

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCIL**

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/ICTD/2006/2
12 June 2006
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

REPORT

**WORKSHOP ON INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY
POLICYMAKING IN ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES
BEIRUT, 2-4 MAY 2006**

Summary

The Workshop on Information Communication Technology (ICT) Policymaking in ESCWA Member Countries (Beirut, 2-4 May 2006) constitutes an activity under the Development Account project entitled Capacity-building for ICT Policymaking, that is being implemented jointly by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the regional commissions of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The Workshop was attended by 26 participants from nine member countries, mainly from the public sector, and covered a number of subjects, including as follows: (a) methodologies for formulating national ICT strategies for development; (b) formulating sectoral policies for an integrated knowledge society; (c) implementing strategies and plans of action; (d) measuring, analysing and evaluating the impact of ICT policies; and (e) designing partnership schemes towards the knowledge society. Additionally, it included country experiences in the area of formulation and implementation of ICT policies and strategies; and discussion sessions related to institutional issues, the economic dimension of ICT policies and strategies, and the partnerships needed among the various stakeholders in the ESCWA region for developing the information society.

The Workshop resulted in the formation of an initial network of ICT policymakers aimed at sharing experiences and knowledge in the field of ICT strategies, and their implementations. Moreover, this network is set to discuss topics and issues of concern for the region through an online forum managed by ESCWA. Furthermore, the participants agreed on a number of recommendations, including developing a mechanism for the implementation of regional projects; identifying models for the formulation of ICT strategies and plans of actions; disseminating best practices and lessons learned in the field of ICT policymaking; harmonizing ICT indicators; and building a regional database for ICT indicators.

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Introduction

1. The Workshop on Information Communication Technology (ICT) Policymaking in ESCWA Member Countries (Beirut, 2-4 May 2006) follows up on the outcome of the Tunis Phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and supports the process of developing an inclusive information society in the ESCWA region.

2. It constitutes an activity under the Development Account, entitled Capacity-building for ICT Policymaking, that is being implemented jointly by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the regional commissions of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). That Project, which was initiated in late 2005 and extends until the end of 2006, falls within the efforts to link ICTs with the internationally agreed development goals, particularly the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Specifically, it provides training, technical assistance and advisory services to decision-makers in developing countries and countries with economies in transition in order to develop sustainable ICT policies and national strategies, and integrate them within the national development programmes and strategies of each country. Additionally, the Project aims to establish a network of ICT stakeholders and policymakers in order to promote bilateral, regional and international cooperation.

3. Within that context, the Workshop aimed at the following:

(a) Providing ICT policymakers in the region with a framework and a guide for designing and developing national ICT strategies that target the realization of the information society and the knowledge-based economy;

(b) Proposing practical methodologies for implementing such strategies and for evaluating their impact;

(c) Promoting cooperation among ESCWA member countries in the areas of policy, strategy and regulation of ICTs by establishing a network of ICT stakeholders and policymakers for sharing experiences and knowledge, thereby leading to capacity-building.

I. RECOMMENDATIONS

4. As a result of the group discussions that took place during the three-day Workshop, which was summarized in the final discussion and closing sessions, the participants agreed on the following:

(a) To establish a network of ICT stakeholders and policymakers for knowledge-sharing aimed at discussing policy issues related to ICTs and other issues of concern for the region, and at participating in the follow-up activities of this project. Initially, the participants of the Workshop are set to constitute the kernel of this network; and ESCWA, in cooperation with the members of the network, will subsequently invite other policymakers from the region to join this network;

(b) To involve the network of ICT policymakers in the discussions and outcomes of relevant ESCWA workshops of high priority for the region, particularly the planned online workshops on e-government and digital Arabic content;

(c) To develop a mechanism for the implementation of regional projects aimed at building the information society in the Arab region, especially those projects that were agreed during the preparation for WSIS and that have been included in the Regional Plan of Action for Building the Information Society;

(d) To focus future themes of cooperation for the network of ICT policymakers on topics of de-regulation and de-globalization as driving mechanisms, "broadband-for-all" initiatives, information technology (IT) business cases, ICT demand and supply analysis, consumer advocacy, monitoring of strategies with specific indicators, and developing models for regional cooperation in the ICT sector;

(e) To formulate a regional ICT strategy and regional ICT goals aimed at achieving the MDGs and at monitoring progress made towards the realization of those Goals at the national and regional levels through a harmonized and regional set of ICT indicators that reflect the different sectors and market forces;

(f) To develop a regional database for the internationally agreed set of indicators for measuring the information society, and a regional set of indicators related to the attainment of the ICT development goals for the region;

(g) To establish partnerships among the various stakeholders for building the information society in the region, and to initiate joint endeavours with the participation of the private and other sectors of the economy. This needs high-level coordination for the identification of the stakeholders at the national and regional levels. ESCWA could assist in this coordination, and highlight best practices and lessons learned;

(h) To seek funding for the implementation of regional ICT projects that help to foster cooperation in the Arab region. This requires the network of ICT policymakers to address the issues of collaboration with existing funding agencies in the region, and establishment of an ICT Trust Fund;

(i) To clarify the role of stakeholders as well as the leadership of each initiative or project in the plan of action of the ICT strategy, particularly given that the institutional dimension is a determining factor for the successful implementation of such strategies;

(j) To promote commitment at the highest political and institutional levels, which represents another determining factor for the successful implementation of an ICT strategy. Within that context, ICT policymakers must secure the support and commitment of the authorities at the highest political level for the national ICT strategy, given its social and economic impacts;

(k) ESCWA needs to increase its advisory services to its member countries for formulating, developing and implementing national ICT strategies and for monitoring their progress. ESCWA has an important role in fostering interaction between countries, compiling and summarizing best practices, conducting training workshops on collecting and analysing data for ICT indicators, developing a regional database on ICT indicators, and carrying out studies on topics of interest and priority for the region.

II. DISCUSSION TOPICS

5. The Workshop addressed a number of subjects, including as follows: (a) methodologies for formulating national ICT strategies for development; (b) formulating sectoral policies for an integrated knowledge society; (c) implementing strategies and plans of action; (d) measuring, analysing and evaluating the impact of ICT policies; and (e) designing partnership schemes towards the knowledge society. Additionally, it included discussions on the institutional issues related to the formulation and implementation of ICT policies and strategies; the social and economic dimensions of these policies and strategies; and the partnerships needed between the various stakeholders in the region for the development of the information society. The topics addressed in the Workshop sessions are summarized and set forth below.

A. ANALYSING ICT POLICIES AND STRATEGIES IN THE ESCWA REGION

6. An analysis of the ICT policies and strategies in the ESCWA region, which was presented in the first session, reviewed the different methodologies developed and available in literature, and considered a framework for the review of the declared ICT strategies and their implementations. Such a framework differentiates in a top-down approach between policy objectives, strategic priorities, key initiatives and specific actions. While doing so, the key issues were identified, including the resources made available for strategy implementation, risk analysis, selection of clear indicators, achieving targets and monitoring progress.

7. Despite the international commitment of ESCWA member countries to build the information society through the WSIS process, the analysis of their e-strategies reveals the following:

(a) Most countries have still not built comprehensive e-strategies based on a sound logical framework with clear policy objectives and strategic priorities, including monitoring and evaluation of the achievements of targets;

(b) Most of the declared e-strategies are seen in terms of access rather than of usage, without clear strategic drives for accelerating ICT usage for the population at large and for businesses;

(c) The core aspect of developing infrastructure is still lacking a comprehensive approach that allows the identification of sources for financing such development, including how to provide universal access schemes. With the exception of Internet service providers (ISPs), the infrastructure sector is still being led by public and private oligopolies, with unclear regulatory frameworks to foster private sector investments and the necessary accompanying public investments;

(d) The ICT sector has seldom been addressed in ESCWA member countries as one built on developing local demand and export; and no major research centre or production premise of large ICT multinational dimension has been implemented in any member country. The efforts have been devoted only in terms of fostering the implementation of commercial units of such multinationals. Equally, the e-strategies have not sufficiently addressed the ICT sector as essentially based on developing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), thereby creating the necessary and friendly regulatory, financing and incubating environment;

(e) While most member countries have focused on e-government in their strategies, the focus is mainly on publishing information and one-way communication. The e-strategies still lack the necessary drive for pushing e-government applications towards interaction with citizens and businesses and for better delivery of services, which necessitates addressing all other aspects from access to engagement;

(f) In the areas of e-education and e-health, the e-strategies of ESCWA member countries are still timid, even in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). These two sub-sectors offer tremendous opportunities in terms of fostering local demand, indicating clear commitment of country strategies towards the knowledge society and serving the population.

B. ICT STRATEGIES IN ESCWA MEMBER COUNTRIES

8. The second and third sessions addressed the ICT strategies in selected ESCWA members, namely, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. A summary of each of these national experiences is presented below.

9. The Egyptian experience was presented under the title “Challenges and opportunities of the information society in Egypt” (in Arabic), which highlighted the effective role of ICT tools in the development process, and pointed out to the challenges that face the Government and decision-makers within their efforts to benefit from the ICT opportunities. These opportunities arise from the role of ICT applications in terms of increasing productivity and making information available to decision-makers. However, many challenges counterbalance the efforts towards development, namely, the scientific and technological divides; the poverty and education divides; and the gaps that exist at the legislative, digital-content and literacy levels. Within that context, the vision in Egypt aimed at establishing partnerships among the Government, private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for the implementation of the national ICT strategy. Additional challenges still exist in terms of defining the means for ensuring the sustainability of implemented projects, raising public awareness, training the working force and supporting SMEs.

10. Under the title “National ICT strategy for Syria: methodology, outcome and implementation”, the experience of the Syrian Arab Republic covered seven aspects of that strategy, namely, vision, process, objectives, strategic tracks, challenges and obstacles, plan of action, and the implementation and follow-up for each of the steps. The presentation elaborated on the general guiding principles and focused on the implementation of the restructuring programme in the telecom sector.

11. The preparation of the ICT e-strategy of Lebanon was a collective effort among the Ministry of Telecommunications, the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform, the United Nations Development Programme (Lebanon) and various ICT stakeholders who were engaged in a collaborative process to prepare the strategy. Entitled "Lebanese ICT strategy: infrastructure and regulator perspectives", the presentation indicated that national priority projects were identified in the process of preparation of the implementation plan. This resulted in the arrangement of the e-strategy into the following tracks: infrastructure and national policies as part of the enabling environment; ICT as a production sector; ICT for human capacity development; ICT for social development; ICT for business and economic development; and e-government. The work of the Ministry of Telecommunications towards achieving its part of the first track resulted with reaching three important goals. The first of these goals consisted of offering a DSL service, in partnership with the private sector represented by ISPs and data service providers, by decreasing the tariffs both of international bandwidth connecting ISPs to the World Wide Web and of international telephony by up to 60 per cent. The second and third achieved goals are inherent in terms of defining the telecommunications policy paper and the Telecom Regulatory Authority (TRA), together with identifying the basic pillars of the policy paper and responsibilities and mandates of the TRA.

12. The Jordanian experience, which was presented under the title "Investing in the future: Jordan's leadership drive change", outlined the importance of ICTs and the commitment of Jordan's leadership towards investing in the ICT sector. The presentation highlighted the vision of transforming Jordan to an ICT regional hub, which results from the ICT policy statement and strategy. The Government adopted and implemented the strategy that led to legislative reform, increasing investment in the education sector and infrastructure, and the launching of several e-initiatives. The presentation shared the various successes that have already been attained in Jordan, and considered that the main objectives for each country can be encapsulated in a vision and a will to invest in future generations in order to reap benefits. While Government leadership and commitment were considered the key cornerstone for the success of the process, the partnership between the public and private sectors and the participation of civil societies were believed to be crucial for achieving those objectives.

13. The ICT policy statement of Saudi Arabia highlighted the main efforts, achievements and future directions of the ICT sector in that country. The presentation covered the policies adopted by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology aimed at developing the regulatory framework, ICT infrastructure, e-applications and digital content. Moreover, it indicated the policies that are currently being pursued for building human capacity, providing safety and security, developing the ICT industry and boosting investments. In the light of the various social, economic and technological changes, the policy directions were considered to be dynamic and of an evolving nature. The National Information Technology Plan (NITP) was developed for Saudi Arabia to cover major IT areas and to include a number of goals, policies, projects and legislations; and its implementation has been planned according to priority areas.

14. The Palestinian experience related to the use of specific websites for making them widely available, namely, the State Information Service, the Palestinian National Information Centre, the International Press Centre and the Electronic Library.* The presentation highlighted the importance of information dissemination, classification, archiving and publication for the Palestinian Authority, and its significant role in supporting the Palestinian community. The importance of disseminating information was underscored through the example of a website, targeting youth and women in remote areas, that provides the basic information needed for starting small productive projects aimed at developing rural communities and creating employment. Additionally, the website provides access to training packages and various economic feasibility studies, and technical cooperation references that help in building those capacities and skills that match the needs of the job market.

15. The formulation of the national information strategy for Yemen was presented with a briefing on the steps that are being followed in that process. The first steps included project preparation and adoption by the Parliament as part of its national five-year plan; and the establishment of the national committee entrusted

* These are available at: State Information Service - <http://www.sis.gov.ps>, National Information Center - <http://www.pnic.gov.ps>, the International Press Center - <http://www.ipc.gov.ps>, the Electronic Library - <http://www.sis.gov.ps>.

with the preparation of the strategy document, which is directed by the National Information Centre and comprises representatives from various governmental bodies and the private sector. The presentation covered the project implementation phases from the assessment of the situation and status of the information sector in Yemen to the undertaking of comprehensive national field surveys. After reviewing the assessment document, the national committee prepared the draft national information policies and strategies, and the various sector-specific information strategies. Currently, the national committee is in the stage of reviewing the final document of the national information strategy as a concluding step before its adoption, and is in the process of developing the plans of action for the implementation of this strategy.

C. STRATEGIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ICT SECTOR

16. The fourth session addressed the strategies for the development of the ICT sector and included two presentations, entitled “Egypt information technology industry strategy” and “Enhancing telecom infrastructure, services and policies”.

17. The Information Technology Industry Development Agency (ITIDA) in Egypt was established in 2004 for the promotion of the IT industry with the following mandates: (a) to drive the development of the industry to the international market level, in cooperation with the private sector; (b) to support the intellectual property rights on software and databases; and (c) to develop and regulate the electronic signature. The first presentation profiled the national IT strategy that was developed by experts from the private, public and academic sectors, and by the Ministry of Telecommunication. This strategy aims to transmit the benefits of ICT tools and applications to the communities and citizens, and to develop the national industry for ICT exports. Additionally, the presentation included an assessment of the ICT sector in Egypt; a vision for its development and monitoring; a description of the relationship between the strategy objectives and the national economic development plan; and an identified line of business, projects and programmes that can enable the realization of the national objectives and boost ICT exports.

18. A joint activity between ESCWA and ALCATEL that targets the development of the ICT sector in the region was then presented in two parts, thereby showing a common perspective for enhancing the telecommunication infrastructure, services and policies in the region. The first part summarized an ESCWA publication, entitled “Enhancing telecommunication infrastructures, services and policies in ESCWA member countries” (in Arabic), that illustrated the best practices and viable models along three major levels, namely: policies, technology infrastructure and services, and business models. The second part focused on the efforts of Alcatel towards bridging the digital divide and its cooperation with ESCWA and other institutions through Alcatel’s Digital Bridge Initiative. A joint Alcatel-ESCWA study on developing broadband access in the Middle East will be conducted in cooperation with regional ICT policymakers, given that its subject is central to the future development of the ICT sector in the region. The focus of this part was on the need for a favourable regulatory environment as an essential prerequisite for fostering the development of broadband access. Within that context, the experience of France was described whereby broadband access has reached almost 10 million out of a total of 25 million households.

D. SECTORAL ICT STRATEGIES

19. The fifth session covered sectoral ICT strategies in the ESCWA region, namely, the ICT strategy in higher education in the Syrian Arab Republic, the e-commerce initiative in Lebanon, and the process for the development and implementation of e-government strategies.

20. The presentation on the ICT strategy in higher education in the Syrian Arab Republic focused on the main difficulties and challenges in the higher education system, particularly the large number of students and the incompatibility of the curriculum with the market needs. Moreover, it showed the benefits of ICT applications in higher education and described the infrastructure projects that have been implemented during the past year, including the Syrian Higher Education and Research Network (SHERN), and connection to the Euro-Mediterranean infrastructure projects (GEANT and GRID). Part of the presentation focused on the human resource development in ICT and such major institutions as faculties of information technology, the Higher Institute of Applied Science and Technology (HIAST) and the intermediate IT institutions.

Additionally, it summarized the ICT aspects in the tenth strategy for higher education, namely, the objectives, policies and projects related to ICT.

21. Having the proper legal and administrative infrastructure is mandatory, albeit not sufficient, to develop the e-commerce sector in Lebanon. The statistics shared with participants highlighted the current situation of e-commerce in Lebanon. Based on the data presented, a discussion was initiated towards well-developed incentives to promote e-commerce and other related and complementary strategies. The intervention, entitled "Current legislative framework for e-transactions in Lebanon" (in Arabic), included a briefing on the current legislative framework for electronic transactions in Lebanon, namely, the draft decree prepared for regulating such e-transactions as e-signatures, e-commerce, cyber crimes, security and protection of personal information, e-banking and protection of the rights of signing parties.

22. E-government is probably the largest organizational transformation project of many economics. It is on the agenda of most countries in the ESCWA region and includes within its scope formulating national vision, planning strategy, developing infrastructure, building capabilities, redesigning processes, delivering e-services and managing technologies. A presentation on "E-government journey: from formulating strategies to implementing plans of action" offered a strategic framework to guide the development of e-government; presented a road map for implementing e-government that highlighted main challenges; discussed measurements of e-government; looked into future e-government evolution; and recommended the development of a regional e-government observatory for the region.

E. MONITORING AND EVALUATING ICT STRATEGIES

23. The sixth session addressed the subject of monitoring and evaluating ICT strategies by measuring indicators and benchmarking plans of action.

24. The presentation, entitled "Measurement and analysis of the impact of ICT policies" (in Arabic), stressed the need for measuring and monitoring ICT strategy implementation. It outlined the importance of the periodic evaluation according to different criteria by ensuring the complementarities among its different components and the integration of its different levels. The presentation emphasized the need to identify assumptions of the ICT strategy, which includes the prerequisites, the special conditions and the challenges; described how these assumptions could be identified and formulated; and focused on the importance of indicators in the process of ICT strategy evaluation. Subsequently, the discussion concentrated on the definition of an indicator, its characteristics, its different forms, the formulation of indices and indicators, and the evaluation of those indicators.

25. The presentation on "Information society measurement: policies and indicators" focused on the role indicators play in terms of providing evidence for the evaluation of current policies and the development of future ones. It addressed the make-up of national ICT policies for poverty reduction and economic growth. Drawing on the core list of ICT indicators by the Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, it also addressed how such indicators can be used for monitoring the progress, measuring the output and assessing the impact of national ICT policies targeting growth. Within that context, a case study of a very popular national ICT policy within the Arab countries was presented, namely, "PC for every home".

26. Several countries have exerted efforts aimed at articulating and structuring e-strategies without linking such efforts to evaluation and monitoring of the implementation and costing plans. The presentation on "Benchmarking plan of action" emphasized the quantitative elements of performance indicators and deliverables, and proposed a methodology for their application.

F. COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP

27. The seventh session dealt with the subject of cooperation and partnerships needed for the fulfilment of the objectives of ICT policies and strategies.

28. In an ever-changing world with global trade overtaking national development, it is necessary to re-examine ICT strategies in terms of front-end planning constraints in order to provide continuity of global integration while sustaining priorities of national concerns. This process is referred to as deglobalization.

The presentation on “Deglobalizing pan-Arab ICT strategies in terms of international development” described this concept, its importance for the region and methodologies that could be followed for its application with some case studies.

29. The presentation, entitled “Multi-stakeholder partnership for the region”, highlighted the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSPs) for building the information society, and the roles of different stakeholders in the public and private sectors, civil society, and regional and international organizations. The presentation showed how international summits, especially WSIS and the Millennium Summit, emphasized the role of MSPs for socio-economic development. Moreover, that presentation described the challenges for ensuring the sustainability of these partnerships, and discussed case studies of MSPs at the local, regional and international levels, as well as the challenges for MSPs in the ESCWA and Arab regions.

30. A review of the Development Account project on Capacity-building for ICT Policymaking was provided in a presentation, entitled “Building a regional ICT policymakers network”. The review outlined the main objectives of building sustainable capacities in developing countries to formulate and implement national ICT policies, e-strategies and programmes aimed at harnessing the potential of ICTs for promoting development. The need for a regional ICT network of policymakers was stressed in order to galvanize partnership formation, thereby increasing the chances of successful ICT policy formulation and implementation; and to promote collaboration and coordination in developing and implementing a regional strategy. Such a network could become a driver of success in the execution of activities of the project, as well as knowledge sharing, by facilitating access to leading experts in the region and linking to similar networks from other regions. It could act as a community of practice on ICT policymaking for the region by providing/updating information on ICT policies and strategies in the region for posting on a dedicated website, issuing a monthly electronic bulletin and activating an e-forum on the subject.

G. GROUP DISCUSSIONS

31. The group discussions mainly covered the following three subject areas: the institutional coordination for the implementation of national ICT strategy; the economic dimension of ICT policies and strategies; and the partnerships needed among the different stakeholders in the region to develop the information society.

32. Participants emphasized the importance of the institutional dimension in the process of formulating and implementing ICT policies and strategies, and stressed the need for commitment at the highest political and institutional levels in order for these strategies to be adopted and implemented with a sound plan of action. The considered process requires a significant amount of coordination in order to be sustainable and to lead to the realization of the target objectives. Participants emphasized the need for the establishment of a high-level committee for the coordination between ministries, institutions, private sector and NGOs concerned by the ICT strategy.

33. During the process of formulating strategy, the team elaborating the ICT policies and strategies must be responsible for the coordination between the stakeholders and for creating partnerships among them, particularly given that the process requires consolidated coordination and that ICT strategies involve many economic and social sectors.

34. Addressing the economic dimension of ICT policies and resource allocation, participants considered that the social and economic dimensions needed to be clear within those strategies, and reflect their effectiveness and integration in the various fields of the economy. Moreover, there was a strong need to conduct necessary sectoral economic studies that help to define the challenges faced by each sector, and to raise public awareness on the subject.

35. Best practices and models of partnership for building the information society will be helpful for different ESCWA member countries and for establishing partnerships among the different stakeholders at the national and regional levels. There is also eagerness to develop mechanisms for the implementation of regional projects.

III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. VENUE AND DATES

36. The Workshop was held at the United Nations House in Beirut from 2 to 4 May 2006.

B. OPENING

37. Mr. Yousef Nusseir, Chief of the ICT Division of ESCWA, delivered the opening speech and highlighted the main objectives of the Workshop aimed at building regional capacity in the formulation and development of ICT policies and strategies, and the establishment of plans of action and methodologies for their implementation and subsequent evaluation.

38. Indicating that ICT is one of the four main priorities of work of ESCWA, Mr. Nusseir emphasized the regional need to focus on those new technologies that constitute a main pillar for the development of a knowledge-based economy, which requires bridging the digital divide at the regional and subregional levels.

39. Moreover, he stated that the indicators of the information society and knowledge-based economy in the region are lower than half of the world average; and the situation calls for revising the way in which the region deals with ICTs and trying to improve the ICT indicators, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Subsequently, the formulation of national and regional ICT policies and the design of suitable plans of action are essential for the development of ICT in the region and the improvement of its indicators. Despite the existing national specificities and different experiences in the region, there are common guidelines for the formulation of ICT policies. The exchange of best practices in the use of ICTs could help the complementarities in the region and could lead to the realization of the information society.

40. Mr. Nusseir further highlighted the questions that need to be posed within the framework of Arab ICT policies and strategies, namely, those related to the priorities and development in terms of promoting labour force capacities, infrastructure, industrial approaches, scientific research, Arabic content on the Internet, development of Arabic domain names, cyber legislation and bridging the digital divide.

41. Emphasizing the importance of regional cooperation on ICT policies and strategies, Mr. Nusseir indicated that ESCWA intends to build a network of experts and ICT decision-makers to be the basis for a regional framework for cooperation between the various stakeholders and help the region progress towards the regional information society that meets the national needs and promotes regional efficiency.

C. PARTICIPANTS

42. The Workshop was attended by 26 participants, largely from the public sector and experts from academic centres, from nine ESCWA members, namely, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. The list of participants is contained in annex I of this report.

D. AGENDA

43. Presentations and discussions were made over seven sessions and covered a number of themes. The agenda of the Workshop is summarized and set forth below:

1. Opening;
2. Analysis of ICT policies and strategies in the ESCWA region;
3. ICT strategies in ESCWA member countries:
 - (a) Challenges and opportunities of the information society in Egypt;
 - (b) National ICT strategy for the Syrian Arab Republic: methodology, outcome and implementation;

- (c) Lebanese ICT strategy: infrastructure and regulator perspectives;
 - (d) Investing in the future – Jordan's leadership drive change;
 - (e) ICT policy statement for Saudi Arabia;
 - (f) Palestinian experience in using IT to make information available for all;
 - (g) National information strategy in Yemen.
4. Strategies for developing the ICT sector:
 - (a) Egypt information technology industry strategy;
 - (b) Enhancing telecom infrastructure, services and policies.
 5. Sectoral ICT strategies:
 - (a) ICT strategy in higher education in the Syrian Arab Republic;
 - (b) E-commerce facilitation in Lebanon and the legislative framework for e-transactions;
 - (c) E-government journey from formulating strategies to implementing plans of action.
 6. Monitoring and evaluating ICT strategies:
 - (a) Measurement and analysis of the impact of ICT policies;
 - (b) Information society measurement: policies and indicators;
 - (c) Benchmarking the plan of action.
 7. Cooperation and partnership:
 - (a) Deglobalizing pan-Arab ICT strategies in terms of international development;
 - (b) Multi-stakeholder partnerships for the region;
 - (c) Building a regional ICT network of policymakers.
 8. Closing.

E. DOCUMENTS

44. A list of the documents, submitted to the Workshop, is contained in annex II of this report.

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Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Title
1. Background paper:
Analysing ICT policies and strategies in the ESCWA region
2. Presentations and papers:
تحديات وفرص مجتمع المعلومات في مصر
National ICT strategy for Syria: methodology, outcome and implementation
Lebanese ICT strategy: infrastructure and regulator perspectives
Investing in the future – Jordan's leadership drive change
Information and communications technology (ICT) policy statement
التجربة الفلسطينية في إتاحة المعلومات للجميع باستخدام تكنولوجيا المعلومات
مشروع الاستراتيجية الوطنية للمعلومات في الجمهورية اليمنية
Egypt information technology industry strategy
Enhancing telecom infrastructure, services and policies
ICT strategy in higher education in the Syrian Arab Republic
E-commerce facilitation in Lebanon
الإطار التشريعي الحالي للعمليات الإلكترونية في القانون اللبناني
E-government journey from formulating strategies to implementing plans of action
قياس وتحليل أثر سياسات تكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات
Information society measurement: policies and indicators
Benchmarking plan of action
Deglobalizing pan-Arab ICT strategies in terms of international development
Multi-stakeholder partnerships for the region
Building a regional ICT network of policymakers