

Minister Opening Remarks

1st African IGF

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UN Economic Commission for Africa

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Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great honour to welcome you all in Egypt.

Today, we witness the birth of the First African Internet Governance Forum. It is through your presence here as well as your active participation and engagement in the discussions that would take place over the coming couple of days, the Forum will prove to be a tremendous success.

Allow me here to take this opportunity to thank our partners the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Union AU for their valuable efforts towards the realization of the 1st African IGF. Our bonds with both organizations in Internet governance goes back to 2006 when we organized together “Africa on the Road to Athens”. The first regional meeting that aimed at raising the awareness of

African countries before the first Global IGF held in Athens. Today, together with ECA and AU, we are creating a new platform that we hope will serve as a mechanism for bringing closer the different views on topics pertaining to Internet Governance.

As well, I would like to extend my sincere thanks for our international and national sponsors. Without your generous contributions, we would have not been able to achieve our target.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The current government is putting an emphasis on shifting Egypt to a knowledge-based society that can produce, effectively using innovation to improve life of citizens. The development of Internet in Egypt has also evolved from gradually being led by a group of pioneers in the early '90s to an overall national agenda. Years later, the advances made were brought about through a combination of government support and guidance, a political willingness, and a constant communication with all relevant stakeholders. The Internet penetration rate leaped from 13.75% to 37% between 2006 and 2012.

A special emphasis is being placed during the current period towards the modernization of infrastructure. As such, a new broadband deployment plan is set in place, namely e-misr. Broadband is seen as a general purpose technology that stimulates growth in the wider economy and creates new business opportunities. It is a key driver of economic growth and national competitiveness, and it definitely contributes to social and cultural development.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We previously said that "there is a need to encourage more national and regional IGFs while exploring the possibility of extending institutional relationships among them and with the global IGF in the future". Today I am happy to see that almost all of our African regions have their own national IGFs; North Africa being the last in the row, yet started very strongly last month, and almost all countries are pushing for establishing the platform of the national one. In Egypt we are reviving the ISOC Chapter through the newly established body 'Internet Masr', where the different

stakeholder groups participate to an open dialogue shaping national Internet public policies.

Today we witness the birth of what we can call the umbrella platform of the different regional forums and the link to the Global IGF. It is worth mentioning as well that all African regional platforms of Internet Governance have taken well into consideration the importance of including all relevant stakeholders in their respective roles to shape their own Forums.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The array of issues discussed within our Forum reflects and emphasizes its importance. Among those issues is the development of local content which still lags behind. The Internet is a viable tool that could be utilized in reaching out for rural and remote areas, providing them with the kind of support they need. Nevertheless, the absence of localized content stands as an obstacle in that regard. Our continent is very rich in cultural and natural heritage. Egypt believes that it is our clear responsibility together to further dig into current mechanisms and propose creative models to address policies that encourage the creation of multilingual content and Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs). The lost inter- alia business that could happen if we are able to communicate with our local languages is immense. I hope our gathering today would be able to tackle this issue and we could find ways and means to collaborate efforts and share experiences in that regard.

Enhancing security and building confidence and trust in the use of ICT applications is one of most important emerging issues that are threatening the ICT sector worldwide. Collaboration of regional and international efforts from all stakeholders involved are much needed. In this respect, Egypt has established its national CERT and we are ready to discuss together policy challenges and find ways for cross-border cooperation on cybersecurity. As well, Openness and free flow of information should be maintained in way that preserves the stability and robustness of the Global Internet.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The international agenda of Internet governance this year, is very challenging.

The current UN General Assembly will decide on a number of important issues such as the report of the 15th session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development of the Economic and Social Council on Internet Governance Improvements, the Enhanced Cooperation consultations, and the WSIS Review Meeting Decision. In addition, we have the World Conference of International Telecommunications (WCIT) that encompasses a lot of articles pertaining to Internet Public Policy matters. Such issues requires series collaboration and coordination from our side to be able to face the international community with one African Voice.

The experience of the regional and national IGF's proved its success. In many cases, the national or regional challenges were reflected in the Global Forum agenda, enriching the discussions and allowing for introducing new challenges. Accordingly, we believe that this 1st African Internet Governance Forum is a catalyst for creating more convergence between the views coming from the five different African regions. It will then channel- in a more consolidate manner- the African Agenda on the global Forum.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you all, wishing you a fruitful meeting.
Thank you