

Speech of H.E. Dr. Amr S. Talaat

Minister of Communications and Information Technology in Egypt

Prof. Patrick Deane, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University;

Excellency Mr. Louis Dumas, Ambassador of Canada to the Arab Republic of Egypt;

Excellency Mr. Ahmed Abouzeid, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Canada.

Distinguished Colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that I witness today the signing of the Agreement between the Information Technology Industry Development Agency (ITIDA), on behalf of the Egyptian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, and Queen's University at Kingston, one of the most impactful educational institutes worldwide.

The Agreement we celebrate today with Queen's University aims to deliver a one-year program offering a Master of Science degree with a track in data science and Machine Learning for top university graduates, to become world-class skilled calibers capable of serving Digital Egypt vision and competing globally. Today's agreement is a new building block in a series of partnerships we have concluded with a number of world-ranked universities such as Ottawa University in Canada and POSTECH University in Korea.

This Agreement comes within the framework of Digital Egypt Builders Initiative, a presidential initiative targeting 1,000 university students annually, majoring in engineering and computer science, in tracks that include data science, Artificial Intelligence, cybersecurity, IoT, robotics, automation, financial technology, and digital arts, and implemented in collaboration with a number of high ranked international Universities.

We are all aware that the first step in building a digital society is by having the right expertise and human resources to carry on this mission. Therefore, enabling the Egyptian citizen to be ready for the future and the digital transformation era is the first step in promoting Digital Egypt.

To usher in this transition to a digital society and build a strong digital economy, Digital Egypt is built on three main pillars: digital transformation, digital skills, and digital innovation. With more than 20% of its population in the age group "18-29 years", and 500,000 annual graduates including more than 50,000 students in IT-related fields graduate, Egypt is becoming a hub for talents in the region.

We have adopted a pyramid model to reach all Egyptian youth in different categories and levels of education and specialties to achieve higher rates of development. The Pyramid's base represents all graduates, while its top is represented by top university graduates in ICT specializations.

DEBI initiative helps hone practical languages, technological and personal skills of calibers; in addition to creating an enabling environment to nurture innovation and excellence, and providing the qualifications needed by local and global companies operating in the ICT domain. I am proud of the progress that the Digital Egypt Builders Initiative has reached in a short time, not only in terms of collaboration with world-class universities, but also with industry partners, and international organizations.

Candidates will be assigned to a training program on leadership and management skills that would prepare qualified leaders to work in the entities responsible for transforming Egypt into a first-class digital state. To date, we have concluded agreements with nine multinational companies that have found home in Egypt to capitalize on its growing competitive advantages; among which qualified youth calibers are considered as a major pillar. Those companies are contributing towards DEBI by providing practical experience-building opportunities; in addition to contributing towards enriching the educational process in areas of management and leadership.

In addition, DEBI has been able to stand on international platforms by engaging with UNESCO – Open Education Resource Program with the aim of developing the skills of its management and faculty team to facilitate the international learning process that is provided through the various engagements with world-renowned universities.

Hence, it is indeed a pleasure to add a star of excellence on DEBI's wall by partnering with Queen's as one of Canada's oldest degree-granting universities and a contemporary hub of academic research in Kingston. Queen's value is well noted with its 28000 students and over 131,000 alumni living worldwide. Notable alumni include government officials, academics, business leaders, including Nobel Laureates . I am well aware that there are 24 active Queen's alumni living in Egypt, including Mr. Jess Dutton, formerly Ambassador of Canada to Egypt and currently Director-General for the Middle East Region for Global Affairs Canada.

I am sure that our DEBI students would benefit enormously from this new partnership, which will add to the fast progress in the initiative. I am also confident that the ethics of

Queen's and its forward-looking and "community for all" motto will be a value-added to our students.

I am also looking forward to opening new windows of cooperation with Queen's University in the area of applied innovation. Our Applied Innovation Center (AIC) in charge of creating ICT solutions to the national challenges in different societal fields, using emerging technologies, is looking forward to collaborating with Queen's esteemed research and development community, especially with the School of Computing which is well known for its eminent research record in a broad range of areas.

Finally, I would like to thank the expert teams from both sides for their efforts in developing this agreement and look forward to celebrating the fruits of your efforts.