UNITED NATIONS
الإسكوا
ESCWA

ARAB HIGH-LEVEL
FORUM on WSIS
and 2030 AGENDA
for Sustainable Development
Beirut, 8-12 May 2017

REPUBLIC OF LEBANON
MINISTRY OF
TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Beirut Consensus on Transformation and Digital Economy
in the Arab Region Towards the Achievement
of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

We, the participants assembled in Beirut at UN House on 12 May 2017, at the closing of the Arab High-level Forum on WSIS and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

Emphasizing what was stated in the United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1 - Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, on the great potentials in the spread of information and communications technology (ICT) and global interconnectedness to accelerate human progress, bridge the digital divide and develop knowledge-based societies;[1]

Stemming from our deep appreciation for the international community's move towards the information society and digital economy, and following the renewal of the mandate of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) until 2025, to provide one of the inputs to the overall review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

Taking into consideration the continuous efforts of Arab countries to support and develop their ICT sector, where the number of Internet users in the Arab region would reach around 230 million users in 2018;

Strongly convinced that achieving sustainable development in the Arab region based on the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is the best guarantee for linking the citizens with their countries through providing a dignified and decent life for all;

Taking into account the distinct regional efforts made in the Arab region to build the information society, within the framework of the United Nations system, including UNESCWA, as well as the League of Arab States and other regional organizations;

We emphasize the importance of:

1. Continuation of Arab countries› efforts to narrow the digital divide and to build inclusive information societies and digital economies that place citizens at the centre of their development concerns and efforts, towards attaining sustainable economic growth, alleviating poverty and increasing prosperity.

2. Benefiting from the existing opportunities with the growing transformation, digital economy and Internet economy at the regional and global levels,

and the development of national digital agendas to promote social and economic development through strengthening research and development (R&D), innovation, entrepreneurship and capital investment in ICT to increase employment, as well as alleviation of poverty and inequality, and maximizing the added value of the macro-economy.

3. Formulation and development of digital strategies to achieve the SDGs in an integrated

manner, develop national plans for their implementation, promote awareness of the importance of digital technologies in achieving the global goals, and propose the mechanisms and business models for financing implementation initiatives and projects.

4. Support investment in the ICT infrastructure and development of its industries, and direct its services and products to meet the local demand and to reach exports, through strengthening the production of digital technology rather than its consumption only, and benefiting from it as a source of new employment opportunities.

5. Expand the development and use of digital technology applications, as a central pillar for the process of digital transformation towards smart sectors, in the Government, education, health, trade, transport, water and energy, to facilitate the lives of citizens in various segments of the society and achieve social inclusion.

6. Support the efforts aimed at achieving gender equality and empowering women through the use of technology, without conflicting with the laws and regulations of countries and while promoting the role of women in various areas.

7. Promote entrepreneurship, and support education, training and capacity building for all segments of the society, especially youth and women, to benefit from the digital economy and the development opportunities offered by ICTs.

8. Strengthen the competitiveness of sectors that are based on digital technology, reduce the constraints facing the expansion of the digital economy, and facilitate the regulations that promote access to new areas, such as Internet of Things, Cloud Computing, Big Data and Domain Names on the Internet, including the Arab Domain Names and other partnerships platforms and other transformative technologies, and follow up of UNESCWA on the development of disruptive technologies and the proposal of policies that are appropriate to Member Countries.

9. Participation of Governments and all stakeholders in the activities of UNESCWA that are framed under its recent program, ISDEHAR - Information Society and Digital Economy Hub for the Arab Region, and encourage the private sector to be a key partner.

10. Emphasize the importance of continued efforts by the UNESCWA and the League of Arab States to implement the AIGF2020 initiative for the development of the Arab Internet Governance Forum (ArabIGF) in its new mandate until 2020, for making the necessary improvements to its work process and directing it towards the SDGs.

We note the importance of organizing the Arab High-level Forum on WSIS and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at United Nations House in May 2017, and the request from UNESCWA to organize this forum periodically to serve as a regional platform for the exchange of experiences and lessons learned, and the request from regional and international organizations working in technology, particularly the League of Arab States and its specialized organizations, to continue to build partnerships to promote complementary and balanced work to optimize the benefits.

We thank the Republic of Lebanon for its efforts in supporting the Arab Internet Governance Forum in previous years and for sponsoring the Arab High-level Forum in 2017, and we encourage all Arab countries to participate actively in organizing these forums in the future.

From Beirut, we reaffirm our commitment to work together to implement the outcomes of WSIS and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to realize the future our people want.

---

1. UNGA Resolution 70/1, p. 5, para. 15. Available from https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1.