States;
* Ms Sameera Belal, Manager of Technical Office of CEO, CITRA, Kuwait, and Vice-Chairman of Arab Group for the preparation for WTDC-21,
* Ms Amel Khiar, Telecommunications Engineer, Technical Department, Algeria Telecom, and Vice Rapporteur of Question 4/2;
* Ms Aysha Binsanadmm, Director, Telecommunications, Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications, Bahrain.

The meeting suggested that this initiative be continued at the regional level beyond WTDC-21. Moreover, the ITU Arab Regional Office is invited to consult with Member States to make the Network of Women inclusive of all three Sectors.

***Generation Connect – Arab Youth Group:***

The [Generation Connect - Arab Youth Group](https://www.itu.int/generationconnect/generation-connect-arab-states-youth-group-gc-arb/) (GC-ARB) was established within the framework of the Generation Connect initiative to promote meaningful youth engagement and participation in the international dialogue on digital development. GC-ARB aims at providing a unique participative process for youth to virtually discuss regional opportunities and challenges related to digital technologies. Through this platform, youth can share their interests, concerns and perspectives on digital transformation, especially in the context of the RPM-ARB and the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2021 (WTDC-21).

The RPM-ARB side event on GC-ARB focused on providing the opportunity to a number of Arab youth representatives to share their thoughts and insights on the common major digital issues facing young people in the region and their perspectives on the future of digital communication.

The side event was moderated by Mr Ali AlToblani, an ITU intern. The distinguished youth panellists included the following:

* Ms Yasmine Seghier from Algeria, a second-year student from the INPTIC Institute. In her intervention, she described what the future would look like in terms of digital communication and the advancement of technology, if we were all living in a world where we were able to communicate and interact in a much easier way than we already are. She also stated that she hoped to see meetings take place in 3-D;
* Mr Tarek Abi Ramia from Lebanon, recently graduated with a bachelor’s degree in computer sciences from the USEK University. In his intervention he raised multiple issues regarding infrastructure, connectivity, affordability and security concerns, specifically in low-income countries and in countries that suffer from conflicts;
* Ms Yomna Sherif from Egypt graduated from the German university in Cairo with a bachelor’s degree in business informatics. In her intervention she mentioned her interest in youth engagement and her willingness to influence others beyond university students;
* Ms Mariam Termos from Lebanon is a second-year student in the American University of Beirut, studying computer science engineering. In her intervention, she proposed solutions through the use of innovation, in an effort to combat the issues already mentioned by Tarek and the need to make connectivity available at affordable prices for students.

In the open discussion that followed each of the above interventions, a poll was launched asking the audience questions on the importance of youth engagement, and the answer displayed a clear agreement on its importance with over 90% of responses.

Following the RPM, the GC-ARB members will be working together to identify regional thematic priorities and to ideate related key opportunities and challenges. The goal is for GC-ARB to elaborate on a crowd-sourced document to be presented by the digital youth envoys at a specific meeting after the RPM-ARB. The young participants will continue to be engaged in Generation Connect Initiatives on the journey to WTDC-21 and the preceding Generation Connect Youth Summit.

RPM-ARB noted both these initiatives and encouraged all the Members in the region to contribute actively to both of them.

***Launch of the ITU Arab Regional Office Twitter Account:***

Mr Adel Darwish, Regional Director of the ITU Arab Regional Office, announced during the meeting the launch of the ITU Arab Regional Office Twitter account. He emphasized that this account will be an additional mechanism for the regional office to share information with the membership and the general public on ITU activities in the region. It is noteworthy that this launch coincides with the 30-year anniversary of the establishment of the ITU Arab Regional Office.

RPM-ARB noted and welcomed this launch.

During the discussions under this agenda item, the secretariate advised that the next meeting of the Inter-Regional Meeting for the WTDC-21 will take place from 12 to 13 May and the report of the first meeting will be issued shortly.

# 10. Main outcomes

RPM-ARB, after considering all input documents and discussions, came to the following conclusions:

* RPM-ARB considered the final report of **TDAG Working Group on WTDC Preparations (TDAG-WG-Prep)** and noted the contribution;
* RPM-ARB noted the implementation of the Arab regional initiatives with appreciation;
* RPM-ARB considered the progress report of **TDAG Working Group on Resolutions, Declaration and Thematic Priorities (TDAG-WG-RDTP)** and noted the contribution;
* RPM-ARB considered the progress report of **TDAG Working Group on Strategic and Operational Plans (TDAG-WG-SOP)** and noted the contribution;
* RPM-ARB recognized that the ITU-D regional initiatives constitute an effective mechanism for fostering implementation of the WSIS outcomes and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;
* RPM-ARB invites the League of Arab States Preparatory Working Group for WTDC-21 to continue the work to elaborate and enhance the regional initiatives and consider in their work the contributions received in the RPM, specifically under agenda items 4 and 8. Moreover, the working group should target to elaborate and enhance the regional initiatives by identifying clear KPIs and targets, including identifying the targeted countries to implement each of the identified regional initiatives. Also, the Arab Preparatory Working Group for WTDC-21 will also consider the suggestion made by the ITU Arab Regional Office to organize deep-dive workshops for each of the identified priority areas using the proposed I-CoDI methodology. This suggestion is to be considered one of several options available to the working group in their efforts to formulate the regional initiatives;
* RPM-ARB welcomed the report on “Digital trends in the Arab Region in 2021” as an important contribution to developing the regional initiatives, taking into account the developments and challenges at the regional level in the field of ICTs;
* RPM-ARB welcomed the report titled “Gap Analysis on the Status of Thematic Priorities of the Development Bureau of the International Telecommunication Union in the Arab Region” and invited the ITU to share this information with other ITU field offices. Moreover, Member States are invited to provide feedback on the report to ensure that the analysis depicts an accurate status of the gaps pertaining to the thematic priorities in all the countries of the Arab region;
* RPM- ARB launched the Network of Women (NoW) for the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector, paving the way for the involvement of more women in WTDC-21;
* RPM-ARB welcomed the creation of the GC-ARB Youth Group, which could serve as a means for meaningful engagement, empowerment and participation of youth in the work of ITU.

# 11. Closing ceremony

Mr Adel Darwish, Regional Director of the ITU Arab Regional Office delivered the closing remarks on behalf of the BDT Director, Ms Doreen Bogdan-Martin, as he emphasized the success of this RPM-ARB as an emblematic example of the spirit of dialogue, cooperation and collaboration permeating ITU-D. Such spirit will be brought into all meetings and interactions engaging ITU-D membership, such as TDAG-21 and finally WTDC-21.

He noted the important outcomes reflected in the Chairman’s report, which would serve as the building blocks for the region’s contributions to WTDC-21 and reiterated the importance of making WTDC a more inclusive process through youth engagement and by ensuring gender balance.

He thanked the Chairman, Mr Mansour S. Alqurashi, as well as the Vice-Chairmen, Eng. Alansari Almashagbah, Eng. Salim Al-Mawali, Eng. Samira Belal, and Ms Shahira Selim, for their excellent leadership of the meeting and for facilitating consensus on the issues discussed during the meeting.

He also thanked all delegates for their contributions and for sharing their views and ideas, as well as those who worked behind the scenes to help make the meeting a success.

He concluded by thanking the BDT Director, Ms Doreen Bogdan-Martin, ITU staff, including the ITU Arab Regional Office staff for their dedication and contribution to the success of the meeting.

Closing the meeting, Mr Mansour S. Alqurashi, expressed his gratitude to all ITU Members having participated in the work of RPM-ARB. He also expressed his particular gratitude to Ms Doreen Bogdan-Martin, BDT Director, to Mr Adel Darwish, the Regional Director for the Arab region, and thanked the ITU staff for their assistance in the organization and running of the meeting.

Finally, Mr Mansour S. Alqurashi reiterated the importance of the constructive discussions and deliberations of RPM-ARB, in particular those aimed at bridging the digital divide and connecting the unconnected.

The RPM-ARB participants thanked the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen of the meeting for their effective leadership, as well as for their excellent organization of the meeting and for the facilities and working conditions provided, highlighting in particular the spirit of collaboration among membership and with ITU.

Mr Mansour S. Alqurashi,
Chairman, RPM-ARB for WTDC‑21

8 April 2021, Cairo

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