

IGF 2017 Reporting Template

- Session Title: "Data is the New Oil": Shaping the Digital Economy of MENA (WS50)

- Date: 19 Dec 2017

- Time: 10:40 – 12:10

- Session Organizer: Ali AlMeshal

- Additional Organizers: Satish Babu, Ms. Sarah Kiden

- Chair/Moderator: Ali AlMeshal

- Rapporteur/Notetaker: Satish Babu

- List of Speakers and their institutional affiliations:

1. Baher Esmat, ICANN VP Global Stakeholder Engagement
2. Walid al-Saqaf, Södertörn University, Sweden
3. Ms. Lisa fuhr, Director General, ETNO, Europe
4. Ms. Ines Hfaiedh, Tunis, Tunisia
5. Satish Babu, Chair, APRALO, ICANN
6. Ms. Hanane Boujemi, Consultant, Morocco
7. Ms. Lianna Galstyan, Technical Community, .AM Registry, Armenia
8. Jorge Sebastio, University of London, UAE (Remote)
9. Nasrat Khalid, ISOC Afghanistan (Remote)

- Key Issues raised (1 sentence per issue):

- The MENA region experienced economic slowdown around 2010, but by 2013-14, the region had bounced back in terms of growth
- Only 5% of global web sites are hosted in the MENA region, and only 1% of domains are registered in the region
- Most users prefer to use their own language to access the web
- While data (and its free flow) stimulated the growth of the region, most data still belonged to countries outside the sector
- The GDPR and data protection is likely to find repercussions in the region as well
- The capacity of the region—in terms of training and educational requirements—will need to be boosted to enable sustainable use of ICTs, managing the deployment of expatriates for ICT management
- The region is continuing its innovations, for instance the adoption of Blockchain
- The Governments of the region need to significantly enhance their adoption and transformative use of ICTs

- If there were presentations during the session, please provide a 1-paragraph summary for each presentation:

The speakers did not generally use presentations.

- Please describe the Discussions that took place during the workshop session (3 paragraphs):

The background to the Workshop was the slowdown in the economy of Middle East and North Africa during early 2010 and thereafter, with dire predictions of further slowdown. However, the region recovered and continued to grow beyond expectations from around 2013-14. One of the main enablers of this growth was the free flow of data, as reported by several observers. The region is receptive to Internet-based services. For instance, although less than 1% of global domains are registered in the region, it has over 3.5% of global Internet users (as reported by a study conducted by ICANN).

Despite the emergence of data as a key resource, it has been observed that most data emanates from companies outside the region, and there is a need for local companies to adopt these tools and methodologies. There has also been an explosive growth of mobile phones in the region. While GDPR and privacy concerns exist, the group felt that these should not hamper the free flow of data.

It was pointed out that the UAE has announced a 100% blockchain-enabled governance system from 2020, and also a new digital currency called EmCash. These are proactive measures that will increase the resilience of the region. If these measures serve to enhance governance and services delivery to citizens, the region will show an even stronger growth.

- Please describe any Participant suggestions regarding the way forward/ potential next steps /key takeaways (3 paragraphs):

Further studies need to be done on the use of ICTs, in the Government as well as the Private Sector, and the type of innovations that could still be leveraged (which includes some of the planned innovations such as the blockchain). Documenting these experiences will benefit other regions.

Capacity building efforts for enhancing human resources also require documentation so as to put in place a plan for sustainability of human resources in the region.

In conclusion, while Data may be the new oil, even more work needs to be done in documenting and monitoring the continued use of ICTs to enable the free flow of data in the region, but also the exact way Data benefits stakeholders—particularly citizens—needs to be studied to ensure that there are no adverse effects.

Gender Reporting

- Estimate the overall number of the participants present at the session: 91

- Estimate the overall number of women present at the session: 41

- To what extent did the session discuss gender equality and/or women's empowerment?

As the theme was economic development of a region, the issue of gender was confined to capacity development, training and education.

- If the session addressed issues related to gender equality and/or women's empowerment, please provide a brief summary of the discussion: