League of Arab States

The Arab Paper to the 2nd International Preparatory Committee (Prep-Com2) :
 The World Summit of Information Society (WSIS)

Geneva from 17-28/2/2003

With reference to the first meeting of the International Preparatory Committee (Prep-Com1),

Recalling Istanbul Plan of Action of the International Telecommunications Conference 2002, and recalling also resolution Plen/7,1 of the International Conference of Mandates (Marakesh 2002),

Recognizing the decisions of the League of Arab States (Amman 2001), the Executive Bureau of the Arab Ministerial Cabinet for Information and Telecommunication (Syria 2002) and the results of the 4th Arab preparatory meeting for (WSIS) (Beirut 7-8/2/2003),

Noting the Arab Group's (The Arab Ministerial Cabinet for Information and Telecommunication at the League of Arab State) vision regarding the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action of the World Summit of the Information Society, they should be based on the following considerations:
Full access to information and telecommunication technology.

- Telecommunication and information technology are instrumental to economic and social growth.
- Reliance and safety of using information and telecommunication technology.
- Public awareness and orientation of the government and civil society to the usage of information and telecommunication technology.
- A balanced integration between the two phases of the WSIS.

Arab Suggestions concerning the following:
a- The preparation basics for the WSIS:
- Establishment and completion of the required infrastructure.
- Structural and legislative reform to create a healthy environment for national and foreign investment and to provide public telecommunication services with reasonable prices.
- To heed the cultural, social and economic norms related to the development of the Information and telecommunication society. To provide access to sophisticated services through electronic applications, networks and uses of Information and telecommunication, bearing in mind their economic and social feasibility.

- To use new flexible measuring standards to the Information and telecommunication technology, bearing in mind the situation in each country.

- To develop and increase the Arab content and electronic gateways to satisfy the needs of Arab users, achieve cultural diversity and maintain Arab identity.

- To provide international assistance and participation to qualify the less developed countries to take part in the information society.

- To secure a effective participation of the private sector and the civil society in developing the Information and Telecommunication Society.

The WSIS Plan of Action:
Following the declared principles, *recalling* the Arab Information and Telecommunication strategy, as well as Istanbul Declaration 2002 for the

digital gap in the developing countries, the executive plan consists of the following:

1-The Information and Telecommunication infrastructure which includes:

-Establishing a regional digital network and modernizing the Arab regional VSAT system.

-Setting a mechanism to attract Arab and foreign investments to modernize the Information and Telecommunication infrastructure and networks.

-Setting out plans to expand the cable telephone services and SMART technology.

-Using modern techniques to extend Information and Telecommunication services to rural and remote areas.

-Establishing partnership between the public and private sector to implement the basic national and regional plans.

-Introducing Wi-fi to the developing countries to facilitate the provision of cheap internet services.

-Refusal of all sorts of scientific and technical exclusion that deprive peoples from benefiting from available technologies.

-Setting evaluation standards for the development of the information and telecommunication society as well as to monitor the national, regional and international digital gap based on a collateral integrated unit of measurement. Accordingly, it is suggested to assign this task to an international team, working under the joint auspices of the Technical Secretariat of the World Summit and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

-Creating an international reference to protect the domain names and the root directories, provided that each country would have the right to control and use its electronic addresses.

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1. Structural Reform:
   - Reforming telecommunication and information laws and organizing the telecommunication utilities.
   - Reforming telecommunication and information investment laws to ensure transparency and secure a cheap and high quality service to consumers.

- Protecting intellectual property especially in the field of computer programming.
- Promoting small and medium industries in developing countries by establishing nurseries, encouraging the small credit and funding entities and securing credit risks.
- Securing a national and international gradual and balanced open door policy for free competition.

2. Full and Fair Access:

- To use information and telecommunication technology and networks to promote access to all services including the added value ones.
- To use modern techniques to secure access of services in remote and rural areas.
  To increase awareness by making the use of information and telecommunication technology available to all categories in the society especially women, children, old people and people of special needs.

- To develop and intensify the Arab content on the internet.

- To cooperate with the organizing bodies, the private sector and banks to provide computer machines with reasonable prices.

3. Building Capacities:
It aims to bridge the digital gap on the national and regional levels and to eliminate technological illiteracy:
- To promote technological knowledge and expand the use of information and telecommunication technology in all categories in the society (youth-women-people of special needs).
- To expand and facilitate the use of electronic applications in education and training.
- To increase the number of internet centres in schools, libraries and clubs.

- To encourage scientific research and development in the field.

4. The Network Security:
- To hedge a national and international policy to secure the secrecy and privacy of information networks.
- To enact and enforce related laws and legislations that consider hacking a legal crime.
- To accredit electronic documents and signatures.

5. Electronic Applications and Content:
- To use an integrated computing application system of information and telecommunication to assist the government in coordinating and securing an easy reach of services to citizens.
- To use information and telecommunication applications in providing information useful for political, social and economic decision making. To also use them in cutting down government expenses, using different modes and experiences.
- To use a remote medical information and application system to secure the reach of medical services to remote and needy areas.
- To use distance learning application system to give university degrees to the largest number of people possible, in a bid to promote creativity, innovation and employment opportunities.
- To promote the Arab content industries through a number of relevant legislations.
- To establish technological content accumulators and centres for the Arab content industry companies and create any relevant funds to support them.
- To issue all relevant instructions to include the Arab sites with the other languages.

6. The Different Aspects of Developing the Information and Telecommunication Society:
Building up the information and telecommunication society requires a deep study to all the other factors that influence its process of work and objectives:

-The Social and Solidarity Aspect:

- To strengthen the culture and values of understanding, cooperation and solidarity among peoples. Cross cultural bridges, dialogue between civilizations, development of global citizens and creating an international mechanism of solidarity to shun any attempts of marginalization, poverty and need should be the tool to achieve this.

-The Cultural Aspect and the Need to Develop the Information and Telecommunication Content :

- To promote intellectual producation and protect the language.
- To promote scientific research in general and in the field of information and telecommunication in particular.
- To set out new policies to invest in education and to establish the concept of 'learning forever'.

-The Ethics Aspect:

-To agree on an international set of intellectual property rules to govern both the content and information creativity.

-The Economic and Financial Aspect :

- To establish qualified systems of work, production, transactions, services and technological innovation. This will foster the operational and competition capacity of institutions, personnel and national economies.

-The Regional and International Aspect:

-To broaden and systemize discussions about the development of the information society comprising the public and private sectors and the civil society.

-To set out new bases for multilateral cooperation.

7. Balanced Integration between the Two Phases of the WSIS:

To guarantee success in the two WSIS phases, it is proposed to dedicate the interval period to study the issue of Information Society, in a bid to reach the following results in the upcoming second phase meeting in Tunisia 2005:

- To endorse a charter for the Information Society.
- To sponsor a long term 25 years program of action to develop the Information Society,

bridge the digital gap and respond to the needs
of developments.