



ITU Regional Development Forum for the Arab States (RDF-ARB)

Accelerating the digital development in the Arab Region

Bahrain, 6-7 November 2023

Organized by: International Telecommunication Union

**Hosted By: Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications of the
Kingdom of Bahrain**

FINAL REPORT

1. Introduction & General Overview

The ITU Regional Development Forum for the Arab States (RDF-ARB) was organized by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and hosted by the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications of the Kingdom of Bahrain. The Forum was held from 6 to 7 November 2023 in the Kingdom of Bahrain and was followed by the Digital Regulation Workshop for the Arab States on 8 November 2023.

RDF-ARB reported on the outcomes, and ongoing implementation of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-22) held in Kigali, Rwanda in June 2022. Emphasis was given to the five Regional Initiatives for Arab Region approved at WTDC-22 as well as other activities under the five thematic priority areas adopted at WTDC-22.

The Annual Regional Development Forum for the Arab States provided an opportunity for the exchange of views between ITU and its stakeholders including ITU Member States, Sector Members as well as other stakeholders in the Arab Region. It served as a platform for an exchange of views on how to achieve meaningful connectivity and sustainable digital transformation in the region. This year's RDF-ARB focused on Partner2Connect (P2C) matchmaking between Member States needs and partner pledges under the P2C Digital Coalition that have so far attracted over 832 pledges (as of the event date), valued at 36.7 billion US Dollars.

In this context, the ITU Office for Arab States launched a Regional Consultation for ITU Member States to highlight their priority needs over and above the regional priorities as expressed in the Regional Initiatives, and other stakeholders based on the Partner2Connect Coalition pledges to express their commitments to contribute and support the implementation of projects and activities. ITU received a total of 28 contributions for this RDF, which were added to the P2C pledging platform.

2. List of contributions received:

Full contributions details ([Click Here](#))

No	Language	Title	Organization
1	English	Bridging the Palestinian Digital Gap	Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology, State of Palestine
2	English	Somalia National Priorities	National Communications Authority, Federal Republic of Somalia

No	Language	Title	Organization
3	English	Developing the Internet Digital Infrastructure and Delivering Capacity Building	RIPE NCC
4	English	Country Pledges and National Priorities	Ministère de la Communication, chargé des Postes et des Télécommunications, Djibouti
5	English	Cyber security initiatives	BUGLOUD
6	English	Implementation of a Fiber optic network in a city near the backbone	Ministry of Digital Transformation, Innovation and Modernization of Government, Mauritania
7	English	Pledges and National priorities	Ministry of communications and technology, Syria
8	English	Digital Transformation in the Arab Region, Strategies, Challenges and Youth Empowerment	Members of ITU Generation Connect Arab Region
9	English	Regional Capacity Building Center	TRC Jordan
10	English	Expediting the use of technology and innovation for enhanced operations in Arab Public Institutions (ENACT Project)	UN-ESCWA

No	Language	Title	Organization
11	English	Collecting annual disaggregated data on levels of network deployment and sharing experiences on achieving universal connectivity	The Telecommunications and Digital government Regulatory Authority, United Arab Emirates
12	English	Hosting I-CoDI Regional Hub	The Telecommunications and Digital government Regulatory Authority, United Arab Emirates
13	English	Commitment to coordinate with relevant stakeholders in order to develop digital platforms based on the latest technologies for monitoring	The Telecommunications and Digital government Regulatory Authority, United Arab Emirates
14	English	Connecting rural areas by broadband telecommunications technologies by 2026	The Telecommunications and Digital government Regulatory Authority, United Arab Emirates
15	English	Training 500,000 on Digital Skills	The Telecommunications and Digital government Regulatory Authority, United Arab Emirates
16	English	UAE Digital Identity	The Telecommunications and Digital government Regulatory Authority, United Arab Emirates
17	English	Programmatic - Democratizing Space and Digital Skills	E-Space Inc. United States of America

No	Language	Title	Organization
18	English	Decent Life	National Telecom Regulatory Authority, Egypt
19	English	Internet of Things	National Telecom Regulatory Authority, Egypt
20	English	My NTRA	National Telecom Regulatory Authority, Egypt
21	English	Developing a national code for design and implementation smart cities and communities	National Telecom Regulatory Authority, Egypt
22	English	Innovative Universal Service Funding Mechanism	National Telecom Regulatory Authority, Egypt
23	English	Egyptian African Telecommunication Training Center - EGATRC	National Telecom Regulatory Authority, Egypt
24	English	Promoting Digital Inclusion for refugees in Egypt	National Telecom Regulatory Authority, Egypt
25	French	Infrastructures efficaces et une meilleure connectivité au service de la transformation numérique en Union des Comores	ANRTIC, Union des Comores

No	Language	Title	Organization
26	English	Somalia CIRT development	National Communications Authority (NCA), Somalia
27	English	Somalia national cybersecurity strategy development	National Communications Authority (NCA), Somalia
28	English	Regional Cybersecurity week	ITU-ARAB REGIONAL CYBERSECURITY CENTER (ARCC), Sultanate of Oman, managed and operated by Oman National CERT

3. Contributions and Documentation

The meeting documents are published and found on the RDF website at ([click here](#)). These documents **included 28** written contributions from membership, some of which have also been reflected and updated on the Partner2Connect platform.

The State of Palestine sent a letter to the ITU Secretary General and requested its inclusion in the proceedings of this RDF.

This letter focuses on the request for partners/pledgers to support the reconstruction of the telecommunications infrastructure in Gaza. The letter is posted as annex: 4 to this report.

4. Participation

The event was attended by a total of 123 participants, with 80 attending physically and 43 remotely. This included representatives from 19 Member States and the State of Palestine participating both in person, and remotely. Additionally, there were 4 United Nations Agencies, 6 International and Regional Organizations, and over 30 representatives from Sector Members and the private sector. Most Member States committed to continue improving their regulatory frameworks, aligning with the objectives of the Partner2Connect initiative and Regional Initiative 5, focusing on regulatory modernization in the Arab Region. The final list of participants is available at ([click here](#)).

5. Appointment of the Chair of the Regional Development Forum for the Arab States

Eng. Mohammed Ahmed BinAli, the Acting Director of the Telecommunications Directorate at the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications of the Kingdom of Bahrain, was appointed as the Chair of the Regional Development Forum for Arab States.

6. Opening Ceremony

The first segment of the event comprised the Opening Ceremony and the Opening Executive Panel. Mr. Adel Darwish, Regional Director of the Arab Regional Office, presided over the opening ceremony. The opening remarks were provided by the following high-level speakers:

- H. E. Mohamed Bin Thamer Al Kaabi, Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications of the Kingdom of Bahrain
- Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU
- Mr. Khaled El Mekwad, UN Resident Coordinator in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

At the opening of the Regional Development Forum, the Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications of the Kingdom of Bahrain emphasized the Kingdom's commitment to evolving into a digital economy. This commitment aligns with the vision of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and is supported by Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa. He mentioned the Bahraini government's launch of a strategy for the ICT sector and the digital economy for 2022-2026. This strategy focuses on sustainable sector leadership, digital innovation, infrastructure development, digital capacity building, and electronic governance. Additionally, the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications underlined its contribution to global partnerships, recognizing the critical role of telecommunications and ICT in economic development. The Minister highlighted that the forum would deliberate on the outcomes of the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-22) and regional initiatives for the Arab States, with a particular focus on the Partner 2 Connect alliance. The overarching goal is to drive positive development in the telecommunications sector, enhance collaboration and partnerships for digital acceleration in the Arab region, and identify future priority areas.

The Director of the ITU Development Bureau delivered his opening remarks to the Regional Development Forum, where he commenced his speech by acknowledging connectivity progress in the Arab States region. Dr Zavazava emphasized the importance of the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition and sought to match these commitments with member states' connectivity needs. He acknowledged the global digital divide and outlined the ITU's work in supporting less developed countries

through regulatory frameworks, digital infrastructure, and cybersecurity initiatives. Dr. Zavazava encouraged leveraging the Arab region's potential as a digital hub, expressing optimism that the forum would catalyze impactful digital transformation.

The UN Resident Coordinator in the Kingdom of Bahrain, presented his opening remarks where he highlighted Bahrain's commitment to innovation and progress, aligning with its Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, he explained that the RDF aims to facilitate collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the harnessing of ICT potential for societal advancement. The ITU, as part of the UN's cooperation framework in Bahrain, plays a vital role in supporting SDGs through technical assistance and capacity-building. He emphasized that the current focus of ITU's engagement includes improving Bahrain's digital innovation ecosystem in Bahrain, and specifically through conducting a thorough assessment of the digital innovation ecosystem. He also added that participants are encouraged to actively engage in discussions addressing digital divide, cybersecurity, and SDGs, fostering partnerships for innovation. He concluded his remarks by expressing gratitude to Bahrain and the ITU for their collaborative efforts, underscoring the forum's role in creating a connected, prosperous, and equitable Arab region.

7. Executive Panel:

11:00 – 12:30	Moderator: Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, BDT Director, ITU
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Jama Hassan, Minister of Communications and Technology (MCT), Minister of Communications and Technology, Somalia
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Dr. Gamaledeen ElSadig, Director General, Telecommunication and Post Regulatory Authority, Sudan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Philip Marnick, General Director, TRA Bahrain
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Nezar Banabeela, Chief Executive Officer, STC Bahrain
12:30 – 12:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Bocar Ba, Chief Executive Officer, Samena Telecommunications Council
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing Ceremony Framework Cooperation Agreement with the Ministry of Communications and Technology of Somalia

The High-Level Executive Panel, moderated by the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau in ITU, focused on discussing the challenges and opportunities in the digital development and transformation journey of the Arab States region, using specific country examples. The panel underscored the critical need to bridge the digital divide and skills gap in the MENA region, highlighting the role of private sector investment in digital infrastructure. It emphasized the importance of resilient digital infrastructure, especially in the face of natural disasters. The panelists also discussed the steady path of digital transformation in the Arab region, with a focus on advancing national strategies around 5G, IPv6, and fixed broadband.

Key takeaways from the panel session include:

- The great need to bridge the digital divide and skills gap in the MENA region, including through encouraging private sector investment in digital infrastructure. This should be anchored on a holistic multi-stakeholder approach to digital transformation. The opportunity to boost digital development lies in fostering cooperation among stakeholders, as most of the work demands collaborative efforts over as opposed to competition.
- Emphasis on importance of resilience of digital infrastructure in the face of natural disasters, particularly in least developing countries. The panelists discussed a number of specific initiatives that are underway in the MENA region to address these challenges. For example, the government of Bahrain is working to ensure that its telecommunication networks are designed to be resilient to natural disasters. The ITU is also working on a number of initiatives to promote digital transformation in the MENA region, such as the development of early warning systems for natural disasters.
- The Arab region at large is on a steady path for digital transformation. On the technological front, national strategies across the region have prioritized 5G, IPv6 and fixed broadband.
- Governments are progressively enhancing their regulatory frameworks with the focus on effectiveness. Examples of such progress include Saudi Arabia's recognition to have G5 level of regulatory framework, UAE vision 2031, and Bahrain's ambition to be leading a giga society. This path of regulatory agenda updates should be maintained.
- Several noteworthy policies, which have been implemented in certain countries in the region and merit broader adoption, encompass spectrum policies that promote facilitation and non-collection, fortifying cybersecurity measures, establishing data centres, encouraging public-private partnerships, and tailoring policies and regulations to bridge connectivity gaps in remote areas.

Following the High-Level Executive Panel a signing ceremony took place between the Ministry of Communications and Technology of Somalia, represented by H.E. Mr. Jama

Hassan, Minister of Communications and Technology (MCT), Minister of Communications and Technology, Somalia and the ITU represented by Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, BDT Director, ITU. The Framework Cooperation Agreement (FCA) focuses on key areas of telecommunications/ICT development and aligns with the national priorities of Somalia, encompassing the development of digital policies, economic growth, regulatory frameworks, capacity building, digital infrastructure, connectivity, and fostering trust in the usage of digital services.

8. Panel Discussions

i. Panel One: Multistakeholder Cooperation and Digital Development

The panel provided an overview of digital cooperation actions undertaken by various international multilateral organizations and stakeholders, aimed at achieving digital development in the Arab States. Additionally, the panel presented a progress report on several joint initiatives between the ITU and other agencies.

13:45 – 14:45	Moderator: Mr. Adel Darwish , Regional Director, ITU Regional Office for Arab States
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Khaled Wali, Director for ICT Development, League of Arab States
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Chafic Chaya, Regional Manager, Public Policy and Government Affairs, Middle East Region, RIPE NCC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Jawad J. Abbassi, Head of Mena, GSMA
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Hussein Abul Enein, Head of Middle East, Access Partnership

This panel was moderated by the Regional Director of the ITU Regional Office for the Arab States, Mr. Adel Darwish, and focused on the vision and opportunities for cooperation, as well as shared successful experiences cooperating to promote digital transformation, and the lessons learned that this exercise has left. A Presentation on WTDC22 Kigali Action Plan (KAP) implementation in the Arab Region was delivered.

The main discussions and outcomes of the session were as follows:

Mr. Jawad J. Abbassi, representing the GSMA, highlighted the organization's pivotal role in the mobile industry, boasting 700 mobile numbers in GSMA and 300 larger

mobile entities. Emphasizing GSMA's commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Abbassi discussed the organization's non-profit status, with revenue primarily derived from events and capacity building initiatives. He underscored the telecom industry's crucial role in SDGs, focusing on regional disparities and inter-regional gaps, particularly in the Arab world. Abbassi expressed concerns about varying levels of broadband and fiber optic accessibility, stressing the importance of competition for fiber optic deployment. A major focus for GSMA is addressing the usage gap, where 3.2 billion people covered by reliable mobile networks are not utilizing them due to affordability or lack of relevant services. Abbassi advocated for closing this gap to unlock economic and social benefits. Despite progress in reducing the coverage gap, tackling the usage gap requires a multifaceted approach involving changes in government policy, stakeholder collaboration, and increased support from donors and industries.

Mr. Hussein Abul-Enein, highlighted the organization's commitment to ensuring universal access to technology through policy consulting. Access Partnership employs convening powers to bring together public and private sectors in collaborative conversations, akin to the ITU's approach. Abul-Enein cited examples of their regional initiatives, including policy work with governments from Singapore to the U.S., addressing regulatory gaps. Notably, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Access Partnership collaborated to develop guidelines for last-mile connectivity in Africa, leading to increased government implementation. The organization also focuses on addressing the skills gap and collaborates closely with countries like Saudi Arabia to enhance policy understanding for market advancement. Emphasizing multistakeholder collaboration, Dr. Chafic Chaya, emphasized the importance of the multistakeholder approach in addressing the challenges faced by the information society and emphasized the significance of the WSIS agenda in 2005. He acknowledged the challenges in the Middle East region, including the current regulatory framework, infrastructure limitations, and the crucial need for digital literacy.

Dr. Chaya also discussed global challenges such as the Internet governance debate and the issue of Internet segmentation. He emphasized the need for government support, alignment of standards with national priorities, and collaboration in the multistakeholder process to facilitate the development and deployment of digital innovation.

Dr. Khaled Wali, a regional organization known for its impactful initiatives, provided insights into the implementation of three significant P2C pledges. These commitments extend across the Arab ICT Strategy, the Strategy for artificial intelligence, and digital capital. Dr. Wali highlighted the organization's dedicated efforts in areas such as AI and cybersecurity, emphasizing the crucial role of robust partnerships. He called for support from the ITU and other willing partners in the region to ensure the successful realization of their commitments.

ii. Panel Two: P2C Matchmaking Roundtable – Transforming Pledges into Commitments for Impact

The session focused on identifying effective mechanisms to transform pledges into actionable commitments, aiming for scalable impact in the Arab Region through the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition. It invited partners to share the progress of their pledges made under the P2C platform and stressed the importance of public-private collaboration in accelerating digital development.

This session introduced the Partner2Connect initiative and its expected impact in achieving universal meaningful connectivity and sustainable digital transformation within the broader Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and called for partners to share progress on the pledges made under the P2C platform and in particular:

- To elaborate on the progress made towards implementing their pledge; highlight opportunities available and or partnerships required to advance their commitment.
- Inviting Members who have not made any pledges yet to do so and make use of the P2C platform to mobilize resources much needed in the region.
- Emphasis on the need for public-private collaboration to accelerate digital development among others. Shared their ideas / views on how platforms such as P2C can be used to accelerate digital developments in Arab Region.

15:00 – 16:00	Moderator: Mr. Sameer Sharma, Head, Special Initiatives, ITU
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Nibal Idlebi, Acting Director, Statistics, Information Society and Technology Cluster, UN-ESCWA
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Hulk Zhang, Senior Cybersercurity Specialist, Huawei
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Maitha Aljamri, Government Relations and International Cooperation Officer, TDRA, UAE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Khaled Wali, Director for ICT Development, League of Arab States

Partners elaborated on the progress made towards implementing their pledges; highlighted opportunities available and or partnerships required to advance their commitments; Members/panelists that had not made any pledges yet were invited to do so and take advantage of the P2C platform to mobilize resources needed; and emphasize on the need for public-private collaboration to accelerate digital development among others.

The main discussions and outcomes of the session were as follows:

Dr. Nibal Idlebi, the Acting Director of the Statistics, Information Society, and Technology Cluster at UN-ESCWA, shared UN ESCWA's recent pledge focused on the "Expediting the use of technology and innovation for enhanced operations in Arab public institutions" (ENACT). This project is carried out to revolutionize the deployment of emerging technologies, expediting the realization of digital strategies and fortifying responsive, inclusive, trustworthy, and effective governments in support of the 2030 Development Agenda, specifically SDG 16, addressing peace, justice, and strong institutions. She underscored the vital role of effective partnerships in implementation, commending the P2C Coalition's commendable efforts. Importance of collaboration with Academia and need for capacity building in cyber security at all levels including for professional and users are also highlighted.

Dr. Khaled Wali, the Director for ICT Development at the League of Arab States, a regional organization with a rich history of impactful initiatives, shared his organization's experience with the implementation of three ambitious P2C pledges, spanning the Arab ICT Strategy, the Strategy for artificial intelligence, and digital capital. Dr. Wali emphasized the diligent work underway in AI, cybersecurity, and related domains, underscoring the critical role of effective partnerships and appealing for support from ITU and other willing partners in the region to realize their commitments.

Dr. Hulk Zhang, a Senior Cybersecurity Specialist at Huawei, provided insights into Huawei Technologies' active role as a member of P2C and the tangible progress made in fulfilling their pledges. Dr. Zhang placed particular emphasis on Huawei's pivotal contributions to the realm of cybersecurity in the Arab States, a cornerstone of ICT in the region, and also aligned with ITU's regional initiatives.

Ms. Maitha Al Jamri, the Government Relations and International Cooperation Officer at the Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), presented a comprehensive overview of the substantial work undertaken in implementing the UAE's six impactful P2C pledges. Notably, the UAE stood out as the first country to submit an update progress report on their pledges during the ITU Council meeting in June 2023. These pledges collectively advanced the ITU-D priorities defined by the WTDC-22, covering a spectrum of digital connectivity, resource mobilization, and enabling policy and regulatory frameworks. The UAE's progress was characterized by the development of a robust digital ecosystem and the provision of accessible digital skills training programs on a global scale.

iii. Panel Three: Innovation and Entrepreneurship for Digital Development

The panel discussed how innovation and digital entrepreneurship serve as crucial enablers for digital development in the Arab States. It included a presentation by the

ITU, detailing its activities in implementing the relevant outcomes of the 2022 World Telecommunication Development Conference. This particularly focused on the fourth Arab Regional Initiative, which is dedicated to building capacities in digital innovation entrepreneurship and future foresight. This was in addition to shedding light on support provided to countries of the region to establish digital innovation ecosystems through the newly launched BDT global initiative: "Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alliance for Digital Development."

16:00 – 17:30	Moderator: Mr. Karim Abdelghani, Programme Coordinator, Regional Office for Arab States, ITU
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheikh Ahmed bin Isa Al Khalifa, Head of External Relations, Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, Kingdom of Bahrain
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Ali Alnoaimi, Senior Innovation Officer, Telecommunication and Digital Government Regulatory Authority, UAE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eng. Qusai Abu Sanap, Operations Manager, Meem Ain Education
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Nasser Mohammed Al Fannah, Director of Technical Programs, Sultanate of Oman (virtually)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Myriam Kani, Director of Innovation, Ministry of Digital Transformation, Innovation, and Administrative Reform, Mauritania (virtually)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Mohammed Ba, Senior Coordinator, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU (virtually)

Following that a dynamic discussion was conducted between the panelists to present the collaboration with ITU to assess their digital innovation ecosystems, or joint projects relevant to digital innovation.

The main discussions and outcomes of the session were as follows:

Mr. Mohammed Ba, Senior Coordinator, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU showcased the ITU Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alliance for Digital

Development and explained that it was established to respond to significant unmet needs of ITU Membership in the area of innovation, as articulated in the Kigali Action Plan adopted at the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2022 (WTDC-22) and the Outcomes of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference 2022 (PP-22). Innovation centers in Egypt, Mauritania and Oman are planned to be established to be part of the global alliance.

Mr. Ali Alnoaimi, Senior Innovation Officer, Telecommunication and Digital Government Regulatory Authority, UAE announced plans that are ongoing to enjoin UAE's initiative called iCodi, to the alliance. The proposal is for iCodi to be a capacity building partner aiming to train around 500,000 people by 2030.

Sheikh Ahmed bin Isa Al Khalifa, Head of External Relations, Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, Kingdom of Bahrain and Dr. Nasser Mohammed Al Fannah, Director of Technical Programs, Sultanate of Oman (virtually) both highlighted the collaboration between ITU, and each of their countries, Bahrain and Oman, to develop digital innovation country profiles. This in-depth analysis provided important insights for policy makers on the challenges, opportunities, and recommendations that can help take their digital innovation ecosystems to the next level. ITU announced that the next digital innovation country profile would be developed for Qatar.

Eng. Qusai Abu Sanap, Operations Manager, Meem Ain Education presented ITU's collaboration with Meem Ain to train children on financial literacy using a mobile game resulted in a successful pilot in Jordan, with training of over 1200 children. Partners were called upon to join the effort whose goal is to train over 30,000 children in at least three countries.

9. Partner2Connect Roundtables: Fostering partnerships and project execution to accelerate digital development in the Arab Region

The Partner2Connect regional matchmaking roundtable is a multistakeholder platform for matchmaking between regional and country needs and existing pledges that were announced as well as new pledges. The matchmaking is aligned with the WTDC-22 adopted Regional Initiatives for the Arab region. Through engagement among pledging partners and Member States, the roundtables aim at transforming pledges into concrete commitments ready for implementation for concrete results and impact.

i. P2C Matchmaking Roundtable One: ARB RI1: Sustainable Digital Economy through Digital Transformation

The Panel provided an opportunity for countries to present their individual country and regional priorities to partners that submitted pledges under the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition. The panel focused on partnerships and collaboration on digital government services, digital health and digital agriculture.

09:15 – 10:15	Moderator: Eng. Hossam Ragheb, Govstack Digital Government Specialist for the Arab Region, ITU
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Abdallah Ibrahim Omar, Secretary General, Ministry of Digital Economy and Innovation, Djibouti
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Zakarie Ismael, Advisor to the Minister on e-Government, Ministry of Communications and Technology, Somalia
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Ayman Essam, Director of Legal and External Affairs, Vodafone Egypt

The P2C matchmaking Roundtable discussed how to promote digital transformation in the Arab region particularly in least developed countries (LDCs). The session also explored the role of telecom operators in supporting digital transformation. In this session, calls were made for support and pledges in areas relevant to digital government services, capacity building, connecting the unconnected and recycling mobile devices.

The main discussions and outcomes of the session were as follows:

- Mr. Abdallah Ibrahim Omar, Secretary General, Ministry of Digital Economy and Innovation, Djibouti, is working with ITU through the Govstack initiative to digitize two services and would like to scale the work further.
- Mr. Zakarie Ismael, Advisor to the Minister on e-Government, Ministry of Communications and Technology, Somalia indicated their need to learn from best practices of countries advanced in the connectivity and digital transformation.
- Mr. Ayman Essam, Director of Legal and External Affairs, Vodafone Egypt, pledged to connect people in rural areas, provide training for inhabitants in rural areas and also share knowledge on recycling mobile devices.

ii. P2C Matchmaking Roundtable Two: ARB RI 2: Enhancing Confidence, Security and Privacy in the Use of Telecommunications/Information and Communication Technologies in the Era of New and Emerging Digital Technologies.

10:30 – 11:30	Moderator: Mr. Ahmed ElRaghy, Senior Advisor, ITU Regional Office for Arab States
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs. Iman Mahmoud Odeh, Director of Cybersecurity Development, OMAN National CERT, Oman
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Fahd Batayneh, Stakeholder Engagement Director, Middle East, ICANN
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Aysha Ahmed BinHaji, Director, Outreach and Awareness, Directorate, National Cyber Security Center Bahrain (NCSC)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Naima Hassan Dimbil, Director of Interconnection, Wholesale and Universal Access Department, National Communications Authority (NCA) of Somalia
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Hulk Zhang, Senior Cybersecurity Specialist, Huawei • Mr. Mohammed Alawadhi, CEO, BugLoud, UAE

Moderated by Mr. Ahmed ElRaghy, Senior Advisor at the ITU Regional Office for Arab States, this roundtable focused on "Enhancing confidence, security, and privacy in the use of telecommunications and information and communication technologies in the new digital era." The discussion emphasized the need to enhance trust and security in the information society, foster collaboration among all relevant stakeholders, and bridge the cybersecurity gap both between and within countries.

The main discussions and outcomes of the session were as follows:

H.E. Mohamed, Al Kuwaiti spoke as a keynote speaker in the roundtable where he highlighted the impact of digital changes across various sectors and stressed the need for a secure approach to digital transformation. He said that cybersecurity is a shared responsibility and commended the collaborative efforts of organizations like ITU and regional cybersecurity centers. Dr. Al Kuwaiti underscored the critical role played by

individuals and organizations in securing data and infrastructure, ultimately benefiting the larger digital community. The importance of leveraging advanced technologies, such as AI, IoT, and blockchain, was emphasized to proactively detect and counter cyber threats. He also underscored the importance of collaboration and joint efforts through initiatives like cyber drill exercises and emphasized the ongoing need for partnership to enhance cybersecurity resilience.

Ms. Naima Dimbil highlighted the positive developments in the cybersecurity and telecommunications sector in Somalia. The tech and ICT sector is rapidly growing in the Horn of Africa, with around 11% contribution to the country's prosperity. She also mentioned ongoing efforts in policy, regulation, and specific pledges related to national CERT establishment and malware.

Ms. Aysha BinHaji outlined the cybersecurity initiatives undertaken by the National Cybersecurity Center in Bahrain. She emphasized the importance of global collaboration and knowledge transfer, aiming to build partnerships and learn from the experiences of other countries. The core pillars of their national cybersecurity strategy include capacity development and raising awareness, with a focus on cultural awareness. Ms. BinHaji discussed the creation of a comprehensive cyber wiser web page in Arabic and English, offering downloadable resources for organizations to enhance their cyber awareness. Additionally, they developed a self-assessment tool for individuals, families, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), recognizing the financial constraints of cybersecurity for smaller businesses. The intervention highlighted efforts in cybersecurity education, particularly for children, with a unique curriculum involving law enforcement officers as teachers. The curriculum covers responsible communication, connectivity, privacy, and digital citizenship.

Dr. Hulk Zhang highlighted the multifaceted challenges in cybersecurity and emphasizes the need for standardization in addressing these issues. He noted that cybersecurity has evolved beyond a simple technical problem and now encompasses various aspects, leading to diverse implementations and perspectives globally. Dr. Zhang supported for the adoption of globally recognized standards and best practices, stressing their importance for Arab stakeholders. He suggested that unified standards and certifications can bridge the gaps among different regions and countries, providing a common understanding of federal security, established curricula, and relevant scenarios.

Mr. Fahd Batayneh emphasized the importance of domain names in human interaction with the internet, noting that while the internet operates on IP addresses, humans find it easier to remember names than numbers. He highlighted the critical role of cybersecurity in today's internet landscape and discussed ICANN's involvement in maintaining the security, stability, and resiliency of unique identifiers, including domain names, IP addresses, and protocols. Specifically, he mentioned ICANN's extensive work on DNSSEC (Domain Name System Security Extensions) as a measure to enhance the security of the DNS (Domain Name System) and contribute to the

overall resilience of the internet. Mr. Batayneh also touched upon various ICANN initiatives aimed at strengthening the Domain Name System and fostering collaboration among different entities for a safer online environment.

Mr. Mohammed Alawadhi highlighted the BugLoud platform and its role in bridging the gap between cybersecurity experts, government entities, federal organizations, and private companies in the Arab region. He emphasized the importance of BugLoud in providing a centralized platform for reporting vulnerabilities, similar to those in other countries, where individuals receive rewards for identifying and reporting vulnerabilities. Alawadhi discussed the challenges faced in the Arab region due to diverse methodologies employed by cybersecurity researchers, contrasting it with the standardized approach of scanning tools.

Ms. Iman Mahmoud highlighted ARCC's efforts and commitments in supporting and enhancing confidence and security in the information society, encouraging collaboration with and between all relevant stakeholders, and bridging the cybersecurity gap between and within countries, through:

- Cybersecurity Maturity and Response Readiness Assessments.
- Enhancement of Incident Response Capabilities.
- International cyber-Exercises.
- Development of Cybersecurity Capacity.

Also, she emphasis the successes achieved by the Regional Cyber Security Week organized by the ITU - Regional Cybersecurity Center, which was widely praised by local and international participants. Given the importance of the topics addressed in the conference, in addition to the participation of a group of international experts and speakers in the conference, as well as a group of international companies that participated in the accompanying exhibition and presented a range of solutions and technologies in the field of electronic security.

iii. P2C Matchmaking Roundtable Three: ARB RI3: Developing Digital Infrastructure for Smart Sustainable Cities and Communities.

The session focused on regional and country needs from the Arab Region in the area of the development of resilient and synergistic infrastructure and the creation of an enabling environment that ensures universal coverage and meets the requirements of new and emerging technologies, and the necessary measures that need to be taken to ensure a rapid transition to smart sustainable cities and communities (SSCCs). Partners were invited on the basis of their pledges to announce their commitment to address these priorities in a concrete way including supporting regional initiatives.

11:30 – 12:30	Moderator: Eng. Rouda AlAmir Ali, Programme Officer, ITU Regional Office for Arab States
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Ihar Shchetko, Connectivity Officer, ITU
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Faycal Beyouli, Director, General Directorate of Communication Technologies, Ministry of Communication Technologies and Digital Economy, Tunisia
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Zaidou Abdoulhalim, Conseiller Technique chargé de la stratégie et de la communication, ANRTIC, Comoros
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Aroua Hadani, Project Officer, PRIDA, ITU

This roundtable was moderated by Rouda AlAmir Ali, Programme Officer for the Arab Region, focusing on "Developing Digital Infrastructure for Smart Sustainable Cities and Communities". This roundtable discussed how to enhance the development of resilient and synergistic infrastructure and the creation of an enabling environment that ensures universal coverage to bridge the connectivity gap and meet the requirements of new and emerging technologies.

The session began with a focus on the Arab Regional initiative 3, emphasizing the development of digital infrastructure for smart and sustainable cities. Mr. Ihar detailed the ITU's role, highlighting broadband infrastructure mapping and tools like ICT infrastructure business planning and last-mile toolkits, aiming for data-driven decision-making and sustainable infrastructure planning.

The main discussions and outcomes of the session were as follows:

Mr. Zaidou's intervention from Comoros on their contribution to the RDF, unveiled a commitment to data-based regulation aiming to collect and provide sector-wide data online for operators, consumers, and investors. This initiative seeks to enhance ICT operators' performance measurement for quality service improvement and enable informed consumer choices. To execute this, the ICT regulator (ANRTIC) plans to acquire various recorders and crowdsourcing tools, necessitating an additional budget of 600,000 euros, with support anticipated from financial partners like the League of Arab States and ITU. Additionally, Mr. Zaidou recommended re-launching an awareness campaign on connectivity challenges, encouraging quality service

investments from operators, empowering consumers, and advocating infrastructure sharing. They further proposed establishing a Regional Experimental Committee (CREX) to foster collaboration among Arab stakeholders, identifying shared interests and initiatives to collectively enhance the Arab region's digital landscape.

Mr. Faycal outlined the comprehensive approach to infrastructure development as part of Tunisia's digital strategy and how Tunisia operationalized their pledges by implementing a diverse range of projects, including interconnecting public institutions, expanding high-speed connectivity and coverage of white areas, and strengthening sector-specific technology centers like education and health. These efforts, funded by the state budget and loans from international institutions, have improved connectivity with neighboring Arab countries Algeria and Libya via fiber optic cables, effectively enhancing coverage within Tunisia.

Mr. Tamer's intervention from E-space, focusing on leveraging satellite technology for digital infrastructure, particularly in remote areas. He highlighted collaborations with governments and the need for supportive policies. Mr. Tamer explained the readiness of E-SPACE to offer support to countries in need and to discuss with them any potential collaboration.

During PRIDA's intervention, Ms. Aroua emphasized the joint initiative of the African Union, European Union, and ITU to promote universally accessible broadband, outlining goals such as spectrum improvement, IoT awareness, and capacity building. They highlighted the project's impact with numerous activities completed and planned for Arab African countries, focusing on technical assistance, spectrum efficiency, and facilitating knowledge exchange through workshops, fostering collaboration among administrations in and outside the Arab Region. Following these discussions, there was an intervention from floor from Dr. Chafic Chaya, Regional Manager, Public Policy and Government Affairs, Middle East Region, RIPE NCC, who emphasized the commitment to internet security and the importance of IPv6 for Smart Cities and Communities. RIPE NCC pledged support, training, and necessary tools for Arab countries to deploy IPv6, citing successful initiatives in Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Oman, and Jordan while urging further collaboration to bridge the digital divide.

In conclusion, the session emphasized collaborative efforts, data-driven decision-making, and supportive policies for sustainable digital infrastructure. The importance of regional connectivity, government support, and multistakeholder cooperation were highlighted as key takeaways for advancing secure, connected, and resilient infrastructure in the Arab region.

iv. P2C Matchmaking Roundtable Four: ARB RI5: Developing Means of Digital Regulation

The Roundtable provided a platform for discussing and presenting regional and country priorities to partners in the area of developing national strategies and policies,

as well as capacity development on digital regulation methods in the Arab region with the aim of promoting economic and social development.

14:00 --15:00	Moderator: Dr. Mustafa Almahdi, Programme Officer, ITU Regional Office for Arab States
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Mustafa Yacin SHEIK, General Manager of the National Communications Authority, Somalia
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Ahmed S. Alrahmah, Advisor, International Affairs, and Director of the Digital Regulatory Academy (DRA), Communications, Space, and Technology Commission (CST), Saudi Arabia
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eng. Nadir Ahmed Gaylani, Deputy Director General, TPRA, Sudan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Basma Tawfik, Manager of International Organizations, NTRA, Egypt
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eng. Mustapha BESSI, Head of Spectrum Division, Agence Nationale de Réglementation des Télécommunications (ANRT), Morocco (virtually)

The P2C Match-Making Roundtable Four, titled "ARB RI5: Developing Means of Digital Regulation," served as a crucial forum for extensive discussions regarding digital regulation priorities in the Arab region, spanning both the national and regional levels. Its primary objective was to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and strategic dialogues concerning the development of national policies and regulations, with a specific emphasis on capacity building within the realm of digital regulation. The ultimate aim was to leverage the potential of digital technologies to drive economic and social progress in the Arab region. A significant portion of this session was dedicated to the transformation of P2C pledges into actionable commitments, aimed at supporting concrete projects related to digital regulation, with the potential introduction of new pledges.

The session was moderated by Dr. Mustafa Almahdi, Programme Officer at the ITU Arab Regional Office, who delivered an introduction that underscored the significance of digital regulation in terms of policy, regulations, and capacity development. The session then went into a panel setup where each speaker presented their respective announced or to be announced P2C pledges, their perspectives on digital regulation,

their national priorities, and commitments to support countries in areas of digital regulation.

The main discussions and outcomes of the session were as follows:

H.E. Mr. Mustafa Yacin SHEIK highlighted Somalia's Pledges, particularly Somalia's commitment to advancing its telecommunications and ICT sector to support national development priorities. He emphasized the importance of updating regulations to align with the demands of the digital regulation environment and the need for capacity building in digital regulation within Somalia.

Mr. Ahmed S. Alrahmah provided in-depth insights into Saudi Arabia's regulatory advancements and its collaborations with ITU in the domain of digital regulation, notably emphasizing the role of the National Regulatory Committee and the Digital Regulatory Academy in supporting ITU members.

Eng. Nadir Ahmed Gaylani discussed Sudan's pledges and requirements in the context of digital regulation, digital transformation, and regulatory enhancement. He called upon P2C partners to provide support for capacity building in digital regulation for Sudan.

Ms. Basma Tawfik shed light on Egypt's P2C pledges and commitments, focusing on strategies for capacity development in digital regulation, not only for Arab countries but also for African nations.

Eng. Mustapha BESSI emphasized Morocco's initiatives and commitments to support Arab and African Francophone countries, particularly in the area of spectrum management, a critical enabler for digital transformation. Eng. Bessi highlighted Morocco's advancements in digital regulation, reaching the G5 level of generations of regulations.

The roundtable discussions featured several recommendations to advance digital regulation both at the national and regional levels, with a strong emphasis on the necessity of collaboration, cooperation, and the sharing of best practices among Arab countries. Speakers underscored the critical role of capacity development in digital regulation, as well as the pivotal role digital regulation plays in fostering innovation, ensuring equitable competition, safeguarding privacy and security, instilling trust in online interactions, and supporting international cooperation. Effective digital regulation was acknowledged as the cornerstone of achieving this delicate balance.

In conclusion, the roundtable session provided a valuable platform for sharing P2C pledges, needs and commitments as well as sharing experiences and best practices in digital regulation.

10. RDF: Side Events:

i. ITU-D Network of Women (NoW) meeting

This meeting provided women delegates in the Arab region the opportunity to exchange views on how to develop gender mainstreamed policies to facilitate the meaningful participation and engagement of Arab delegates in the ITU work.

In particular, the focus will be on:

- Presenting the NoW-ARAB in ITU-D strategy for the coming years
- specifying the challenges of meaningful participation and leadership and examining the role of institutions in promoting meaningful participation and leadership

15:15- 16:00	Moderator: Ms. Zeina BouHarb , Head of Int’l Cooperation, OGERO-Lebanon, Vice-Chair, NoW-ARAB in ITU-D
	Welcoming remark: Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava , Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)
	Speaker:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Noha Gaafar, Senior Expert, International Policies, NTRA, Egypt and Chair, NoW-ARAB in ITU-D • Ms. Rania Aljarf, Acting General Director of Policies and Development, Supreme Council for Women, Bahrain
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Alya Alali, Chief Strategy & Data Analytics Officer at Tamkeen, Bahrain • Ms. Amel AL-HANAWI, Consumer Affairs Department Manager, Communication Regulatory Authority, Qatar • Ms. Naima Hassan Dimbil, Director of Interconnection, Wholesale and Universal Access department, National Communications Authority, Somalia

The session moderated by Ms. Zeina BouHarb, Vice-Chair of NoW in ITU-D ARAB and focused on the Network of Women (NoW) in the ITU-D in the Arab region, aiming to develop gender mainstreamed policies for meaningful participation and engagement of Arab delegates. Ms. Zeina mentioned that the Now ARAB chapter, since it's launched in 2021, has been recognized as a vital platform to advance gender equality in ITU D from policymaking to implementation.

In his opening remark, Dr. Zavazava stressed the significance of women's involvement in the ICT sector. He highlighted the urgent need to transition women from informal to formal sectors, emphasizing the importance of STEM education for young girls. Dr. Zavazava discussed the gender disparity prevalent in ICT usage, particularly in least developed countries, emphasizing the criticality of empowering women within this domain. Dr. Cosmos stressed that without the empowerment and inclusion of everyone, including women, sustainable economic growth is unthinkable. Lastly, Dr. Cosmos commended the greater force of the steering committee of NoW ARAB in the ITU D and invited the membership in the region to support and participate actively in the network. He thanked Ogero. Lebanon for the support of the network training activities which turned the support into action.

The Chair of the NoW in ITU-D ARAB, Ms. Noha expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Network of Women (NoW) and urged greater support from policymakers at the policy level to empower this network. She recognized the challenges faced by the region, especially in light of the Palestinian issue, and commended the cooperation and participation of Palestinian women despite these challenging circumstances.

The main discussions and outcomes of the session were as follows:

Ms. Rania, the representative from Bahrain's Supreme Council for Women detailed Bahrain's initiatives aimed at achieving gender equity in the ICT sector. These initiatives involved extensive data gathering to tailor programs and support for women in technology-related fields. Ms. Rania underscored the role of institutions in supporting women's empowerment in ICT and ensuring gender equality.

The floor given back to Ms. Noha to present the NoW ARAB in the ITU-D strategy prepared by the NoW Arab Steering Committee. The strategy outlined encompasses several key elements. The network is open to all women working in the digital telecom industry, encouraging participation, and sharing of knowledge and support among members. The structure includes an executive steering committee comprising a President, three deputies from different geographic areas, and representatives from the ITU and the League of Arab States (LAS). Strategy objectives are centered on fostering support among women within the network, rather than solely increasing membership numbers. Goals include creating gender equilibrium, enhancing participation in regional organizations like the LAS, and developing the network to achieve its objectives. The strategy emphasizes the importance of being a connected network and serving as a role model for other women's networks. Open dialogue,

workshops, and specialized training sessions form part of the approach to achieve these aims, fostering communication and facilitating updates among participants. Success stories and models are highlighted to inspire leadership roles among women, whether within the ITU or in their respective countries. Moreover, the strategy includes engaging decision-makers to garner support and influence policy changes that align with the network's objectives. A mentoring program, surveys, and ongoing activities are in place to identify achievements and future needs, aiming for tangible implementations beyond policy formulation. Ms. Noha highlighted that several initiatives have already been set in motion, such as training partnerships with organizations like Ogero in Lebanon and Google Egypt, awareness sessions preceding conferences, and themed events addressing challenges faced by women in the ICT sector. Additionally, plans for Girls in ICT Day events are in progress, aiming to organize a series of events during that week. The network aims to organize open meetings within the region to discuss critical topics, address challenges faced by women, and raise awareness. These elements collectively form the network's comprehensive strategy for empowering and supporting women in the ICT sector in the Arab Region.

Three panelists invited to the panel discussions on the challenges women face in the ICT sector and the role of institutions to empower women leadership. The panel discussed various challenges faced by women in ICT, such as limited internet access, cultural barriers affecting education choices, biases in the workforce, and a lack of female representation and role models. Additionally, the session highlighted Bahrain's initiatives for gender equity, utilizing data, funding, and tailored programs to empower women in the ICT sector.

Ms. Amal from Qatar highlighted multiple challenges hindering women's advancement in the ICT sector, including limited educational opportunities, cultural and societal expectations, lack of supportive workplace policies, difficulties in accessing funding for entrepreneurship, and limited representation in decision-making roles. She emphasized the need for collaborative efforts among governments, educational institutions, and organizations to implement inclusive educational programs, promote supportive workplace policies, and encourage women's participation and leadership in the ICT sector to create a more equitable industry landscape.

Ms. Naima from Somalia highlighted the disparities prevalent in ICT usage and education for women, citing cultural barriers and biases within the workforce. She cited the low internet usage among women in LDCs. Education also poses a challenge as cultural and societal pressures discourage women and girls from pursuing ICT-related fields. Even if they manage to overcome these obstacles and graduate, prejudice and gender bias persist in the workforce. There's an assumption that ICT jobs are predominantly for men, creating a barrier for women in shouldering responsibilities and finding their place in this field. Moreover, the ICT sector remains male-dominated, lacking sufficient representation and role models for aspiring women. This lack of support further hampers women's progress and opportunities for

advancement, particularly in leadership roles within the ICT industry. Overall, she highlighted the systemic challenges and biases that women encounter daily within the ICT sector, pointing out the need to address these disparities to enable positive changes and opportunities for women in the field.

Ms. Alyia emphasized the vital role institutions and organizations play in empowering women, particularly in Bahrain, by focusing on funding opportunities and tailored programs within the ICT sector. She highlighted three key initiatives: data gathering for customized funding, responsive programs targeting women in technology and STEM fields, and the encouragement of women in starting businesses. She also stressed the importance of gender equality in training programs, specifically in cybersecurity and ICT, showcasing the active participation of women. Additionally, she highlighted collaboration with various regional and global organizations to support their efforts in empowering women.

Throughout the session, there was a recurring emphasis on the urgency to boost female participation, support, and empowerment within the ICT field. Each panelist provided insights into the challenges women encounter and shared initiatives undertaken at national and regional levels to mitigate these disparities. Cooperation, mentorship, and tailored programs were reiterated as crucial strategies to bridge the gender gap in ICT. They emphasized the need for increased female representation, role models, mentorships, and access to opportunities in the ICT sector.

Key takeaways:

- Gender disparity in ICT usage and education is a significant challenge, impacting women's participation and advancement in the sector.
- Collaborative efforts from governments, educational institutions, private organizations, and civil society are essential to address challenges.
- Institutions and organizations play crucial roles in empowering women, including gathering data, offering responsive programs, and encouraging women to start businesses.
- Cooperation between national, regional, and global organizations is vital to further women's empowerment in the ICT sector.
- Participants emphasized the importance of collaboration and partnerships to support and empower women in the ICT sector.
- Call for collective action to make women part of the development agenda that led to bring impactful and measurable results.
- Inclusive educational programs and supportive workplace policies can encourage women's participation and leadership in the ICT sector.
- Fostering an environment conducive to women's involvement can create a more diverse and equitable industry landscape.
- Targeted support for women entrepreneurs, including increased access to funding and resources, can boost the growth and success of women-led ICT businesses in the region.

The session concluded with an interactive poll to gather insights on capacity building and training needs for women, emphasizing the commitment to implementing strategies for women's empowerment and inviting collaboration for future events.

ii. Youth: Generation Connect and Inter-generational Dialogue

This session is a discussion between Youth and experts who will engage in an intergenerational dialogue on how young people may be more involved in digital development and digital transformation work taking into account that the ages 15 to 24 are the most active online.

16:00- 16:45	Moderator: Mr. Ali Toblani, Generation Connect, Chair of Generation Connect Arab Youth Group
	Welcoming Remark: Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yousseif Seifallah, Generation Connect, Arab Youth Envoy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yomna Sherif, Generation Connect, Arab Youth Envoy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hamad Mohammed Al Hameli , CTO at BugLoud • Omar Eid, Generation Connect Arab Youth Envoys

The Youth Session, titled “Empowering Youth for a Secure and Connected Arab Region,” aimed to foster dialogue between young individuals and digital technology and security experts. Moderated by Mr. Ali Toblani, Chair of the Generation Connect Arab Youth Group, the session focused on empowering youth in digital security, connectivity, and empowerment. It featured discussions with youth envoys and experts, including Omar Eid, Yomna Sherif, Hamad Alhameli, and Seif Youssef. These discussions revolved around digital literacy, cybersecurity, privacy, and connectivity, highlighting youth-led initiatives and contributions to the ITU's RDF efforts.

Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, in his welcoming speech, celebrated the presence of youth at the session, emphasizing their pivotal role in shaping the digital landscape of the Arab States. He highlighted the forthcoming Global Youth Summit next year and stressed the significance of empowering youth through ICT, emphasizing their potential as visionaries and innovators. Zavazava urged young participants to engage

in digital transformation, offering guidance to learn, contribute, and improve, encouraging them to be bold and courageous as future leaders.

The main discussions and outcomes of the session were as follows:

In this youth session panel discussion, several key aspects of digital empowerment and security were explored. The panelists highlighted the significance of digital security in safeguarding sensitive information, discussing the increasing accessibility of data online and the need for proactive measures to secure it.

The conversation also emphasized initiatives like Generation Connect, which empowers youth by providing platforms for learning, skill-building, and networking. The panelists shared personal experiences of how such programs have contributed to their professional growth and opened doors to new opportunities in the tech industry.

Moreover, the discussion delved into the evolving trends in cyber threats affecting youth, including identity theft and cyberbullying, underscoring the importance of digital literacy and inclusive access to technology. The future of engagement in the digital realm was envisioned as an integral part of our existence, emphasizing the need for continuous learning, adaptability, and the inclusion of young innovators in shaping the digital future.

Each intervention highlighted diverse aspects, ranging from personal experiences to strategic initiatives, underscoring the significance of youth empowerment, digital security, and collaborative efforts in shaping the digital future of the Arab region.

Omar, representing the Youth Envoy from Bahrain, highlighted the essence of digital security as the protection of sensitive online data and documents from unauthorized access. He stressed the importance of maintaining the integrity, confidentiality, and privacy of information to prevent cybersecurity threats. Sharing personal experiences, he discussed the ease with which people can access sensitive data online and emphasized the need for stringent measures to secure data, especially in online transactions and work-related usage. Omar raised concerns about the vulnerability of data on platforms like OneDrive and stressed the importance of taking pre-emptive steps and thinking ahead before sharing information online. He also described his entrepreneurial efforts in starting an awareness program to educate teenagers and young adults about the vulnerability of their information online and the need for heightened awareness regarding digital security.

Yomna, Egypt's ITU Youth Envoy and AI tech advisor at IBM, highlighted initiatives like Generation Connect, emphasizing its global impact in empowering youth. She detailed how this program broadened her horizons beyond her job, enabling her to bridge generational gaps in the tech world and excel in emerging technologies. Yomna shared her personal growth through workshops that enhanced her skills in data science and AI, expanding her professional reach across regions and enabling her to present to executives and C-level individuals. Additionally, she mentioned the Manara program,

focusing on upskilling youth in software engineering, offering interview skill training, and providing job opportunities, particularly emphasizing its focus on empowering Palestinian women.

Hamed, a cybersecurity expert and founder of a leading cybersecurity company BugLoud, highlighted prevalent cyber threats affecting youth. He outlined various threats like online scams, identity theft, and cyberbullying that are pervasive in the digital world. He emphasized the significance of personal data as a valuable commodity online and the risks associated with its misuse, leading to identity theft and financial losses. Hamed stressed that cyber threats not only impact individuals negatively but also shape their perceptions of the digital world.

Seif, the Tunisian Generation Connect Youth envoy shared a life-changing experience starting with an email from Generation Connect during COVID. This led to attending the Global Youth Summit in Rwanda, landing a dream job in Blockchain technology, and participating in competitions, making him feel anyone can achieve similar success. He emphasized the program's impact on his life, enabling him to study in Europe and prepare for a Master's in data science. Regarding the future, he emphasized the integration of the digital domain into our existence, highlighting the importance of digital literacy and inclusivity for young innovators. He envisioned a future where learning intertwines with fun, breaking boundaries between reality and digital through technologies like Blockchain and virtual reality for enhanced professional growth.

Then the Contribution to the RDF that made by some of the Generation Connect Arab Youth envoys was presented by Ms. Yomna. The Generation Connect Arab Youth Group highlighted their joint contribution to the Regional Development Forum (RDF) focusing on bridging the digital divide and promoting sustainable ICT projects. Their collaboration aimed to address ICT sector challenges through innovative solutions, driven by their passion and purpose. The Youth Envoy elaborated on their efforts, emphasizing six key pillars: digital development, multistakeholder cooperation, innovation, digital infrastructure for smart cities, building confidence in ICT, and fostering a sustainable digital economy. They sought greater involvement from academia and government to support their initiatives, emphasizing the need for expertise, transparency in data protection, and regulations to build trust in ICT usage.

The moderator expressed gratitude for the insightful contributions during the session. They highlighted the vital role of youth in shaping a secure and connected Arab future, emphasizing that youth are not just the future but the driving force of the present. Encouraging continued engagement and collaboration, they emphasized the collective ability to

make a difference. The moderator thanked Dr. Zavazava and Mr. Adel Darwish for their support and expressed a collective aspiration to work together towards a brighter digital future for the Arab Region.

Key Takeaways:

- Empowering Youth for Leadership by leveraging digital tools for empowerment and innovation.
- Digital Security Awareness: Discussion highlighted the importance of safeguarding online information and the need for awareness programs. Initiatives focused on educating youth about digital security and privacy were underscored.
- Youth-Driven Initiatives: Successful programs like Generation Connect were lauded for their impact in empowering youth. Examples included capacity-building workshops, job opportunities, and skill development in emerging technologies.
- Cyber Threats and Preparedness: Experts emphasized the escalating cyber threats affecting youth, from online scams to identity theft and cyberbullying. Calls were made for better education and initiatives to ensure a safer digital space.
- Future Digital Engagement: Envoys stressed the need for inclusive digital education, focusing on digital fluency and inclusive learning methods. They highlighted the importance of adaptability, continuous learning, and collaboration for future success.

The joint contribution of the Arab Youth Group in bridging the digital divide, enhancing capacity building, and promoting sustainable digital projects for the region was recognized. They outlined pillars for digital development, multistakeholder cooperation, innovation, digital infrastructure, and ICT confidence building.

In conclusion, the session highlighted the youth's critical role in steering the present and future digital landscape. Collaboration, education, and proactive measures were identified as key drivers toward a brighter digital future for the Arab region.

iii. Digital Regulation Workshop for the Arab States

Following the RDF-ARB, the “Digital Regulation Workshop” was organized on 8 November at the same venue, with the kind support of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as part of the collaboration between the Saudi Communications, Space & Technology Commission and ITU, for the participants from regulatory teams of companies and regulatory bodies in the region.

The workshop grabbed great interest from membership who sought it to be very useful and requested that ITU and its partners carry out more of such initiatives at regional and national levels to increase the awareness of such topics at the national level to the most possible extent.

For more information, please visit the [workshop website](#).

11. Summary of RDF

Before the closing ceremony, Mr Adel Darwish, Regional Director, Arab States, provided a summary of all the discussions throughout the different sessions as well as indicated that the State of Palestine sent a letter to the Secretary General. In this letter, the State of Palestine requested to include this letter in the proceedings of this RDF. This letter focuses on the request to partners/pledgers to support the reconstruction of the telecommunications infrastructure in Gaza. Closing Ceremony

The closing remarks were provided by the following high-level speakers:

- Eng. Mohammed Ahmed BinAli, Acting Director, Telecommunications Directorate, Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunication of Bahrain - Chair of the RDF-ARB.
- Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU.

Annex 1 (Regional Initiatives)

ARB1: Sustainable digital economy through digital transformation

Objective:

To enable digital transformation and develop digital services by using telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICTs) and establishing well-developed infrastructure in order to support digital transformation, achieve high levels of digital inclusion and bridge the digital divide through transition to the digital economy and access to an inclusive digital society for all, and in particular to facilitate rapid response to epidemics and emergencies.

ARB2: Enhancing confidence, security and privacy in the use of telecommunications/Information and communication technologies in the era of new and emerging digital technologies.

Objective:

To enhance confidence, security and privacy in the use of telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICTs) through support for the deployment of resilient infrastructure and safe and reliable services that ensure the protection of privacy and personal data for all groups of society, including child online protection and the combating of all cyberthreats, including the misuse of telecommunications/ICTs.

ARB3: Developing digital infrastructure for smart sustainable cities and communities.

Objective:

To facilitate universal access to high-speed connectivity by developing resilient and synergistic infrastructure and creating an enabling environment that ensures universal coverage and meets the requirements of new and emerging technologies, and to take the necessary measures to ensure a rapid transition to smart sustainable cities and communities (SSCCs).

ARB4: Building capacities and encouraging digital innovation, entrepreneurship and future foresight

Objective:

To build capacities, increase awareness of the culture of innovation, future foresight and entrepreneurship among all groups of society, in particular youth, and empower women in order to harness telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICTs) to drive economic projects and activities that focus on providing job opportunities and supporting small and medium enterprises.

ARB5: Developing means of digital regulation.

Objective:

To enhance cooperation between regulators and policymakers in various sectors and other stakeholders in telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICTs); to create an appropriate, enabling and harmonized regulatory environment for digital regulation in order to enhance cooperation and keep pace with new challenges and rapid developments in the telecommunication/ICT sector; and to establish a mechanism for information and experience sharing and skill development.

Annex 2 (Matchmaking Table)

P2C Matchmaking

The matchmaking exercise, which was a highlight of the P2C Roundtable sessions, was based on the matching of the regional priorities and country specific needs with the commitments made by the P2C partners at the roundtables through their pledges, contributions before and during the roundtables, resulting into concrete actionable projects for implementation in the region.

During the Partner2Connect Roundtables, partners announced commitments for several countries, following pledges already made. Examples are indicated below.

The commitment by **UN-ESCWA**¹ to expediting the use of technology and innovation for enhanced operations in Arab Public Institutions through its multi-stakeholder project ENACT in Algeria, Bahrein, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen; the commitment by **Vodafone** to continue implementing its 190 million USD connectivity pledge and further connect 60 million persons in addition to the 20 million already connected; the commitments by the **League of Arab States** worth a total of 160,000 USD to a) implement the initiative “Arab Digital Capital” launched by Saudi Arabia; b) to implement the “Arab Strategy for artificial intelligence”, and, c) to develop and implement the “Arab ICT Strategy” in all Arab countries where applicable; the commitments by **Huawei** to bring connectivity to about 120 million people in remote areas globally by 2025, including in relevant Arab states, and, to build capacity through development of cybersecurity maturity model in the Arab States; the commitment by the **UAE** to invest 1.4 million USD (5 million AED) to support I-Codi initiative, through hosting the I-Codi regional hub and providing trainings and workshops to empower Arab Member States in Digital Innovation in ITC; the commitment by **Oman** to further implement its pledge of 2.7 million USD for the establishment of Arab Regional Cybersecurity Centre (ARCC); the commitment by **BUGLOUD** to provide different learning opportunities for participants in the region through its cybersecurity activities; the commitment by **E-Space** to deploy service and resources into developing nations in the Arab region, that will allow for rapid advances in technology and create highly advanced critical infrastructure, smart cities and environmental monitoring network; the commitment by **ICANN** to continue the implementation of its pledge and provide support to strengthen ccTLD registries which will support the capacity development activities as well as technical and hands-on assistance; the commitment by **GSMA** to further implement its pledge

¹ All countries of implementation can be found on the P2C Dashboard: <https://www.itu.int/itu-d/sites/partner2connect/pledges/explore-pledges/>.

of providing free training to policy makers and regulators on topics including Addressing the Digital Divide, Disasters and Humanitarian Crisis response, IoT, 5 G, Big Data and Bridging the Mobile Gender Gap; the commitment by **RIPE NCC** committed to further support Arab states in their efforts to cultivate and secure their digital infrastructure and enhance the skills of their workforce; the commitment by **Access Partnership** to further promote better policies and regulations in the Arab region which enable the use of new technologies for further connectivity and digital transformation; the commitment by **Egypt**, to further implement its pledge of training 500 trainees in the field of ICT technologies and services in Arab and Africa regions by 2026; the commitment by **Saudi Arabia** to enhance capacity development in the realms of digital regulation and transformation to ITU members worth 400,000 USD until 2024.

At the Forum, new Partner2Connect pledges and commitments were also announced. Examples of some of the new commitments made is listed as follows:

Egypt committed to promote digital inclusion for nearly 300,000 refugees in Egypt in collaboration with UNHCR by ensuring equitable internet access and SIM card availability; **Somalia** committed four pledges focused on: a) the establishment of CIRT, b) development of national cybersecurity strategy, c) regulation for government services, d) ICT Development priorities; **Djibouti** committed to advance in its digital transformation including seven (National Digital Strategy, Broadband Development Strategy, Connect Schools and Hospitals to Broadband, Improve quality and affordability of telecommunication services, Strengthen digital trust, Establishment of legal and regulatory framework, Host ITU event on business planning) processes and activities which are in line with Djibouti's National Priorities; **Comoros** committed to engage with willing partners in the realization of a digital economy which will be based on developed digital infrastructure; **Members of the ITU Generation Connect Arab Region** committed to help advance digital transformation in the region by creating strategies, addressing challenges and enhancing youth empowerment through proactive action and activities;

For further information, please refer to the Matchmaking Table below which contains the examples of the pledges/commitments against the ITU Regional Initiatives for Arab Region.

N:	Regional Initiatives	Name of the Pledge/Commitment	Submitting Organization	Value of Total Pledge/Commitment in USD (US dollars)	Beneficiary Countries of the Pledge/Commitment in Arab Region
1	ARB.1	UN-ESCWA committed to expediting the use of technology and innovation for enhanced operations in Arab Public Institutions through its multi-stakeholder project ENACT	UN-ESCWA	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algeria • Bahrein • Egypt • Iraq • Jordan • Kuwait • Lebanon • Libya • Morocco • Mauritania • Oman • Qatar • Saudi Arabia • Somalia • Sudan • Syrian Arab Republic • Tunisia • United Arab Emirates • Yemen
2	ARB.1	League of Arab States committed to implement the initiative “Arab Digital Capital” launched by Saudi Arabia	League of Arab States	10,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All countries in the Arab region, where relevant
3	ARB.3	League of Arab States committed to implement the “Arab Strategy for artificial intelligence”	League of Arab States	50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All countries in the Arab region, where relevant

N:	Regional Initiatives	Name of the Pledge/Commitment	Submitting Organization	Value of Total Pledge/Commitment in USD (US dollars)	Beneficiary Countries of the Pledge/Commitment in Arab Region
4	ARB.5	League of Arab States committed to develop and implement the “Arab ICT Strategy”	League of Arab States	100,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All countries in the Arab region, where relevant
5	ARB.1	Huawei committed to bring connectivity to about 120 million people in remote areas globally by 2025	Huawei	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All countries in Arab region, where relevant
6	ARB.4	UAE committed to invest 1.4 million USD (5 million AED) to support I-Codi initiative, through hosting the I-Codi regional hub and providing trainings and workshops to empower Arab Member States in Digital Innovation in ITC	UAE	1,400,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All countries in Arab region, where relevant
7	ARB.2	BUGCLOUD committed it will provide different learning opportunities for participants in the region thru its cybersecurity activities	BUGCLOUD	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algeria • Bahrein • Comoros • Djibouti • Egypt • Iraq • Jordan • Kuwait • Lebanon • Libya • Morocco • Oman • Qatar • Saudi Arabia

N:	Regional Initiatives	Name of the Pledge/Commitment	Submitting Organization	Value of Total Pledge/Commitment in USD (US dollars)	Beneficiary Countries of the Pledge/Commitment in Arab Region
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Somalia • Sudan • Syrian Arab Republic • Tunisia • United Arab Emirates • Yemen
8	ARB.1	E-Space committed to deploy service and resources into developing nations in the Arab region, that will allow for rapid advances in technology and create highly advanced critical infrastructure, smart cities and environmental monitoring network	E-Space	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algeria • Bahrein • Comoros • Djibouti • Egypt • Iraq • Jordan • Kuwait • Lebanon • Libya • Morocco • Oman • Qatar • Saudi Arabia • Somalia • Sudan • Syrian Arab Republic • Tunisia • United Arab Emirates • Yemen
9	ARB.3	Vodafone committed to continue implementing its 190 USD million connectivity pledge and	Vodafone	190,000,000	All countries in Arab region,

N:	Regional Initiatives	Name of the Pledge/Commitment	Submitting Organization	Value of Total Pledge/Commitment in USD (US dollars)	Beneficiary Countries of the Pledge/Commitment in Arab Region
		further connect 60 million persons in addition to the 20 million already connected			where relevant
10	ARB.3	ICANN committed to continue the implementation of its pledge and provide support to strengthen ccTLD registries which will support the capacity development activities as well as technical and hands-on assistance	ICANN	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All countries in Arab region, where relevant
11	ARB.4	GSMA committed to further implement its pledge of providing free training to policy makers and regulators on topics including Addressing the Digital Divide, Disasters and Humanitarian Crisis response, IoT, 5 G, Big Data and Bridging the Mobile Gender Gap	GSMA	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All countries in Arab region, where relevant
12	ARB.3	RIPE NCC committed to further support Arab states in their efforts to cultivate and secure their digital infrastructure and enhance the skills of their workforce.	RIPE NCC	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algeria • Bahrein • Comoros • Djibouti • Egypt • Iraq • Jordan • Kuwait • Lebanon

N:	Regional Initiatives	Name of the Pledge/Commitment	Submitting Organization	Value of Total Pledge/Commitment in USD (US dollars)	Beneficiary Countries of the Pledge/Commitment in Arab Region
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libya • Morocco • Oman • Qatar • Saudi Arabia • Somalia • Sudan • Syrian Arab Republic • Tunisia • United Arab Emirates • Yemen
14.	ARB.5	Access Partnership committed to further promote better policies and regulations in the Arab region which enable the use of new technologies for further connectivity and digital transformation	Access Partnership	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All countries in Arab region, where relevant
15.	ARB.4	Egypt committed to further implement its pledge of training 500 trainees in the field of ICT technologies and services in Arab and Africa regions by 2026	NTRA, Egypt	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All countries in Arab region, where relevant
16.	ARB.2	Oman committed to further implement its pledge of 2.7 million USD for the establishment of Arab Regional Cybersecurity Centre (ARCC)	MTCIT, Oman	2,700,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algeria • Bahrein • Egypt • Iraq • Jordan • Kuwait

N:	Regional Initiatives	Name of the Pledge/Commitment	Submitting Organization	Value of Total Pledge/Commitment in USD (US dollars)	Beneficiary Countries of the Pledge/Commitment in Arab Region
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lebanon • Morocco • Oman • Qatar • Sudan • Syrian Arab Republic • United Arab Emirates • Yemen
17	ARB.4	Saudi Arabia committed to enhance capacity development in the realms of digital regulation and transformation to ITU members worth 400,000 USD until 2024.	KSA	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All countries in Arab region, where relevant

Declaration, meetings, and Special Announcements

The Regional Development Forum provided an opportunity for special announcements:

- During the RDF, the Director signed a Framework Cooperation Agreement (FCA) with The Government of Somalia in scope of advancing the Telecommunications/ICT sector and promoting the adoption of digital services to align with the national development priorities of Somalia.
- The Director also held several bilateral meetings during the RDF-ARB as follows:
 - Meeting with H. E. Mr. Mohammed bin Thamir AlKaabi, Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications, Kingdom of Bahrain.
 - Meeting with H. E. Mr. Philip Marnik, General Director, Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), Kingdom of Bahrain.

- Meeting with H.E. Mr. Adil Hassan Mohamed El Hussein, Acting Minister of Telecommunication and Digital Transformation, Sudan, accompanied by H.E. Eng. Consultant Dr. Elsadig Gamaleldeen, Director General, TPRA from Sudan.
- Meeting with H.E. Mr. Jama Hassan, Minister of Communications and Technology (MCT), Minister of Communications and Technology of Somalia, accompanied with H.E. Mr. Mustafa Yaasin Sheik, General Manager, National Communications Authority (NCA), Somalia.
- Meeting with Ms. Maryam Alrumaihi, Head Corporate Communications Bahrain (BNET), Kingdom of Bahrain.

Annex 3 (AGENDA)

ITU Regional Development Forum for the Arab States (RDF-ARB) - Accelerating the digital development in the Arab Region - Bahrain, 6-7 November 2023

Monday, 6 November 2023

Master of Ceremony: Mr. Hussain Ali

Accreditation (delivery of badges): 08:00-10:00 a.m.

10:00 – 10:30	<u>Opening Ceremony</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• H.E. Mohamed Bin Thamer Al Kaabi, Minister of Transportation and Telecommunication, Kingdom of Bahrain• Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU• Mr. Khaled El Mekwad, UN Resident Coordinator in the Kingdom of Bahrain
	Facilitator: Mr. Adel Darwish , Regional Director, ITU Regional Office for Arab States
	<u>Appointment of the Chair of the ITU Regional Development Forum for the Arab Region</u> <u>Eng. Mohammed Ahmed BinAli, Acting Director, Telecommunications Directorate, Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications, Bahrain</u>
10:30 – 11:00	<u>Group Photo + Coffee Break</u>

Executive Panel:

Digital Development in Arab Region: Trends, Opportunities & Challenges

This is a high-level executive panel, with the objective to discuss regional and country specific challenges and opportunities arising from digital development and transformation. The focus will be on the Arab States and how the region could accelerate the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the Arab States through digital.

11:00 – 12:30	Moderator: Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, BDT Director, ITU
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• H.E. Mr. Jama Hassan, Minister of Communications and Technology (MCT), Minister of Communications and Technology, Somalia
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• H.E. Mr. Adil Hassan Mohamed El Hussein, Acting Minister of Telecommunication and Digital Transformation, Sudan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Philip Marnick, General Manager, TRA Bahrain
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Nezar Banabeela STC Bahrain CEO, Bahrain• Mr. Bocar Ba, Chief Executive Officer, Samena Telecommunications Council

12:30 – 12:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Signing Ceremony Framework Cooperation Agreement with the Ministry of Communications and Technology of Somalia
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12:45 – 13:45	<u>Lunch</u>
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Panel One:

Multistakeholder Cooperation and Digital Development

This panel will present an overview of digital cooperation actions promoted by different international organizations, multilateral banks, and other stakeholders to achieve digital development in the Arab States. Likewise, the progress report of some joint initiatives between ITU and other agencies will be presented.

13:45 – 14:45	Moderator: Mr. Adel Darwish Regional Director, ITU Regional Office for the Arab States
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr. Khaled Wali, Director for ICT Development, League of Arab States
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr. Chafic Chaya, Regional Manager, Public Policy and Government Affairs, Middle East Region, RIPE NCC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Jawad J. Abbassi, Head of Mena, GSMA• Mr. Hussein Abul Enein, Head of Middle East, Access Partnership

14:30 – 14:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing Ceremony Framework Cooperation Agreement with Somalia
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14:45- 15:00	<u>Coffee Break</u>
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<u>Panel Two:</u>	
<p>P2C Matchmaking Roundtable – Transforming Pledges into Commitments for Impact Effective mechanisms for transforming commitments into scaled-up impact: Digital for sustainable development in Arab Region through Partner2Connect Coalition.</p>	
15:00 – 16:00	Moderator: Mr. Sameer Sharma, Head, Special Initiatives, ITU
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Nibal Idlebi, Acting Director, Statistics, Information Society and Technology Cluster UN-ESCWA
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Hulk Zhang, Senior Cybersecurity Specialist, Huawei
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Maitha Aljamri, Government Relations and International Cooperation Officer, TDRA, UAE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Khaled Wali, AI Strategy, Director for ICT Development, League of Arab States

<u>Panel Three:</u>	
<p>Innovation and Entrepreneurship for Digital Development</p> <p>This panel will present innovation and digital entrepreneurship as an enabler for digital development in the Arab States. The ITU will provide information about its activities in implementing the World Telecommunication Development Conference relevant outcomes, particularly the fourth Arab regional initiative titled "Building capacities and encouraging digital innovation, entrepreneurship and future foresight". In addition, to shedding light on support provided to countries of the region to establish digital innovation ecosystems through the newly launched BDT global initiative: "Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alliance for Digital Development."</p>	

16:00 – 17:30	Moderator: Mr. Karim Abdelghani, Programme Coordinator, ITU Regional Office for Arab States.
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheikh Ahmed bin Isa Al Khalifa, Head of External Relations, Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, Kingdom of Bahrain
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Ali Alnoaimi, Senior Innovation Officer, Telecommunication and Digital Government Regulatory Authority, UAE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eng. Qusai Abu Sanap, Operations Manager, Meem Ain Education
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Nasser Mohammed Al Fannah, Director of Technical Programs, Sultanate of Oman. (virtually)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Myriam Kani, Director of Innovation, Ministry of Digital Transformation, Innovation, and Administrative Reform, Mauritania (virtually)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Mohammed Ba, Senior Coordinator, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU (virtually)

AGENDA

ITU Regional Development Forum for the Arab States (RDF-ARB)

Accelerating the digital development in the Arab Region

Bahrain, 6-7 November 2023

REGIONAL INITIATIVES AND PARTNER2CONNECT (P2C) ROUNDTABLES

Tuesday, 7 November 2023

REGIONAL INITIATIVES AND PARTNER2CONNECT (P2C) ROUNDTABLES

09:00 – 09:15	<u>Summary of the Day 1</u> Mr. Adel Darwish, ITU Regional Director for Arab States
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P2C Matchmaking Roundtable One: ARB RI1: Sustainable Digital Economy through Digital Transformation

The Roundtable will provide an opportunity for countries to present their individual country and regional priorities to partners that submitted pledges under the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition and other partners. The partners will respond by announcing their commitments to finance and support the priorities to those countries on the Roundtable and any other from the region and from elsewhere. Under this Roundtable the focus will focus on partnerships and collaboration on digital government services, digital health and digital agriculture.

09:15 – 10:15	Moderator: Eng. Hossam Ragheb, Govstack Digital Government Specialist for the Arab Region, ITU
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keynote Speaker: Engineer Khaled Al-Attar, Deputy Minister of Communications and Information Technology for Administrative Development, Digital Transformation, and Automation, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (virtually)
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Abdallah Ibrahim Omar, Secretary General, Ministry of Digital Economy and Innovation, Djibouti• Mr. Zakarie Ismael, Advisor to the Minister on e-Government, Ministry of Communications and Technology, Somalia• Mr. Ayman Essam, Director of Legal and External Affairs, Vodafone Egypt• Dr. Arash Rashidian, Director of Science, Information and Dissemination, WHO/EMRO (virtually)

10:15- 10:30	<u>Coffee Break</u>
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P2C Matchmaking Roundtable Two: ARB RI 2: Enhancing Confidence, Security and Privacy in the Use of Telecommunications/Information and Communication Technologies in the Era of New and Emerging Digital Technologies

The matchmaking Partner2Connect Roundtable will discuss how to address country and regional needs to enhance confidence, security, and privacy in the use of telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the efficient means for support the deployment of resilient infrastructure and safe and reliable services that ensure the protection of privacy and personal data for all groups of society. The aim will be to hear from partners on their commitment to concretely respond to regional and country needs/priorities.

10:30 – 11:30	Moderator: Mr. Ahmed ElRaghy, Senior Advisor, ITU Regional Office for Arab States.
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs. Iman Mahmoud Odeh, Director of Cybersecurity Development, OMAN National CERT
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Fahd Batayneh, Stakeholder Engagement Director, Middle East, ICANN
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Aysha Ahmed BinHaji, Director, Outreach and Awareness, Directorate, National Cyber Security Center (NCSC), Bahrain
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Naima Hassan Dimbil, Director of Interconnection, Wholesale and Universal Access Department, National Communications Authority (NCA) of Somalia
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Hulk Zhang, Senior Cybersecurity Specialist, Huawei • Mr. Mohammed Alawadhi, CEO, BugLoud, UAE

P2C Matchmaking Panel Three: ARB RI3: Developing Digital Infrastructure for Smart Sustainable Cities and Communities.

The session will focus on regional, and country needs from the Arab Region in the area of the development of resilient and synergistic infrastructure and the creation of an enabling environment that ensures universal coverage and meets the requirements of new and emerging technologies, and the necessary measures that need to be taken to ensure a rapid transition to smart sustainable cities and communities (SSCCs). Partners will be invited on the basis of their pledges to announce their commitment to address these priorities in a concrete way including supporting regional initiatives.

11:30- 12:30	Moderator: Ms. Rouda AlAmir Ali, Programme Officer, ITU Regional Office for Arab States.
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Ihar Shchetko, Connectivity Officer, ITU
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Faycal Beyouli, Director, General Directorate of Communication Technologies, Ministry of Communication Technologies and Digital Economy, Tunisia
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Zaidou Abdulhalim, ANRTIC, Comoros
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Tamer Azb, Director, Regulatory and Market Access, Middle East & Africa, E-space
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms. Aroua Hadani, Project Officer, PRIDA, ITU Regional Office for Arab States.
12:30 14:00	<u>Lunch</u>

P2C Matchmaking Panel Four: ARB RI5: Developing Means of Digital Regulation

The Roundtable aims to provide a platform for discussing and presenting regional and country priorities to partners in the area of developing national strategies and policies, as well as capacity development on digital regulation methods in the Arab region with the aim of promoting economic and social development. Partner2Connect pledges will be converted into commitments to be operationalized for supporting concrete projects in this area. New pledges could also be announced.

14:00- 15:00	Moderator: Dr. Mustafa Almahdi, Programme Officer, ITU Regional Office for Arab States.
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• H.E. Mr. Mustafa Yacin SHEIK, General Manager, National Communications Authority, Somalia
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Ahmed S. Alrahmah, Advisor, International Affairs and Director, Digital Regulatory Academy (DRA), Communications, Space and Technology Commission (CST), Saudi Arabia
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eng. Nadir Ahmed Gaylani, Deputy Director General, Telecommunications, Post and Regulatory Authority (TPRA), Sudan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms. Basma Tawfik, Manager International organizations, National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (NTRA), Egypt
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eng. Mustapha BESSI, Head of Spectrum Division, Agence Nationale de Réglementation des Télécommunications (ANRT), Morocco (virtually)
15:00 – 15:15	<u>Coffee Break</u>

ITU-D Network of Women (NoW) meeting

Provide women delegates in the Arab region the opportunity to exchange views on how to develop gender mainstreamed policies to facilitate the meaningful participation and engagement of Arab delegates in the ITU work.

In particular, the focus will be on:

- Presenting the NoW-ARAB in ITU-D strategy for the coming years
- specifying the challenges of meaningful participation and leadership and examining the role of institutions in promoting meaningful participation and leadership

15:15- 16:00	Moderator: Ms. Zeina BouHarb, Head of Int’l Cooperation, OGERO-Lebanon, Vice-Chair, NoW-ARAB in ITU-D
	Welcoming remark: Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)
	Speaker: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Ms. Noha Gaafar, Senior Expert, International Policies, NTRA, Egypt and Chair, NoW-Arab in ITU-D
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Ms. Alya Alali, Chief Strategy & Data Analytics Officer at Tamkeen, Bahrain○ Ms. Amel AL-HANAWI, Consumer Affairs Department Manager, Communication Regulatory Authority, Qatar○ Ms. Naima Hassan Dimbil, Director of Interconnection, Wholesale and Universal Access department, National Communications Authority, Somalia

Youth: Generation Connect and Inter-generational Dialogue

This session is a discussion between Youth and experts who will engage in an intergenerational dialogue on how young people may be more involved in digital development and digital transformation work taking into account that the ages 15 to 24 are the most active online.

16:00- 16:45	Moderator: Mr. Ali Toblani, Generation Connect, Chair of Generation Connect Arab Youth Group
	Welcoming Remark: Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)
	Panelists:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Yousseif Seifallah, Generation Connect, Arab Youth Envoy• Ms. Yomna Sherif, Generation Connect, Arab Youth Envoy• Mr. Hamad Mohammed Al Hameli , CTO at BugLoud• Mr. Omar Eid, Generation Connect Arab Youth Envoys

16:45 – 17:00	<u>Summary Report & Outcomes:</u> Mr. Adel Darwish, Regional Director, ITU Regional Office for the Arab States
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17:00 – 17:15	<u>Closing Ceremony</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eng. Mohammed Ahmed BinAli, Acting Director, Telecommunications Directorate, Ministry of TT Bahrain - Chair of the RDF-ARB• Dr. Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau, ITU

Annex 4:

STATE OF PALESTINE
Ministry of Telecom & Information Tech.
Minister's Office



دولة فلسطين
وزارة الاتصالات وتكنولوجيا المعلومات
مكتب الوزير

Ms. Doreen Bogdan
Secretary-General
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)



**Subject: Participation in the International Telecommunication Union Regional
Development Forum for Arab Region (RDF-ARB)**

Dear Ms. Bogdan,

The Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology in the State of Palestine presents its best wishes. We are writing to express our gratitude for the invitation extended to us to participate in the upcoming ITU Regional Development Forum for Arab Region (RDF-ARB) and workshop on digital regulation, scheduled to take place from November 6 to 7, 2023, in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

We deeply appreciate the significance of this forum, as it serves as a vital platform for fostering international collaboration and support for developing countries. In the past, this event has played a pivotal role in garnering commitments from various nations to provide assistance, resulting in shared success stories. Unfortunately, the current circumstances facing the State of Palestine, particularly in Gaza Strip, regrettably preclude our participation in the forthcoming forum.

Our inability to attend is primarily attributed to the ongoing Israeli aggression against Gaza, which has caused extensive destruction to the region's communication infrastructure. The impact of this aggression has been devastating, with over 65% of wired and wireless networks in Gaza have been destroyed, leaving only 35% of the area with limited telecommunications access. As of the present date, the services offered to Gaza are limited to second-generation technology (2G), illustrating the urgent need for support and assistance.

In light of these circumstances, and in order to make the forum success and not to address the issues of the brutal Israeli aggression on Gaza and its destruction of the communications sector infrastructure, we respectfully request your understanding and acceptance of our apology for not being able to participate in this event.

Nevertheless, we remain hopeful that the International Telecommunication Union, as promised, will continue to support the State of Palestine. Specifically, we would appreciate your assistance in the following areas:



1. Encouraging countries that have pledged support to allocate a special share for the State of Palestine to aid in the reconstruction of the telecommunications networks in Gaza Strip. This support is crucial to reconnecting the unconnected and restoring vital services.
2. Providing the State of Palestine with opportunities to benefit from projects, for which we have outlined specific demands that pertain to our region.
3. Urging international and other stakeholders to facilitate the deployment of fourth and fifth-generation technologies in Gaza Strip, which would significantly improve communication services.

We kindly request that this letter be included as an official document within the forum's proceedings.

It is important to acknowledge the unwavering support and assistance provided by the International Telecommunication Union and your office in particular. We extend our heartfelt gratitude for the tireless efforts and dedication to the mission of connecting to the unconnected communities. We also express our profound appreciation to Mr. Adel Dawish, Director of the Arab Regional Office, for his invaluable guidance and support in all matters concerning the State of Palestine, which has resulted in the successful implementation of numerous projects, such as IPv6, the emergency plan for Palestine, and numbering.

Once again, thank you for your understanding and support during these challenging times.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ishaq Sider

Minister of Telecommunications and Information Technology
State of Palestine