

Draft Speech of H.E. Dr Amr Talaat, Minister of ICT

@ The Metaverse and AI Week

12- 14th of September 2023

This workshop is the product of a close collaboration between Industry represented by META and Academia represented by Egypt's University of Informatics and the American University in Cairo.

The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology is proud to support this effort, as it highlights the emerging technologies of the Metaverse and their huge potential impact on the globe.

A significant component of Egypt's strategic plans for digitalization focuses on using emerging technologies for the public good and enhancing the nation's economic competitiveness.

Today, Egypt is a global source of skilled ICT professionals. We are always monitoring both the global trends in technology advancement and the following evolution of an ever-changing mix of job opportunities that open up for skilled professionals in Egypt and around the globe. We see obviously an increasing demand for professionals and innovators in the fields of augmented reality, virtual reality and other technologies that are at the core of the Metaverse.

The Metaverse is unleashing unique economic opportunities and it may also generate some profound impact on the society and humanity at large. Therefore, we should carefully study all the possible positive and negative effects and deal with them in ways that use their power and mitigate their risks, at the local as well as the international levels.

The Egyptian approach in dealing with the promise of the metaverse depends on three parallel tracks.

First, we are engaged in many **capacity building plans** on the different components of the Metaverse. New programs are taking shape in collaboration with our different industry partners for a comprehensive skilling roadmap.

We are also creating a momentum for innovation whether on the use of technologies that contribute to the development of the Metaverse itself or its various promising applications. We trust that hands-on experimentation is the best educational tool for over-the-edge professionals. In 2022, The Technology Innovation and Entrepreneurship center of ITIDA launched a hackathon in our Creativa innovation hubs across the country, in which it sought to motivate our younger generations to create innovative solutions for the Metaverse. The competition has shown impressive work in augmented reality, virtual reality, extended reality, hybrid reality, 3D modeling and animation, and other Metaverse technologies.

I am glad to learn that parallel to the workshop, a start up competition has been running on “XR for Good”. I would like to commend the efforts of the EUI and META and the support of the AUC for making this happen.

The second track that we are working on is the **development of Metaverse use cases** with partners from the industry.

An example that is close to my heart approaches the accessibility and inclusion challenges. My colleagues at the National Academy of Information Technology for persons with disabilities (NAID), an MCIT affiliate, look at the Metaverse as a support tool for the inclusion of all citizens. The NAID Center of Excellence in Assistive Technologies is an R&D-enabling environment for Metaverse related technologies. It is the first of its kind in Egypt.

Other examples include the rich experience of AUC in the application of Metaverse in education, as well as the work done in the tourism sector. I am sure that the sessions where young innovators are sharing their use cases will be particularly exciting.

The third track that we are working on is that of **pre-standardization** of the Metaverse, which is a global effort led by the ITU. Together with an international community of more than 1,000 experts, we are looking into the status of the Metaverse experience and considering the required regulations or standards for its “humane, safe, sustainable and inclusive use”. We have to consider its different dimensions: services, use cases architecture, infrastructure, the interaction between the virtual and real worlds, interoperability, security, data and personal identification information,

accessibility, sustainability and inclusion, regulations and economic aspects. Egyptian experts work hard with regional and global experts to develop technical reports and specifications which will eventually turn into standards based on the assessment of all players.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are at the stage where we are trying to understand the expanding eco system and potential of the Metaverse. I hope that by the end of your workshops, we will be several steps ahead in understanding the true potential of this technology. I wish you successful and fruitful workshops and the ministry looks forward to receiving your recommendations. Thank you very much.