



"A Better Internet for A Better Arab World"

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Chairman Report

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Organizers:



Secretariat:



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Background on the Arab Internet Governance Forum:

Kuwait Information Technology Society (KITS) hosted in the State of Kuwait the First Arab Internet Governance Forum (Arab IGF) under the umbrella of the League of Arab States (LAS) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in Coordination with the Arab IGF Secretariat The National Telecommunication Regulatory Authority of the Republic of Egypt (NTRA). The Forum was held between 9-11 October 2012 in Kuwait Regency Hotel. The Forum is an Arab multistakeholder initiative similar to the Internet Governance Forum (Internet Governance Forum), which is held annually under the umbrella of the United Nations based on the Outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society.

The First Arab Internet Governance Forum is a platform for dialogue for all stakeholders (Governments - the private sector - civil society - academics - the technical community - regional and international organizations) to discuss and debate topics and issues concerning the use of the Internet that is important and relevant to the Arab region. It aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Focus on discussing public policies related to Internet Governance especially in the areas of access, stability, security and development.
2. Facilitate the exchange of information, best practices, knowledge and lessons learned by involving experts, technical community and academics.
3. Gather different opinions and build consensus for harmonized Arab views on priorities and on mechanisms to respond to Arab countries needs related to Internet governance issues.
4. Discuss emerging issues and develop recommendations on them, as appropriate.
5. Build and develop capacity in Internet Governance as well as improve the participation of all stakeholders to benefit from all possible resources of knowledge and expertise.
6. Communicate the Arab positions globally and enhance the Arab role in formulating global Internet Governance policies.
7. Engage in outreach with the Internet Governance Forum and other regional IGFs with the purpose of exchanging knowledge and expertise

The First Arab IGF will discuss the following themes:

- Access;
- Openness
- Security and Privacy;
- Content;
- Managing Critical Internet Resources;
- Youth

The launch of the Arab IGF went through several stages which reflect the tremendous effort that has gone into its foundation:

- ESCWA's experts group meeting on the Regional Roadmap for Internet Governance, held in Beirut, between 25 and 26 October 2010,
- The outcome of the Conference and Public Consultations to Establish the Arab IGF, jointly organized by LAS and ESCWA in Beirut, during 31/1-1/2/2012, and the consent reached during the conference with regards to the importance and the need to launch the Arab IGF.
- The recommendation of the Executive Bureau of the Arab Telecommunication and Information Technology Council of Ministers (ATICM).to endorse the outcome of the Conference and Public Consultations to Establish the Arab IGF (2/2/2012).

- The recommendation made by the Permanent Arabic Committee for Communication and Information in its 31st meeting, held in Dubai, between 24-25/5/2012 to launch the Arab IGF.
- The endorsement of the Arab Telecommunication and Information Technology Council of Ministers (ATICM).to launch the Arab IGF (5/6/2012).
- The Formation of the Arab IGF MAG Multistakeholder Advisory Group (18/6/2012).

The Arab IGF will be held on annual basis and we look forward for it to continue as a platform for dialogue among all stakeholders to discuss and debate topics and issues concerning the use of the Internet in the Arab region.

Plenary 1: Setting the Scene - Main Plenary and Keynote Speakers

The opening ceremony included a Setting the Scene session to introduce the strategic perspective of the importance and objectives of the forum. The session was coordinated and chaired by Mr. Ayman El-Sherbiny, Chief of the ICT Policies Section in ESCWA and one of the key founders of the Arab IGF and first to call for it in 2009 and launch its open consultations and set its components. He opened the session by providing a historic perspective on the regional development of Internet governance and the evolution of the IGF since 2006, and addressed its role in bridging the policy and development divide in the region and the world, highlighting the experience of the Sharm El Sheikh IGF in 2009. He stressed the importance of the [Arab Regional Roadmap for Internet Governance: Framework, Principles and Objectives](#) that was jointly developed by ESCWA and LAS, within the framing the Arab IGF process at the regional level and the way to follow-up on it to ensure effective implementation of the initiatives and activities related to Internet governance. He further considered that stability and security of the Internet is critical to further evolution.

Mr. El-Sherbiny stressed the fact that there is a policy vacuum in the development of the information society in the Arab region and that the Arab IGF process aspires to bridging this policy gap in its initial mandate from 2012 to 2015. He also stressed the importance of the international dimension of the Arab IGF as part of the global IGF process.

A group of high-level experts in the area of Internet governance at the global and regional levels participated as keynote speakers in this session, namely: Mr. Ridha Gallouz (MICT, Tunis), Mr. Markus Kummer (ISOC), Mr. Chengetai Masango (IGF), Mrs. Christine Arida (NTRA, Egypt), Mr. Haidar Fraihat (ESCWA), Mr. Mohamad Timoulali (ECA NA), Mr. Tarek Kamel (ICANN).

Mr. Ridha Gallouz of the MICT in Tunis noted that openness, multi-stakeholder participation, diversity of language and culture and diversity formed the basis of the IGF, and emphasized the need to assess the progress made in the implementation of the WSIS outcome from 2003 to 2015 with emphasis on measurement of accomplishment in the strife to develop the Internet.

Mr. Markus Kummer of ISOC tackled the lessons learned during the IGF mandate, noting that the spread of national and international IGF initiative validates the concept of multi-stakeholder dialogue. He noted the evolution of Internet from a research project in the 1970s to the backbone of the modernized world, a facility that has changed societies, fostering economic growth through innovation, noting the scope from the World Wide Web to social media and how there has been freedom of innovation ("innovation without permission"). He added that no one is in control of the Internet and that the stability and security and resilience is critical to the health of a functioning Internet.

Mr. Chengetai Massango of the global IGF spoke on regional challenges of the IGF, noting that there are 34 IGF initiatives, and that the borderless Internet is open, transparent and inclusive and that established forums can help effect policy and regulation discussions. He supported the inclusion of the Arab IGF viewpoints in the international IGF events.

Mrs. Christine Arida of the NTRA, Egypt, noted the importance of the Arab participation in the IGF process and its development, and of having a common understanding and stand to make the voice and concerns of the Arab users heard at the international level.

Mr. Haidar Fraihat of ESCWA stressed that the forum is a means to agree on priorities for the Arab region, and are increasingly important with the Arab uprisings (spring) where rules are changing and the collective voices need to be heard amongst multiple parties.

Mr. Mohamad Timoulali, ECA-NA, discussed enhancing the role of North Africa in the further development of the Internet. He noted the diversity of the North African forum and the need for political support for continuity and progress. Balance between freedom of expression and personal data privacy is in need of a legal framework, as is fighting electronic crime and other security issues.

Mr. Tarek Kamel from ICANN, highlighted the good example set for the Arab region by the successful work in the area of Internet governance, especially the multi-stakeholder approach followed that enabled a wide participation and influence in the decision making process. He noted that, like resources such as water, greater attention from governments, private sector and NGOs should be playing a role in recognizing investment into the Internet's development and care. He called on greater participation in the regional, national and international forums by Arab representatives.

Plenary 2: Access and Content

The Access and Content Plenary was chaired by Mr. Saud AlZaid the CEO for corporate affairs at Zain Group and was moderated by Charles Chaban The executive director for copyrights at TAGI Group. The speakers in this session included: Dr. Emad Hoballah - Head of TRA Lebanon, Dr. Yousef Nussier – ICT Consultant Jordan, Mr. Bashar AbdulHadi – Chairman of KuwaitNet Kuwait, Dr. Hossain Badran – CISCO Technical Regional Manager Egypt, and Mr. Fahad Batayneh – Head of .JO Jordan.

The Access and Content Plenary discussions focused on the following points:

1. Good content is the content demanded by the users. This is not limited to the content translated to Arabic but it also includes the content that is developed for the Arab user.
2. There is a link between content, ICT infrastructure and the cost of Access.
3. There is a rising importance for having IXPs in all Arab countries to reduce the cost of Access, make local content available and increasing its volume, and increasing the
4. Cooperation between the Public sector and the Private Sector is much needed now.
5. Mobile access made record growth in the Arab World which reflects the need to focus on it as well as creating adequate development tools for it which will lead toward higher growth in the Arab world.
6. Creating Arabic versions for major Internet website will result in increasing the visits to this web sites
7. Average Internet penetration rate in the Arab world is around 30% compared to the World average which is 40%. While on 2.2% users in the Arab enjoys broadband access, the international average is 8.5% and in Europe its around 25%.
8. Statistics and numbers on Internet access may be misleading sometimes. A case for this is the different Internet penetration rates among cities in one country.
9. It is important to invest and spend on scientific research related to the Internet. The Scientific research expenditures in the Arab World is far less than the world average.
10. Policies needed to be established with regard of Internet content.
11. Events such as the Arab IGF help in exchanging best practices and cases.

Plenary 3: Openness

The moderator began the discussion by asking where governments in the region are in terms of openness. Speakers noted that there is still negotiation as to what "open" means, and of what regulation there should be for online speech. There is a danger of giving the governments "carte blanche" in this area. Freedom of expression is closely tied to a democratic society and democratic governance, and "Arab culture" is not an explanation for why people, including bloggers in Syria, have been detained - those were political actions, and it is important that the law be brought in line with a respect for human rights.

Speakers noted that the region is in a period of rapid change and growth, and the range of issues that governments must address is evolving. Prioritizing how to keep pace with the new era of Internet and big data is a challenge for all governments in the region - no lack of awareness about the issues, but there is a need to plan more effectively to address them.

Recent events around the region's "Arab Spring" have produced some of the most significant changes, and placed freedom of expression as one of the most important issues for the Arab population. During the Arab Spring, some in government saw the Internet as the problem, when in fact it can be a tool to help identify and address the underlying socio-economic issues at the root of the unrest.

One of the panelists noted that while there is a need for some limits on free Internet speech, the current approach of government is preventing people from peacefully expressing their ideas. He argued for a greater cooperation between government and civil society to collectively define the limitations on free speech. While some governments have embraced the new Internet world (setting up Facebook pages, etc.) others have sought to use these tools against users, which serves only to discourage people taking an active role in the discussion.

It was noted that some governments in the region are taking positive steps in terms of accountability, transparency, and eradicating corruption. The potential for cooperation between stakeholder groups, particularly civil society and government and the need for global coordination in an Internet ecosystem that crosses national borders were both emphasized.

Access to information was also highlighted as an important issue for users in Arab countries, and it was noted that language has been written into the Moroccan constitution regarding open access to information. Openness is even more vital in the Arab countries, where there is a need to combat corruption, but governments making data public can also lead to new developments, innovations and business opportunities.

Censorship remains an issue, but there are projects which are helping to highlight censorship of the Internet. There needs to be a long-term change in the mentality of government regarding using censorship as a weapon.

The session concluded stating that government bureaucracy is actually preventing government from effectively helping and protecting citizens, and that methods like blocking websites are not effective. He closed the session, noting the importance of these issues for the region, and the value of open discussions like those being held in this forum.

Plenary 4: Critical Internet Resources

The session was chaired by Dr. Tarek Kamel (ICANN) and moderated by Paul Rendek, RIPE NCC. The panelists included: Hosein Badran, Internet Masr; Khaled Fattal, MINC; Osama Al-Dosary, Cisco Systems; Salam Yamout, Lebanese Government. There were related workshops such as:

1. Moving to IPv6: Governance and Technical Challenges
2. Domain Names Industry in the Arab World

Main Session's Highlights focused on:

- Several countries in the region, including Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt have been proactive in setting up IPv6 task forces to raise awareness and encourage players (service providers, enterprises and academic institutions) to deploy IPv6. One key factor in the success of these task forces is their multi-stakeholder composition.
- The challenge mainly seems to be in convincing those players to invest in deploying the technology in the absence of a business case. However, various speakers expressed a more positive message in relation to the IPv6 business case, particularly with the growth in the number of devices, smart phones, etc. Some also noted the fact that the Arab region has an advantage over other regions like Europe, where older, larger networks will be far more difficult to upgrade.
- While the panelists noted that uptake of IDNs by ccTLDs in the region had been strong, uptake by users remained very small. Many views were shared on why this is the case. Some noted the lack of key applications like emails, and the poor IDN support in other applications like browsers. Others pointed out the fact that IDNs are yet one component in an ecosystem that includes other components like infrastructure (IXPs), and a diversity of local registrars. Several speakers noted that the approach of many ccTLD registries in the region, as well as industry in general, does not adequately consider end users needs, and some times such registries find themselves bound by out-dated legislations.
- There was strong agreement that Arabic IDNs, and more generally, the growth in Arabic content are critical to bringing more Arab users online.
- The final discussion of the main session centered on Arab involvement with Internet governance processes. Panelists stressed the need for governments to embrace the multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance, and the importance of encouraging engagement in existing processes of IETF, ICANN and the IGF. Speakers also noted that civil society, including ISOC Chapters, could play a stronger role in that regard.
- Some also noted that ICANN is under US jurisdiction, and that this is an area where the multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance does not apply. Others noted that ICANN has evolved in recent years, including the appointment of several Arabs to key positions within the organization. There seemed to be consensus that efforts to internationalize the operations and processes of ICANN and other Internet institutions need to continue, and stronger Arab participation in organs like the ICANN Government Advisory Committee is vital to achieving this.
- One other observation was made regarding the importance of capacity building programs to encouraging greater participation and awareness of Internet governance in the Arab world.
- The workshop on 'Domain Names Industry in the Arab World' focused on the main elements of the ecosystem and attempted to identify the related weaknesses in the

Arab region. It also discussed IDN ccTLD uptake and related challenges, as well as opportunities new gTLDs, including (.arab), might bring about.

There was a consensus among participants that there is a problem in the domain names industry in the region. Some suggested the need for some sort of a community initiative to address this problem. ICANN expressed commitment to support with other players any work to develop the domain name industry in the region.

Plenary 5: Security and Privacy

The Theme of Security and Privacy was discussed in a main plenary session and several workshops. The theme formed an important issue of dialogue among all stakeholders taking into consideration the special case of the Arab World with the role of social networks in the Arab Spring, the diffusion of ICT in the Arab world with its growing usage. That is beside the increased number of cyber threats experienced recently in the Arab region.

The main plenary included the following panelists: Mr. Waleed AlQallaf CEO of Qualitynet as a chairman of the plenary, Dr. Adel AbdulSadeq from Al-Ahram political and strategic Studies Center as a moderator, Dr. Abul Ela Hasanein from Cairo University, Dr. Fadhil AlBadrani from Baghdad University, Mr. Ahmed AlKeelani from the Arab Center for Cyber Studies, Mr. Fadi Salsa Head of Information Security Of The Middle East Center and Mr. Allan Ghazi from the Palestinian Ministry of Telecommunication and Information. Among the several workshops that addressed security and privacy, there were "The Freedom of Expression and Content Filtering" workshop and "Children Protection on the Internet" workshop.

The plenary discussed the proper policies that can strike a balance between freedom of use, user security, and maintaining the privacy from one side and the effort to achieve a maximum degree of security in cyberspace from another side in response to threats that is affecting its civil nature.

The speakers stressed the importance of "Internet Governance" definition and the spread of its correct understanding to overcome any misconception. In that respect, the speakers stressed too the important role of the media to spread user awareness on issues related to Internet security and protection. The speakers discussed the importance of the social dimension of cyber security especially that it is linked to means dealing with cyber security. They all agreed that social conditions such as poverty and unemployment are all affecting the volumes of cybercrimes and threats.

The panelists acknowledged that Arab users' personal information are under risk as long as they are not aware on how to safeguard it. This is also affected by the strengthened role of global companies in comparison to the weak role of national entities. It is affected too by the increased level of malware attacks in the Arab regions and the weaknesses in protection measures. These factors combined are depriving the Arab region from development opportunities due to the lack of users' trust in electronic transactions through the Internet. The ignorance of the user in the standards used to protect his electronic privacy is an important factor in allowing the exploitation of his personal information and in violating his electronic privacy. The role of regulatory frameworks and updating it to address effectively privacy, cybercrimes and copyrights is becoming increasingly important. Women and children Internet exploitation needs to be addressed too.

With the debate on filtering adult nature websites and the different positions on it, a new direction has emerged focusing on a comprehensive approach addressing the motives of the youngsters to access these sites and focusing on raising their awareness on its negative impacts in order to create a self-governing conscious. The balance between the individuals' rights to openly use the Internet and measures to not transform this right into a threat to the society is an issue that needs to be addressed. It was noted that electronic attacks have

increased among political and religious rivals in the Arab world along with Internet misuse like creating fake accounts to spread misleading information, identity theft or defamation against others.

A number of speakers emphasized on the importance of the Arabic dimension to counter cyber threats and the importance of establishing cooperation among the National Computer Emergency Response teams in the Arab world. This is beside the cooperation between all stakeholders on cyber security awareness.

It was also noted during the session the increased electronic confrontations among countries and the launch of cyber attacks from one country against another. This issue needs to be addressed in terms of international agreements ensuring that cyber space is a common culture for humanity where the world comes together to cooperate in setting its related policies, future and security.

Plenary 6: Youth

Abdullah AlShaher and Diana Bou Ghanem moderated a wide-ranging discussion of youth perspectives on Internet governance issues, with a panel including Mohammed Al-Doub (Security & Privacy, Kuwait), Marwa Al-Seifi (Al-Ahram, Egypt), David Mounir Nabti (AltCity.me, Lebanon), Maaly Al-Thuwaini (MOE, Kuwait), Mackram Raydan (Seeqnce, Lebanon), Athari Al-Khashti (blogger, Kuwait) and Sumaya Al Failakawi.

The discussion first touched on the range of Issues surrounding Internet commerce in the Arab region, led by Mr Al-Doub and Ms Al-Awadhi. Trust, proof of quality, better regulations and business systems were all identified as key factors in allowing Arab society to fully engage with the Internet economy. It is also vital that new services and regulatory structures be designed to facilitate better cooperation between actors in the Internet economy.

Ms Al-Kashti emphasised the need for investment in infrastructure, and pointed to initiatives in countries such as South Korea, where the government subsidises Internet in a variety of ways.

The discussion turned to the issue of blocking websites, led by Ms Al Failakawi, who noted that while Arab people are conservative and supportive of some blocking, current practices, which are haphazard and not based on consistent standards, deny Arab youth opportunities to benefit from the Internet. Speakers noted various initiatives, including a whitelist technology being facilitated by the ITU - this sparked discussion of the effectiveness of white- and blacklists, and who should have control over what is blocked (the service provider or the individual, specifically parents or educational administrators).

The panel also argued strongly for the role of culture in ensuring that Arab youth are able to realise the potential offered by the Internet. Ms Al-Thuwaini stressed the importance of helping more educators to take advantage of the Internet, through strategies including certification of online educational resources. Mr Mounir Nabti focused on the importance of passion and creativity as vital to ensuring that the large youth demographic in the Arab region is able to channel its potential effectively, and overcome challenges including unemployment, lack of infrastructure and the lure of moving permanently away. Mr Raydan also stressed the need to provide the business environment and opportunity to for youth to succeed.

The panelists emphasized on the important role of social networks as an enabling tool to reach the youth voice to decision makers, outreach each other, exchange their views on current issues and support democracy.

Paul Rendek encouraged all attendees to make contact with their local Internet Society chapters and further their ideas for improving the situation. Others emphasised the need for cultural shifts in how young people are educated and raised, and the need to encourage risk taking. Khaled Fattal stressed the need for those in leadership position to take note and act on the new awareness that the Internet has helped to create in the young Arab population.

Plenary 7: Taking Stock and the Way Forward and Closing Session

In the closing session of the forum, chaired by Ms. Christine Arida representing the Forum Secretariat, the organizers of the main plenary sessions reported and recapped key points that participants deliberated on its importance in guiding the future work of the forum in order to meet the challenges related to Internet governance and building a knowledge-based society. The closing session also addressed the way forward, sustainability and diversity of the process. The future steps were clarified by Mr. Ayman El-Sherbiny, which include preparing a mechanism for convening the second annual forum, opening the door for membership in the Arab Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (AMAG), supporting the sustainability and ensuring diversity of the Arab IGF process and operation, and encouraging the participation of more governments in the process, as well as building trust in the leading role that the Arab region can play in the area of Internet governance at the regional and international levels.

The closing statement of Mr. Haidar Fraihat emphasized the importance that ESCWA gives to the Arab IGF process, and thanked Ayman El-Sherbiny and the members of Internet governance team in the ICT Division of ESCWA, and Qusai El-Shatti and the Internet governance team in KITS; and specified 30 November 2012 as the due date for receiving proposals or requests for hosting the second annual Arab IGF in 2013, in order for the AMAG to selection of the host entity of the next annual forum. Also, a joint closing statement of LAS and ESCWA was delivered by Mr. Khaled Foda who thanked the high-patronage of His-Highness the Crown Prince and the generous hosting of KITS and the contributions of the various partners. The closing session also included the host entity closing remarks by Mr. Qusai El-Shatti, together with a statement for the Arab IGF Secretariat given by Ms. Christine Arida.

The session involved contributions from the floor, including discussions on what to include in the chairman's summary report, and called for the inclusion of content of workshops and the resulting suggestions for action. Discussions addressed issues related to the strategy of blocking websites, relevance of laws to the new gTLDs applications, the need to include in the final report the subjects of Internet for people with disabilities, and child protection. It was clarified that the Arab IGF will not be making any recommendations as part of its report; however, the Arab IGF secretariat will cooperate with further action resulting from the workshops to follow up on activities.