



ESCWA
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Seminar on Legal and Regulatory Requirements for a Sustainable Knowledge Society in the Arab Region

Beirut, 19-20 December, 2012

Information Note

1. Background

In order to promote the development of the knowledge society and high technology sector in the Arab region, a modern, regionally harmonized approach to cyber legislation is needed. Governments, international organizations, the private sector and NGOs, are each important stakeholders in this process. Since 2009, ESCWA has been in the process of implementing a project entitled “Regional Harmonization of Cyber Legislation to Promote the Knowledge Society in the Arab World”¹. The project aimed at enhancing regional integration and strengthening the capacity of member countries to build a strong and sustainable ICT sector through the development of appropriate legal and regulatory structures. Facilitating the growth of this sector promises significant benefits for a variety of social and economic issues. For example, the capacity for ICTs to promote literacy, contribute to the empowerment of women and develop new opportunities for engagement of marginalized groups in society are all potential outcomes of a modernized approach to cyber legislation.

Within the framework of this project, ESCWA developed four reports providing an update of the status of cyber legislation at the sub-regional level². Additionally, the project produced a set of directives designed to assist Arab countries in the development of national cyber laws and to harmonize cyber legislation on a regional level. The developed directives cover the following six areas: personal data protection; e-communication and freedom of expression; e-signature and e-transactions; e-commerce and consumer protection; intellectual property; and cybercrimes. This project also included the promotion and dissemination of the cyber legislation directives, the provision of related advisory services and the organisation of capacity building workshops to train relevant individuals on their application at the national level. To that end, ESCWA organized two regional workshops and three national workshops on the ESCWA cyber legislation directives and it provided advisory to five member countries till the end of October 2012. The project’s main output was the ESCWA Cyber Legislation Directives which provide a framework for the development of harmonized ICT legislation and regulations and thus contributes to the creation of an enabling environment for the growth of the ICT sector and for building knowledge society in the Arab World. Given the economic development challenges facing the ESCWA region, growth in this globally competitive sector has the potential to provide vital strength to the employment market. Because the technology sector is constantly evolving, it is critical for legal and regulatory structures to continuously adapt.

The Seminar on Legal and Regulatory Requirements for a Sustainable Knowledge Society in the Arab Region focuses on the sustainable path forward for cyber legislation in the region in order to enable continuing growth. By promoting competitiveness and economic diversity, these improvements will help remedy serious problems affecting the economies of the region, namely brain drain, capital drain, unemployment and low productivity. The Seminar will focus on mechanisms for promoting the continuing sustainability of the cyber legislation modernization process, with emphasis on the ESCWA Cyber Legislation Directives.

The seminar will target participants chosen from the public sector, private sector and academia in the ESCWA member countries and will endeavour to include participants from all Arabic-speaking countries. It will also

¹<http://isper.escwa.un.org/FocusAreas/CyberLegislation/Projects/tabid/161/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

² The reports were based on the template where two reports covered the Gulf region, one covered North Africa and one the Levant region.

bring together regional and international experts in the field of cyber legislation to show the experience of other regions and to present new features of cyber legislation that fulfil the needs of emerging trends of ICT sector, ICT applications and services. Presentations will feature the cyber legislation virtual network, online collaborative tools, and selected topics focusing on emerging issues in the field.

2. Objectives

The main objective of the Seminar is to discuss a regional legal and regulatory framework for building knowledge society in the Arab region. This regional framework constitutes an important output of the ESCWA project on Cyber Legislation. Additionally, the seminar will review the results of the harmonization process at the national and regional levels and provide recommendations for sustainability. To promote this goal, the Seminar will include content on a variety of emerging issues. These include, but are not limited to: the legal implication of new ICT applications, advances in global and regional harmonization efforts, and selected case studies from regionally representative countries.

The Seminar will also aim at providing a platform for sharing experiences and best practices of the participants, discussing the requirements for utilizing available information to create suitable sustainability frameworks and models on a going-forward basis.

3. Topics

Following is a list of proposed topics of the Seminar on Legal and regulatory requirements for sustainable knowledge society in the Arab Region:

1. An overview of ESCWA's project "Regional Harmonization of Cyber Legislation to Promote the Knowledge Society in the Arab World" covering the main outcomes and results;
2. Framework for the harmonization of cyber legislation in the Arab region, including capacity building efforts;
3. Introduction of the cyber legislation virtual network and portal;
4. Success Stories and case studies related to the development and the harmonization of cyber legislation in the region;
5. Adaptability of the cyber legislation harmonization directives to emerging trends and applications;
6. Emerging trends in protection of personal data, privacy and cybercrime in the Arab region and worldwide.

4. Outcomes

The Seminar's expected outcomes are:

1. Recommendations for continued sustainability of the cyber legislation harmonization process, in the context of regional and global models.
2. Raised awareness of the collaborative tools delivered by the harmonization project to facilitate continued substantive interaction on the topic.
3. Analysis of selected new topics in the field of cyber legislation in the region.
4. Discussion of recently released research by international organizations on the topics on cyber legislation and cybercrime.

5. Participation and Registration

Participants in the Seminar will include, bar associations, professionals from government ministries of ICT and justice, academia and experts from the private sector in the ESCWA region who have been involved in cyber legislation with expertise in ICT.

Participants are requested to register for the meeting by filling out the registration form and returning it by email, to escwa-ictd@un.org and idlebi@un.org before 15 November 2012.

6. Organization, venue and dates

The Seminar is organized by the ICT division at ESCWA and will be held during 19-20 December, 2012 at Beirut, Lebanon.

It will include a number of general presentations and case studies from selected ESCWA member countries on the above topics as well as discussion sessions focusing on cyber legislation in the ESCWA region.

7. Working language

Arabic and English are the working languages of the Seminar. Simultaneous interpretation between both languages will be provided.

8. Travel and Accommodation

All participants are expected to inquire on their visa requirements to Lebanon and secure one ahead of their anticipated travel date. In this regard, ESCWA can provide assistance to Palestinian and Iraqi participants upon request.

ESCWA will cover the travel costs and daily subsistence allowance (DSA) of one participant from invited organizations; priority will be given to the Least Developed Countries in the ESCWA region.

9. Additional information

Further information and documentation is available at the following URL:

Inquiries and requests for additional information should be addressed to:

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