

Distr.
LIMITED
E/ESCWA/ICTD/2003/WG.1/CRP.24
3 February 2003
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

Western Asia Preparatory Conference for the World
Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)
Beirut, 4-6 February 2003



IN THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION
FOR WESTERN ASIA

6 FEB 2003

LIBRARY/DOCUMENTATION



infoDev

ENHANCING THE ICT SECTOR OF ARAB STATES: A PRIVATE SECTOR ROLE



UNESCO

ABFICT



UN ICT Task Force



ITU

Note: This document has been reproduced in the form in which it was received, without formal editing. The opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of ESCWA.

03-0111

Enhancing the ICT Sector of Arab States: *A Private Sector Role*

By
ABFICT

Western Asia Preparatory Conference for WSIS
Beirut, 4-6 February 2003

1

Information Era

- ↓ Global developments show a transfer to market oriented economies.
- ↓ Globalization & ICT are intertwined.
- ↓ ICT: a potential to overcome modernity gap...!!
- ↓ Several developing countries accomplished large 'leaps' in ICT fields.

ESCWA Prep Conference for WSIS

2

ICT Challenges

- ◆ Novelty and dynamism of ICT itself
- ◆ The definition of the term is still vague.
- ◆ Debate on its real potential in development.
- ◆ The ability of the underdeveloped. economies to follow the global trend.

ESCWA Prep Conference for WSIS

3

Digital Divide Threat

- ↓ Wideness of the digital gap
 - ◆ Developed and underdeveloped world
 - ◆ Within the premises of the same country
- ↓ The Threat
 - ◆ Enlarges the existing socio-economic variations

ESCWA Prep Conference for WSIS

4

LIBRARY & DOCUMENT SECTION

07-05-2003

UN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION
FOR THE ARAB STATES

Bridging the Digital Divide

- ✦ Integrated Efforts to combat the digital divide: National & International
 - ◆ Governments: lead smoothly the path of regulations and laws as *policy initiator*
 - ◆ Private sector: charge batteries for more investment in the ICT field as *implementer*

ESCWA Prep Conference for WSIS

5

Role of the Governments

- ✦ Issue Laws and regulations that protect
 - ◆ The industry: Telecommunications Laws
 - ◆ Customers: Electronic Signature Laws
 - ◆ The investors: Investment Laws
- ✦ Providing the suitable Investment Climate: Internet cities & free Zone

ESCWA Prep Conference for WSIS

6

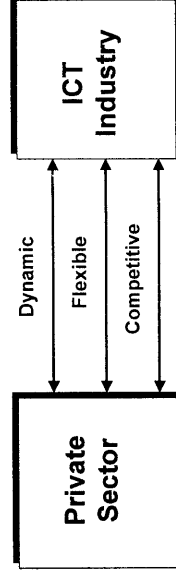
Crucial Role of Private Sector

- ✦ An anchor for economic growth.
 - Functionalizes capital
 - Mobilizes human resources

ESCWA Prep Conference for WSIS

7

Private Sector & ICT



Private Sector is Capable of taking risks that ICT Investment may require.

ESCWA Prep Conference for WSIS

8

Arab ICT Achievements

★ Examples of Arab ICT achievements include:

- ◆ Internet, mobiles and ICT tools: since the beginning of the 1990s
- ◆ Number of mobiles exceeded the number of landlines in 9 countries and is expected in 3 more within the next 4 years
- ◆ Internet became free in some countries and the price is decreasing in others

Cont'd...

ESCWA Prep Conference for WSIS

9

Madar Research Group

ESCWA Prep Conference for WSIS

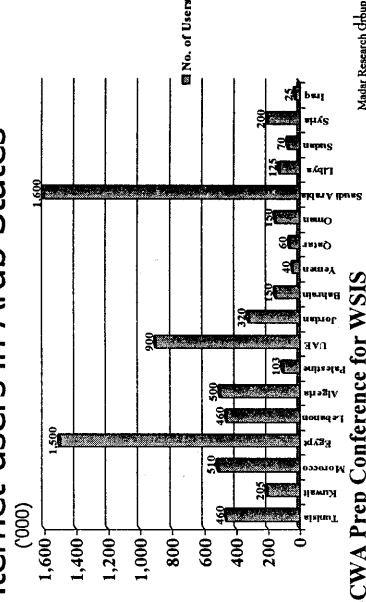
Achievements Cont'd

- ◆ Broadband connections for Internet users.
- ◆ 8.2 million Arab Internet users by the end of 2002.
- ◆ Expected 25 million Arab Internet users by 2005.
- ◆ Internet Penetration was at 1.20% in 2001 has increased to 2.54% in Q3/ 2002..
- ◆ Arab Internet penetration is expected to reach 8% by the end of 2005

Madar Research Group

ESCWA Prep Conference for WSIS

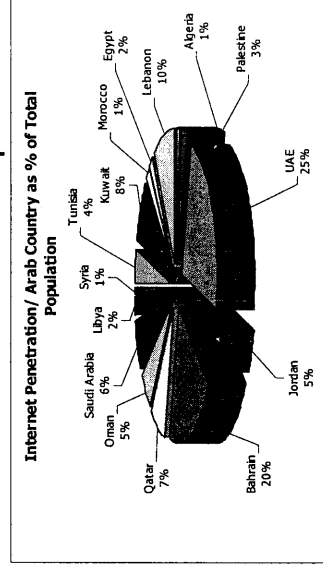
Internet users in Arab States



Madar Research Group

ESCWA Prep Conference for WSIS

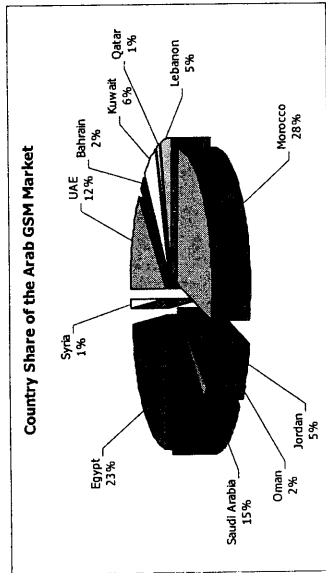
Internet Penetration: Population



Madar Research Group

ESCWA Prep Conference for WSIS

Shares of Arab GSM Market



ESCWA Prep Conference for WSIS

Arab Advisors Group

13

Arab Private Sector Role

- ✚ Initiate and invest in ICT projects
- ✚ Encourage R&D in the ICT field to supply adequate the data needed for its development.
- ✚ Build up fast and reliable Arab networks.
- ✚ Raise awareness of the importance of ICT to the Arab economy (usage of Internet in daily actions).
- ✚ Overcome the vicious circle of low demand vs. uncertainty of supply by build up the trust of the user.
- ✚ Put more effort regarding the Arabic content of ICT.

ESCWA Prep Conference for WSIS

14

Arab Private Sector: Unite

- ✚ Establishment of Arab Business Forum for ICT (ABFICT)
 - ◆ Under the umbrella of LAS
 - ◆ Representatives of more than 80 leading companies from 18 Arab States in the field of ICT
 - ◆ Co-chaired: UAE & Egypt
 - ◆ Executive Committee from 6 Arab states

ESCWA Prep Conference for WSIS

15

Arab Business Forum

For Information & Communication Technology

- ✚ Objectives
 - ◆ Encourage partnerships and coordination among Arab businesses in the ICT field.
 - ◆ Develop a common Arab vision regarding strategic ICT issues.
 - ◆ Open communication channels with Int'l entities
 - ◆ Foster communication between private and public sector entities working in ICT

Cont'd...

ESCWA Prep Conference for WSIS

16

Arab Business Forum

For Information & Communication Technology

★ Objectives cont'd...

- ◆ Expand the reach of Arab ICT products & services:
 - ◆ Promoting them within the Arab region
 - ◆ Opening up channels for them in the International markets
 - ◆ Encouraging the adoption of ICT in remote areas of the Arab region
- ◆ Offering Advice to ICT public sector decision makers



ESCWA Prep Conference for WSIS

17

Tangible Contribution

- ★ Working on a study concerning "Regional Fiber Optic Network optimization"
- ★ Arab e-University (pilot project)
- ★ Arab Cultural Portal (pilot project)

ESCWA Prep Conference for WSIS

18

Contacts

Arab Business Forum

For Information & Communication Technology
(ABFICT)

www.al-montada.net

Mohamed Abdel Wahab
Executive Director

mohamed.a-wahab@masreya.com.eg

Mobile: +(20 12) 733 1600

Phone: +(20 2) 749 5862

Fax: +(20 2) 760 5685

19

Thank You

20

