



ازدهار البلدان كرامة الإنسان



## The Joint Project to Develop, Deploy and Activate the Arab Information and Communication Technology Strategy (Arab Digital Agenda 2023-2033)

Seventh meeting of the Joint Technical Committee and the Core Research and Technical Cooperation Mechanism  
Online, Tuesday 14 November 2023

### Meeting Report

#### Introduction:

The seventh meeting of the **Joint Technical Committee and the Core Research and Technical Cooperation Mechanism (JTC/CRTCM)** was held online on Tuesday, November 14, 2023, for three hours. The meeting provided a quick overview of the most important accomplishments implemented during the first half of 2023 to the meeting day, as well as a glimpse of the vision and future activities planned for the last two months of 2023 and until mid-2024.

The first session reviewed the mechanisms of work progress, **key achievements, and updates in activating the Arab Digital Agenda since the previous meeting of the JTC/CRTCM.** The second session discussed the **implementation mechanisms of the Arab Digital Agenda and its related analysis, monitoring, and follow-up mechanisms.** The third session focused on the future development of the Agenda and the expansion of its scope **to include additional crucial issues of importance to the Arab region in preparation for the release of its next edition.** Finally, the fourth session focused on the **interlinkages with supporting forums and the ongoing preparations for the "High-Level Partners' Conference for the Launch and Deployment the Arab Digital Agenda 2023-2033 (HLPC\_ADA),"** which will be held during the first half of 2024 within the framework of Arab International Digital Cooperation and Development Forum.

#### Presentations that were reviewed and discussed:

- ❖ The first session included a review of the progress made in the adoption, activation and development of the Arab Digital Agenda. It highlighted the success achieved in preparing and adopting its first edition, followed by subsequent efforts in building partnerships and





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expanding and deepening it. This session acknowledged the tremendous efforts exerted over the previous years by ESCWA, the League of Arab States, the team and all partners from Arab countries and partner organizations.

- ❖ The second session of the meeting **included the presentation of two working papers on "Scheduling Implementation Priorities" and "Collaboration and Partnership Framework"**. Both papers were shared with the experts for their insight, opinions, and feedback regarding the various topics discussed.
  - The presentation of the first paper on **"Scheduling Implementation Priorities"** highlighted **the difficulty of applying a single standard or matrix of defined criteria to be applied to all proposed measures at once for implementing the Arab Digital Agenda at the current time**. Despite the existence of numerous methodologies and standards inspired by best practices in the field, the meeting concluded that it would be appropriate to place these **considerations under the purview of a working group consisting of representatives from the League of Arab States, ESCWA, and the team of experts** that played a key role in formulating the Agenda, its objectives, related discussions, and proposed procedures. The meeting suggested that these considerations be reviewed collaboratively and cooperatively by the working group, **with the primary contribution coming from the expert opinions**. The speaking experts also considered it appropriate **to expand the size of the team of experts** by adding new expertise to continue work in this area, in line with what is stated in this regard in the third chapter of the Arab Digital Agenda document.
  - The second paper addressed the **role that the Collaboration and Partnership Framework will play** in enhancing cooperation among various partners from all stakeholders interested in achieving specific goals of the Agenda. This involves participating in launching projects that implement the actions specified within the Agenda and work towards achieving its objectives.

The paper presented **the proposed mechanism** for evaluating and approving projects by the Arab Working Group (AWG) on the Arab Information and





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Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy. This evaluation utilizes the services of the information system currently under development within the Collaboration and Partnership Framework. This mechanism is based on three levels of evaluation and screening :

- (I) **Integrity and Accuracy of Fundamental Data Sets:** This is a fundamental requirement for the inclusion of a project within the framework. The team responsible for managing the Cooperation and Partnership Framework verifies the integrity, consistency, and seriousness of the provided data.
- (II) **Preliminary Assessment or First-Level Accreditation:** This is mandatory for projects seeking accreditation by the Arab Working Group (AWG) on the ICT Strategy. The Joint Technical Committee carries out this process based on a report submitted by the team responsible for managing the Collaboration and Partnership Framework, relying on a set of data including financial and tracking data.
- (III) **Advanced Evaluation:** This refers to the accreditation at the second level granted by the Arab Working Group (AWG) on the ICT Strategy. It is based on the team's evaluation and a minimum project score no less than 70% according to an **evaluation matrix that includes six criteria: transformative impact, leaving no one behind, inclusiveness, timeliness, no harm, and the scale of effort required.** The paper also proposed some formats of possible support for projects that have obtained accreditation from the team.

- Regarding the current list of project data, the paper indicated the existence of 76 current or new programs, initiatives and projects from **24 organizations or countries** within the information system. This is a positive response owing to the early correspondence prepared during the development of the Arab Digital Agenda. Preparation is underway for further correspondence with previous and potential partners from various stakeholders to enrich the framework with new projects and improve the data related to previously submitted projects.
- It was decided that the draft **working papers on "Scheduling Implementation Priorities" and "Collaboration and Partnership Framework", which were reviewed and discussed during the first and second sessions, should be sent**





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to the participating experts for their feedback. Their comments will be considered during the preparation of the final version of these two papers.

- ❖ In the context of future development, the third session announced the "Series of Expert Meetings on Enriching the Mechanisms for Assessing and Advancing Digital Development in the Arab region: Digital Technologies and Pressing Issues from the 2030 Agenda", to be held from November 2023 to mid-2024. **The first meeting of this series, starting at the end of November, will focus on digital technologies and issues related to the environment and climate change.**

Invitations for effective participation in these meetings have been extended to a wide range of experts from diverse backgrounds, working in different developmental sectors. This includes experts and focal points who contributed to the preparation of the Arab Digital Agenda, and those involved in the preparation of national digital development review reports. Everyone is invited to follow and engage in the work in this context. It was suggested to schedule these meetings in conjunction with other Arab meetings whenever possible to facilitate and ensure effective participation of experts.

The experts were requested to provide ESCWA with any textual recommendations or outputs for consideration and inclusion in the final report of this meeting, along with the two working papers, after receiving the experts' comments by no later than Sunday, November 19, 2023.

It was also agreed that this report and its attachments would be submitted to the Arab Working Group (AWG) on the Arab Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy, scheduled to be held in the first half of December 2023. ESCWA will present on this matter in the relevant agenda item during the meeting of the Arab Working Group (AWG), where the team will take appropriate action. Subsequently, it will be considered for referral to the Permanent Committee and the Executive Office of the Arab Telecommunications and Information Council of Ministers, in accordance with the mechanisms employed by the League of Arab States.

In conclusion, the participating experts commended the provision of the latest developments and all details regarding the achievements of the previous period and the way forward for activating the implementation of the Arab Digital Agenda 2023-2033. The attendees also emphasized the necessity of holding similar meetings to delve deeper into the discussion of some items that were





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quickly addressed, especially those related to direct and indirect financing, strategies, national digital agendas, national observatories for digital development indicators, among others.

