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Internet Governance Forum - IV

Open Forum

“Internet Governance: Challenges and Opportunities for the ESCWA Member Countries”

Information Note

In response to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the United Nations convened the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), a five-year programme spanning between 2006 and 2010 and aiming at disseminating the knowledge on Internet governance and facilitating the global dialogue on Internet public policies in an open and inclusive process. The five main areas of discussion of the IGF are: (a) critical Internet resource, (b) access, (c) diversity, (d) openness, and (e) security. “Internet has become the backbone of our globalized world”; addressing IGF-II in Brazil 2007, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon highlighted the essential role of the Internet and its impact on socio-economic development of the world.

UN-ESCWA has been involved in Internet governance issues since 2003 with the formation of an Arabic Domain Names Task Force, a team that worked in close cooperation with the League of Arab States (LAS) for developing policies on the use of the Arabic character in domain names and the creation of a new regional generic top-level domain name “.arab”.

Furthermore, during 2008-2009, UN-ESCWA completed a comprehensive study entitled “Internet Governance: Challenges and Opportunities for the ESCWA Member Countries” to highlight the importance of Internet governance in the Arab region and to increase the knowledge and understanding of Internet governance and its implications on the region, while promoting the role of Arab countries in the global Internet society.

As a pre-IGF meeting, UN-ESCWA is holding a workshop on 14 November 2009 in Sharm El Sheikh in partnership with LAS and the Egyptian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology to discuss the updates on the Arabic domain names as well as key Internet governance issues that are relevant to the region. One of the main outcomes of this workshop is to draw a regional roadmap on Internet governance. This roadmap will go through an open consultation process by regional stakeholders during 2010, and ultimately will be finalized and ready for adoption before the final meeting of the IGF in Lithuania.

Through this open forum, UN-ESCWA will officially launch the aforementioned study which should be useful in formulating opinions and positions on selected issues related to Internet governance from an Arab perspective. This study will also constitute a platform and catalyst for activities paving the way for IGF-V and will enrich the consultation process regarding the development of the mentioned roadmap.

The open forum “Internet Governance: Challenges and Opportunities for the ESCWA Member Countries” will be held on the 3rd day of IGF-IV, Tuesday 17 November 2009, between 14:00 and 15:30 in Room 8 - Citadel.