

**Letter addressed to the Meeting of the Executive Bureau of Arab Telecommunications and Information Council of Ministers (ATICM)**

Beirut, 2 February 2012

**On the Conference and Public Consultations to Establish the Arab Internet Governance Forum**

(Beirut, 31 January - 1 February, 2012)

Within the ongoing coordination between the LAS and ESCWA on the Arab Regional Roadmap for Internet Governance, a consultative conference was held towards the establishment of the Arab Internet Governance Forum, during the period from January 31 to 1 February 2012, in Beirut, Lebanon.

The Permanent Committee for Telecommunications and Information called, in its 30<sup>th</sup> meeting (Abu Dhabi, 8-9/1/2012), upon the Arab authorities to participate in the Conference, and asked the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Regional Arab Office, the Arab ICT Organization, and the Arab Regulators Network to forward the conference invitation to the private sector and non-governmental organizations and to take necessary action to motivate their participation.

The conference was attended by more than 60 participants representing Arab authorities, regional organizations, civil society and other stakeholders.

Pursuant to the decision of the 15<sup>th</sup> session of the Arab Telecommunications and Information Council of Ministers (ATICM) (Beirut, 2 June 2011) on the initiative, the conference overviewed the Arab Regional Roadmap for Internet Governance and a the general framework, principles and objectives document, and addressed the need to hold an annual Arab regional forum on Internet governance.

The Conference also discussed the mechanisms required to convene the forum and the necessary funding, and the possibility of hosting the forums and mandating the secretariat work through the ICT departments in the governments of Arab countries.

Also, the Conference addressed the regional forums held by other alliances and interest groups in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, as well as the national forums that were launched recently in some countries, and the consultations that are currently underway on the establishment of forums for Internet governance that may include some Arab countries.

Based on the Conference discussions, participants agreed on the importance of establishing an annual Arab forum for Internet governance that represents a decentralized platform for dialogue that involves all stakeholders, as agreed upon in the Tunis Agenda and Geneva Declaration of Principles of the WSIS.

Participants agreed that the forum works as follows:

**Forum Objectives**

- (a) Discuss public policy issues related Internet governance, particularly the issues raised in the global Internet Governance Forum in order to foster access, security, stability and development of the Internet;
- (b) Facilitate the exchange of information, best practices, lessons learned, and knowledge, particularly from owners of the policy and technical expertise, academic, and then publish discussions of what is and what it could be reached from recommendations and proposals;
- (c) Bring points of view together towards a common understanding of the Arab region's priorities for Internet governance and the mechanisms to respond to the needs of Arab countries;
- (d) Discuss issues of emerging technologies without the operational management of the Internet, and develop relevant recommendations, as needed;
- (e) Contribute to capacity building in the area of Internet governance in the Arab countries, and promote the promote the participation of all stakeholders to take full use of available resources of knowledge and experience;

- (f) Transfer the Arab perspective to the global level and support the Arab role in the formulation of public policies for Internet governance without having a supervisory role or replacing existing mechanisms, institutions or organizations;
- (g) Communicate with regional and international forums for Internet governance in order to facilitate the exchange of experiences and knowledge transfer.

### **Nature and Mechanisms of the Forum**

- Includes all stakeholders, as defined in the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS);
- Consultative forum, publishes discussions and what could be reached of not-binding proposals and recommendations;
- Based on a decentralized and flexible structure;
- Relies on multiple sources of funding.

### **Organizational Structure for Managing the Forum**

- A Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) comprising representatives of Arab governments and regional organizations, and the private sector and civil society and other stakeholders. The MAG takes decisions related to the work the Forum, identifies topics of the Forum agenda, and looks after the issues of organization of its meetings and related proposals, in the light of experience of MAG members, which ensures an optimal Forum output, in order to achieve a positive effect on all stakeholders.
- The Forum Secretariat, hosted by the Egyptian National Telecom Regulatory Authority (NTRA), coordinates with the host bodies of the periodic Forum events, as well as the logistics and necessary technical preparations for the work of the Forum and its components.

### **Sources of Funding**

During the conference, a number of participating parties expressed interest in supporting the organization and convening of an Arab IGF similar to the regional forums in developing areas, such as in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The sources of funding include: The host body of the Forum carries all expenses related to the convening of the Forum; Voluntary contributions from Arab governments; Contributions of international and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, and other donors; Private sector contributions; In-kind contributions from governments and other parties in the form of studies or activities for the benefit of the Forum at their expense of those bodies; and other sources.

### **Arrangements for Convening the Forum**

Conference participants welcomed the initiative of the Kuwait Information Technology Society (KITS) for hosting and organizing the first meeting of the Forum in the first week of October 2012. A number of bodies also expressed interest in hosting and organizing subsequent Forum events, including telecommunication authorities and non-governmental bodies from Algeria, Bahrain, Lebanon, and the Sudan, in addition to the Arab Organization for Administration Development and the Arab Organization for Information and Communication Technologies.

In addition, the Secretariat of the World Forum for Internet Governance and the Reseaux IP Europeens Network Coordination Centre (RIPE NCC) showed their willingness to provide technical support on remote participation.

### **Other Matters**

Addressed during conference was what the WSIS agreed upon in relation to the follow up on matters relating to international Internet governance, through the course of the IGF, and the path of the enhanced cooperative process

that aims at enabling governments to develop international public policies regarding the Internet and work on its update to keep pace with Internet developments and to achieve the vision set by the Summit.

### **Conclusion**

In the end, participants thanked ESCWA and the Secretariat of the League of Arab States and the Presidency of the Lebanese Council of Ministers and their partners on the convening and organization of the public consultations Conference.

Participants called upon the Technical Secretariat of the Arab Telecommunications and Information Council of Ministers (ATICM) to present the results of the Conference to the meetings of the Executive Bureau of ATICM that will be held in Beirut on 2/2/2012, in order to strengthen the role of government interaction with the work of the Forum.