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DRAFT REPORT

Expert Group Meeting on National Digital Development Reports and Workshop on the UAE National Report
Dubai, 5-7 February 2019

Summary

As part of ESCWA preparations for the 2019 Arab Digital Development Report (ADDR), the Expert Group Meeting on National Digital Development Reports and the Workshop on the UAE National Report were held in Dubai, from 5 to 7 February 2019. . The events were attended by 34 participants from 11 Arab countries, namely from Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and UAE. 30 per cent of the attendees were women.

The national workshop was hosted by the UAE Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) on 5 February 2019, and was held in partnership with the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority and the Mohammed Bin Rashid (MBR) School of Government. The workshop aimed to bring together national focal points to prepare the UAE National Digital Development Report.

The regional meeting was hosted by and in partnership with the MBR School of Government and held on 6-7 February 2019. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the initial draft of the National Digital Development Reports, prepared by experts focal points, who relied on a guiding template that requires the collection of quantitative and qualitative information.

During both parts of the event, the national reports were overviewed based on the five-clusters structure suggested by the ESCWA guiding template. Experts and focal points discussed the main obstacles and challenges they are facing during the process, and a list of recommendations was compiled based on the focal points' experiences in the preparation of the reports for the countries of, namely for Iraq, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, and Syrian Arab Republic.

The documents related to this event are available through the web page: https://www.unescwa.org/meeting-national-digital-development-reports

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Introduction

1.   The Expert Group Meeting on National Digital Development Reports and Workshop on the UAE National Report were held in Dubai, from 5 to 7 February 2019, as part of ESCWA preparations for the 2019 Arab Digital Development Report (ADDR). The regional meeting was held in partnership with and hosted by the Mohammed Bin Rashid (MBR) School of Government, on 6 and 7 February 2019; and it was preceded by a national workshop, on 5 February 2019, that was hosted by the UAE Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), and held in partnership with the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority and the MBR School of Government.

2.   The event aimed to support the national focal points from the countries participating in the preparation of the ADDR in their efforts on the development of national digital development reports, based on a guiding template prepared by ESCWA. The template for national reports links between the action lines of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and includes the UN member states questionnaire on e-government survey (developed by UNDESA).

3.   The guiding template for the preparation of national digital development reports requires the collection of quantitative and qualitative information on national policies, initiatives, plans and measurement methods in the areas of digital development. The template includes five clusters, listed below, and follows a general programmatic framework entitled Information Society and Digital Economy Hub in the Arab Region (ISDEHAR), which links between the WSIS and sustainable development processes.

          (1) Strategic frameworks – WSIS and SDGs;
          (2) State – infrastructure, governance, legal environment;
          (3) Economy – production, competitiveness of ICT sector and economic growth;
          (4) Society – transformation of public administration and social inclusion;
          (5) Culture and media – cultural identity, linguistic diversity, and media.

4.   In both the national workshop and regional meeting, the five-clusters of the national reports were overviewed, as identified in the guiding template, and participants have addressed the main challenges faced by the national focal points in the preparation of their reports. The one-day national workshop has focused on collaborating with the national focal points towards the preparation of the UAE national digital development report; and the regional meeting has further discussed the preliminary first drafts of national reports prepared by experts/ focal points for seven countries, namely for Iraq, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, and Syrian Arab Republic. Participants in the meeting have exchanged viewpoints and work methodologies for collection of data and information and exchanged feedback that could assist in the finalization of national reports after the meeting with the aim of presenting national experiences during the Second Arab High-level Forum (AHLF) on WSIS and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Beirut, 19-20 March 2019).

I.   MAIN OUTCOME/ RECOMMENDATIONS

5.   Based on the participants discussions of the main challenges faced in the preparation of national reports, a number of proposed actions and recommendations were made, including the following:

          (a)   ESCWA should send a motivation letter to national counterpart institutions who are preparing the national reports to emphasize the importance of having a multi-sectoral team for data collection and drafting the reports, and the need to engage and coordinate with the various sectors and entities and to support the work of national focal points through providing the required resources and the right acknowledgement to their efforts.

          (b)   Engaging national entities working on the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development in the preparation and/or review of the national reports.

          (c)   Convene a national workshop to engage national experts and decision makers from various sectors in the review and enhancement of the report.

          (d)   Add an introductory section to each national report that includes the national situation and challenges faced by the ICT sector, in order to clarify the status in each country in terms of applied models, institutional frameworks, and areas of strength and opportunities.

(e)   Give the gender dimension importance in the preparation of national reports as much as possible through the collection, inclusion and analysis of sex-disaggregated data/information.

(f)   Cover the digital and e-government programmes as case studies in the related cluster, as it is considered of importance for showing successes and/or lessons learned.

(g)   Discuss success and failure stories in the national reports, as much as possible, and use boxes where appropriate.

(h)   Follow the style of national information society reports in the final versions of national report, without an explicit mentioning of the guiding template and its queries/statements.

(i)   Include the supporting references of all data/information included in the national reports, in footnotes and references, and include web links.

(j)   Limit the length of national reports to a maximum of 60 pages, using a single-spaced Times New Roman font of size 11 for English and Arial font of size 12 for Arabic.

(k)   The report can be either in Arabic or English, and the choice of language is at the discretion of the authors, although the regional report will be prepared in English in order to disseminate it at the international level, and then its final version will be translated into Arabic.

(l)   The translation to national reports from Arabic to English, and vice versa, to be available in both languages, was advisable for the purpose of wider national, regional and international dissemination.

(m)   The finalization of national reports before mid-March 2019 was considered essential in order to present selected parts at the Second AHLF, in March 2019.

(n)   Including the names of all contributors in the final report for acknowledgement of efforts.

(o)   Specifying and harmonizing the terminologies related to the topics of access and inclusiveness is needed, together with avoiding repetition of topics when the same activity is covered in different clusters.

6.   The main results of the national workshop were as follows:

(a)   Clarification of a number of issues related to the guiding template for the national digital development report under preparation for the UAE.

(b)   Identification of the main challenges faced by the report team in the collection of information that is required in the completion of the template.

(c)   Stipulating a plan for the completion of the national report following collaboration with a number of local entities that are expected to provide information to various sections of the template.

II.   PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

A.   WORKSHOP ON THE UAE NATIONAL DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT

7.   The UAE workshop was opened with brief statements by representatives of the partner institutions, namely the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority (FCSA), MBR School of Government, and ESCWA. The workshop was the first national workshop to be convened within the preparations for the Arab Digital Development Report (ADDR) and its related national reports, and it aimed to come up with a work plan on the development of the national report, with the aim of filling existing gaps in information and identifying national institutions that need to be contacted to fill the information gaps.

8.   During the workshop, interest was expressed in seeing the impact of national investments on development. The preparation of national reports as inputs to the ADDR was commended on, and it was indicated that most of the information needed for the UAE national report is available and that the partners are trying to engage more stakeholders and other institutions in the preparation of the report.

9.   A briefing was provided on the process for the development of the 2019 ADDR and the on-going national efforts on the preparation for national reports that would feed into the regional one. Around 15 Arab countries

have designated a team to implement the initiative while relying on a guiding template to assist on the preparation of the national reports. The template aims at supporting existing efforts in the region in the area of using ICT to serve the goals of sustainable development. An overview of the guiding template was also provided, to facilitate collaboration and support focal points on their efforts on the national report for the UAE.

10.   Thematic deliberations on the five main clusters of the guiding template extended over the one-day workshop, during which it was stressed that the added value of the national reports lies in linking the action lines of the WSIS process with the SDGs. The linkages include more than 200 linkage points, and in focusing on how working towards these action lines contributes to sustainable development through empowerment and inclusiveness of people. The template content is cross-cutting and covers the main processes that serve the global goals, including those serving building the information society. The content covers, among others, the landscape of infrastructure, the ICT sector and competitiveness in the sector as an economic sector, and digital transformation and access to meaningful content.

11.   Following discussions of the template's thematic clusters and the advice of ESCWA team on it as a guiding tool, the participants overviewed the draft national report under preparation by the focal points, means of work on the UAE national report, proposed the main collaborators on each of its components, identified the main challenges facing the team in the collection of data, and proposed few recommendations.

12.   With the guiding template encompassing the UNDESA survey on e-government, it was highlighted that the focal points in some countries on this component are also the focal points for the national report, and in all cases, the preparation of the UAE national report can engage the focal points and various stakeholders and entities. Furthermore, after the completion of the national report, it would be hoped that a national digital development plan would be developed within the framework of work at the national level and in partnership with all stakeholders.

13.   The identification of missing data was considered an opportunity to collaborate with other entities and stakeholders for filling the information gaps and on the measurement of indicators. Sharing research experiences would be important, together with the information on contributions to national development.

B. Expert Group Meeting On National Digital Development Reports

14.   The regional meeting has launched the process on developing national digital development reports within the preparation for the 2019 Arab digital development report (ADDR), and it was opened with welcome statements by representatives of the partner institutions, namely the MBR School of Government and ESCWA. The statements provided a background on the ongoing preparations for the regional report, the process for preparation of national reports by Arab countries contributing to the regional report, and a briefing on the programme of the meeting that allows the review of national reports by each of the five clusters/components.

1- Arab Digital Development Report and related National Reports

15.   The initiative for preparing the ADDR was based on the United Nations mandates related to the global processes on WSIS and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and seeks to link both processes for the aim of enhancing digital development in the Arab region to serve the primary aim of sustainable development. It was further highlighted that the objective of having profiling digital development in the Arab region goes beyond the preparation of national reports to the step of preparing national digital agendas that work towards digital development and transformation in the region.

16.   While the preparation of national reports would be based on the guiding template, the latter is not a survey but is rather a guiding kit to allow synergy and in the preparation of national inputs to the regional report and to harmonize the type of information collected, both quantitative and qualitative information, which is essential for the overall profiling of digital development in the Arab region. With further development of working process, the guiding template is envisaged to be an interactive digital form that encompass examples of initiatives from various countries.

17.   Reliance on the guiding template as a base line in the preparation of national reports was consider of importance for measurements; and the importance of developing a national agenda for digital transformation

was stressed. A national report that covers the various technology areas and their use for development could benefit national efforts as they cover the various indicators needed for assessing progress.

18.   During the regional meeting, the presentations and deliberations extended over six-sessions and have covered the five-clusters of the national reports and the guiding template, as well as the national reports prepared by the experts/ focal points for seven-countries, namely Iraq, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, and Syrian Arab Republic. The participants discussed the draft national reports, covering the aforementioned five thematic clusters, each in the assigned session; and the meeting have concluded with a review by focal points of the main challenges faced in preparing the national reports, which was relied upon in the compilation of the list recommendations showing in part I of this report.

19.   The first presentation was delivered by ESCWA team and covered the process of preparation for the ADDR 2019, and elaborations on the guiding template for national reports. The presentation has covered the following, among others:

    (a) Background and review of the process starting from the information society biennial profiling exercise (2013-2015) to the current process on digital development in the Arab region.

    (b) The process of development of the Arab Digital Development Report, the guiding template with an identified structure, the added value of the report from linking the WSIS action lines with the SDGs, and the selected theme for 2019 - empowerment and inclusion.

    (c) The guiding template for the national reports and its main structure that clusters the themes covered by the report into five-clusters: Strategic frameworks; Governance; Digital economy, employment, trade; Society; Culture and media. The structure also included appendixes that required filling tables with core indicators on the ICT sector, trade in ICT goods, ICT in education and ICT in government, and an appendix for the UNDESA member states questionnaire for the United Nations e-government survey, version 2020.

    (d) The gender considerations for the national reports were also addressed in the presentation, with a briefing on the necessity of reflecting the situation and needs of both women and men in the national reports with a description and numbers.

2- Presentations on Draft National Reports

20.   The national focal points of eight countries delivered presentations on the draft national reports under preparation, namely for the countries of Iraq, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Palestine, Oman, Palestine and Syrian Arab republic. Briefings on national status of digital development in two more countries were informally provide, namely for Kuwait and Tunisia.

21.   The delivered presentations were spread over the five sessions, with each covering one of the five clusters of the report, namely:

    (1) National strategic frameworks cluster: Covers national digital strategies and engagement in initiatives, including WSIS processes;

    (2) Infrastructure, governance and legal environment policy areas: This cluster covers ICT infrastructure, market structure and regulation, connectivity, Internet, fibreoptic network, and domain names; public-private and multisectoral partnerships, non-governmental organizations and engagement in Internet governance activities; and legal environment, privacy and data protection, countering misuse and preventing abuse of ICTs, e-transactions and online security.

    (3) Digital economy, employment, trade policy areas, covering: Building the ICT sector and related research and development, innovation and standardization, and government facilitations and investments; Economic impact of the ICT sector, its contribution to national economy and jobs, to trade in goods and services, e-trade, e-business, and e-employment;

    (4) Digital transformation and social inclusion policy areas, covering: Inclusive and empowering access to relevant information, knowledge, applications and content, and what it entails of affordability and different

uses in various sectors; Capacity building in the area of ICT for development and digital development, including in education, training and e-learning; and ICT applications for e-government and e-health.

(5)   Culture and media policy areas, which covers: Cultural identity and linguistic diversity; and media diversity, independence, pluralism, role in developing the information society, convergence between media and ICTs, and social media.

Iraq

22.   The presentation on the draft national report of Iraq covered the methodology used, challenges faced, and elaborated on the national situation under the five clusters of the report. The main challenges faced by the team included the absence of data, the long process for approvals and the changing policies and strategies. The national initiatives covered the Du3M initiative, telecommunications policy and strategic roadmap, the initiatives related to ICT and e-health, and the e-government programme.

23.   The Iraqi Ministry of Communications, Communications and Media Commissions (CMC), and the main mobile network operators and Internet service providers (ISPs) constitute the main infrastructure and regulatory landscape in Iraq. The presentation also covered the ICT infrastructure service types, connectivity, Internet architecture and domain name management, as well as the existing laws related to telecommunications, communication and information, investment, e-signature and e-transactions. The ICT sector engages and receives funding from various stakeholders and contributes to the national economy through projects that promote e-business, e-banking and e-employment. The main ICT applications are for e-government and e-health, and the country has increased convergence between the media and ICT sector.

Jordan

24.   The presentater on the national report of Jordan overviewed the work of the Jordanian Ministry of ICT and briefed on the report's five thematic clusters. The Ministry is working on e-transformation of government institutions through the e-government programme by establishing a fiber-optic network and supporting investments and development of the ICT sector. The significant growth of the ICT sector in the past two decades was coupled with supporting legal and legislative frameworks, including laws on telecommunications, right to access information, e-transactions, and e-crime..

25.   The presenter also highlighted the national public-private initiative entitled Reach 2025, and the general policy for ICT and postal sectors as the main national strategic frameworks, together with the ICT strategy and related action plans that support follow up on the outcome of WSIS. The telecom infrastructure is operated by many players, and its market includes the fixed and mobile phones and Internet access.The Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (TRC) regulates the telecom sector and promotes competition in the ICT sector and works in accordance with the general policy and issues regulatory decisions that govern the quality of services. Furthermore, a national broadband network is expected to connect the country with a fiber-optic high-speed network and is expected to be completed in 2021., It would widely connect all entities and support e-learning, e-health, and government services.

26.   The ICT sector activities in 2015 were mainly computer programming and computer wholesale.; The government supported the sector through tax exemptions and soft loans to its activities, and through funds for innovative businesses and entrepreneurships. Furthermore, e-employment is applied by the civil service bureau through a web-based system, and teleworking is enabled to all employees, both men and women and people with special needs. The main national steps taken for ensuring inclusiveness as part of digital transformation were highlighted, through affordable and wider access to digital services, in education, capacity building, ICT for development initiatives, e-government services, e-health.

Mauritania

27.   The presentation on the draft national report of Mauritania included briefings on the national digital strategies under implementation that have strengthened Internet capacity and set a legal framework for developing the information society and include an open data project and a programme for developing e-health.

28.   The overview of national ICT infrastructure, market and legal frameworks showed that three operators cover the mobiles, fixed phones and Internet services, with a mobile market reaching saturation, a decreasing fixed lines services, and a start in broadband services that are promising of more growth in the new future. In addition to existing national broadband projects that connect all public institutions, enhance telecom networks, and develop the broadband mobile services, the country will benefit from an international high-capacity fiber-optic network through joining the African Coast to Europe (ACE) project that operates within a public-private partnership framework and according to the open access principles.

29.   The domain names registry is through NIC-Mauritania and the Arabic version of the domain name was added in 2017 and its implementation is in the delegation phase; and a national framework for public-private partnerships (PPPs) was formalized to allow contracting with the private sector and is receiving proposals for further development of PPPs. The legal framework supports intellectual and industry property rights as well as development activities and innovation; and laws were issued related to the information society, cybercrime, protection of personal data, and e-transactions.

30.   A national strategy for the Internet and cybersecurity is under development in 2019 and specifies measures for protection implementation and raising public awareness. The strategy 2019-2023 is expected to bring about an enabling environment for developing cloud computing and e-applications in collaboration with the national operators and to develop ICT incubators, which in turn would support research, development, innovation and measurement in the ICT sector. The sector is expected to contribute to the national economy through enabling e-trade, e-business and e-employment.

31.   For digital transformation and wider social inclusion, the affordable access, digitization of services, and automation of systems were highlighted, together with capacity building and training programmes in the areas of ICT for education and development. National programmes for e-health and remote services were also covered. The digitization of national archives through makrim.org and other platforms help on preserving the cultural identify and traditions and promoting related research activities.

32.   Furthermore, the media sector was portrayed as diverse, easy to join - especially for newspapers where most online and traditional newspapers are privately owned. The government supports independent media through tax exemptions and national laws that guarantee freedom of expression and pluralism and promote content diversity and media professionalism, while hindering all forms of coercion, pressure and restrictions on journalists. The participation of Women in the media sector constitute around 40 per cent of employees, 12 per cent of which are editors.

Morocco

33.   On the national report for Morocco, the presentation briefed on the role of disruptive technologies in changing the economy, focusing on the next wave of disruption with artificial intelligence and machine learning. To face the national challenge of integrating the state, administrations, companies and people in the international knowledge economy, the national strategies for Digital Morocco were highlighted; and this has covered the priorities, initiatives, measures, and modalities of the 2013 strategy and its main achievements in e-government and regulatory frameworks. Also, the main three pillars of the 2020 national strategy were underlined, including: digital transformation, regional digital hub, and digital positioning of Morocco. The main actors in the ICT sector were profiled, together with the facts and figures on the national spread of related services.

Oman

34.   A presentation by the representatives of the Oman Information Technology Authority (ITA) overviewed the draft national report of Oman, elaborating on its process and content, from the planning phase, to team formation and work distribution, collection and analysis of information, and identification of the challenges faced. The briefing on the national strategic frameworks covered the digital strategies, including the eOman strategy and its strategic pillars; the e-transformation plan, and its stages and various national projects for e-government and e-services; the Broadband national strategy and its main pillars; and the 2019 Oman national strategy framework for the ICT sector that is aligned with the national vision 2040.

35.   The regulation of telecommunications and postal services in Oman lies with the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) that translates national policies to regulations, rules and guidelines aimed at the development of infrastructure and an enabling environment for investments. Four mobile operators provide mobile, voice and Internet services, and the ICT infrastructure is keeping pace with the latest technological developments – fifth-generation services were tested, the next generation wireless is underway, and a plan is set for the transition to IPv6. Furthermore, public-private and -multi-sectoral partnerships cover projects on artificial intelligence technologies for big data and Internet of things, and the development of a smart city platform for knowledge sharing, networking, collaboration, innovations, smart solutions, and raising awareness.

36.   Various of laws were put in place for building a trusted regulatory environment that is transparent and non-discriminatory, covering the protection of digital information and personal data, the industrial property rights, privacy, and e-transactions. Furthermore, national policies were set for an eGovernment architecture, and the governance of the cloud and cybersecurity, and a national computer emergency readiness team (CERT) works with renowned achievements. The national telecommunication companies, digital content firms, and standardization of research and development and innovation in the ICT sector were outlined, with elaboration on the Oman 2040 vision that is aimed increasing the contribution of the ICT sector to the national economy.

37.   The national programme for transformation and social inclusion and empowerment runs through discussion labs with all stakeholders from various sectors, examples of which include the Tanfeedh labs for planning, monitoring performance and amending laws and regulations and preparing roadmaps. Other examples include the Manafeth gateway for import and export activities, the Open Data Library and Majlis AlShura platform. National efforts for enhancing the e-learning environment and building capabilities early in the education system were highlighted, together with other efforts on e-government, e-services and e-health.

38.   The national efforts for developing digital content and preserving the national heritage includes the digital archiving of records and manuscripts and is through electronic document and records management systems that follow international standards and would be open and accessible for research. The Royal Opera House was given as an example in leading arts and culture. The media sector is regulated by the Ministry of Information through a number of legislations on printing and publishing, radio on television, artworks and on ethics of freedom and plurality of information. Policies exist for e-participation, social media and website and data hosting.

Palestine

39.   A presentation on the preparation of the draft national report of Palestine was made by representatives from the Ministry of Telecom and Information Technology (IT), noting that the a committee will revisit some areas and work with other public entities for the review of information and finalization of the report. The existing national strategies are for IT and the transition from analogue terrestrial television to digital television broadcasting, and the telecommunication services are managed by one company for the fixed lines, two mobile operators, and a number of Internet service providers. Two domain names are supported, namely the dot PS and its Arabic version, and there are efforts to launch the international domain name registered as dot falasteen.

40.   The presentation included facts and figures on the regulatory landscape of the sector; the cyber laws covered e-transaction, e-signature, and e-payment, and the draft laws cover cybercrime and the protection of personal data. A national CERT for the protection of online and network security online. The use of ICTs in various sectors have increased employment, and the use in e-education and training was highlighted, especially in the elementary and high-school levels and higher education. The ICT sector includes software production companies and general IT companies for software and hardware.

Syrian Arab Republic

41.   The presentation on the Syrian draft national report covered the existing national digital strategies, engagement in cooperation initiatives, ICT infrastructure and services, market structure, domain name management, partnerships and governance activities, the legal environment and laws, and efforts on developing the ICT sector and its economic impact. The current national strategies are the ICT strategy for socioeconomic development and the e-government strategy, and efforts are underway to bridge the digital divide between urban and rural areas through wider access, better bandwidth and access to useful content.

42. The ICT infrastructure/market structure includes two mobile operators, one public operator for fixed lines, and many providers of Internet services, around 28 providers. Access to Internet services and information was more needed during the war times, and in the past seven years, there has been an increase in access to broadband, with 35 per cent increase to fixed broadband and around 47 per cent increase in mobile broadband.

43. A universal trust fund was created for the aim of spreading broadband in rural areas and increasing connectivity and affordability; and an open access network provides IMS and LET and attempts to provide fiber-optics. Efforts are underway to move to the IPv6, and the Arabic version of dot Syria domain name was launched in 2016. At the time there has not been serious steps for enacting a law on partnerships, there has been participation in Internet governance activities since the establishment of a working group on domain names and Internet issues.

44. On the existing legal frameworks for the ICT sector, the laws on cybersecurity are being implemented whereas the law on protection of personal data and privacy was postponed. The laws covered digital signature and network service, telecom regulations, online communication and e-crime prevention, intellectual property, and e-transactions. The national efforts for building confidence and security include the use of e-signature, e-documents and e-transactions, the establishment of a national system for e-government transactions, and the efforts on an information security centre for online and network security.

45. For building the ICT sector and its impact on the economy, national policies covered science, technology and innovation, scientific research institutions and related funds, and intellectual property rights. Furthermore, a national agency was established to support small and medium enterprises, and laws were prepared to support investments and incubators. The main challenge faced in developing an enabling environment for the sector lies in the lack of indicators that reflect the situation and in turn help in assessing the needs.

3- *Discussion of challenges*

46. In the closing session, participants reviewed the main challenges faced in the preparation of national reports and proposed few recommendations that could support their efforts, such as a proposal was to send a letter from ESCWA to the national counterparts to emphasize the importance of the national reports and the need to allocate enough time to the work of focal points on the data collection and completion. The proposals included having the template as an interactive digital application that includes examples of initiatives from other countries.

47. The discussions of the challenges faced by focal points in the preparation of draft reports have identified the following as the main challenges:

(1) Lack of data and updated information, and weak responses from national entities on the requests for information needed for the report.

(2) Lack of gender- and sex-disaggregated data that is needed to reflect the participation of women in the ICT-related activities and in the ICT market.

(3) Limited timeframe for the preparation of the national report does not allow enough time for the collection of data and for the convening of a national workshop for engaging all stakeholders in the revision/finalization of the report.

(4) The collaboration mechanism followed makes it hard get information in a formal way, and it would have been easier to solicit inputs in an informal manner.

III.   PARTICIPATION

48. Participants in the event included experts in the area of digital development, national focal points from ESCWA member countries in charge of preparing the national digital development reports. 34 participants attended the event, with 30 per cent women. Participation in the national workshop included 10 experts/ focal points from the UAE. The participants in the regional meeting were 27 experts/focal points from 11 Arab countries, namely from Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, and UAE.

Annex I.
List of participants

Iraq

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Subject Matter Expert

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Mr. Mohammed Midani
Manager of Internet and Digital Content, MTIT

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Mr. Abbas Elshaikh
Technical Consultant, National Information Center
    (NIC)

Mr. Sudad Ismaeil
Manager of Coordination & Foreign Relations,
    NIC

Syrian Arab Republic

Mr. Ibaa Oueichek
Adviser to the Minister, Ministry of
    Communications and Technology (MCT)

Ms. Rania Bou Saad
Director of Information & Administrative
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