



المجلس الاقتصادي والاجتماعي  
رئاسة مجلس الوزراء



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## Arab Dialogue on Internet Governance

### Conference and Public Consultations to Establish the Arab IGF

31 January – 1 February 2012, Beirut

*Preliminary Information Note*

#### I. Background

Following both phases of the World Summit on Information Society, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) was established as a multistakeholder platform for policy dialogue. It emerged as a bottom-up approach and a community opportunity for addressing global Internet Governance issues. The first five-year mandate of the IGF took place between 2006 and 2010 (inclusive). In view of its benefits and impact, the process was extended for five more years.

From the inception of the IGF, a number of stakeholders from the Arab region have been active participants in the process. These include the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the League of Arab States (LAS). Recognizing the importance of the process, ESCWA launched an initiative named Arab Dialogue on Internet Governance (ArabDIG) which culminated with the publication of the Arab Regional Roadmap for Internet Governance: Framework, Principles and Objectives<sup>1</sup>. This Regional Roadmap was adopted by key stakeholders during October 2010<sup>2</sup> in a document entitled Call of Arab Stakeholders – Towards Promoting Arab Cooperation for Internet Governance Regionally and Internationally”<sup>3</sup>, which specified the need for an Arab IGF.

The LAS Executive Bureau of the Arab Telecommunications and Information Council of Ministers (ATICM) also approved the circulation of the Regional Roadmap as well as the Call of

<sup>1</sup>ESCWA. June 2011. E/ESCWA/ICTD/2010/Technical Paper.5

<sup>2</sup> Further details are available at the following URL:

<http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNum=1301E>

<sup>3</sup> The Call of Arab Stakeholders is available at:

<http://isper.escwa.un.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=eEhLP6tgSZ4%3d&tabid=153&language=en-US>

Arab Stakeholder<sup>4</sup> in their meeting in March 2011, which were both already endorsed by the Arab Working Group on Domain Names and Internet Issues (AWGDNII).

During the global IGF process, several regions established their own IGFs, the goal being to regionalize the debate on Internet Governance and to expand it to the national level. Currently, there are more than 10 regional IGFs in Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa. The Arab region is still without one and needs to catch up with a similar initiative, i.e. an Arab Internet Governance Forum. In fact, in their meeting of March 2011, the Executive Bureau of ATICM endorsed the need to hold public consultations and a conference on the Arab IGF. However, regional political uncertainties delayed related activities. This conference will attempt to make up for lost time by establishing the basic blocks of the Arab IGF process.

The present information note defines a current interest by key stakeholders in the region and the activities needed to launch the Arab IGF process. The first activity will be a **Conference and Public Consultation to Establish the Arab IGF** which will be convened by ESCWA, the Lebanese Presidency Council of Ministers, and LAS and will be sponsored by Réseaux IP Européens (RIPE) and the Kuwait Information Technology Society (KITS). The conference will also be organized in cooperation with the IGF Secretariat and Al-Iktissad Wal-Aamal Group.

## II. Objective

The objective of the **Conference and Public Consultations to Establish the Arab IGF** is to engage and publicly consult key stakeholders on the viability and modalities for establishing a regional Arab IGF process by exploring and articulating all the major building blocks needed to launch and maintain the process until 2015. The Arab IGF process will act as a vehicle to implement the Arab Regional Roadmap for Internet Governance.

Outcomes of the Conference and Public Consultations will be presented to the meeting of the Executive Bureau of ATICM which will take place on 2 February 2012 in Beirut at the same venue of the Conference.

## III. Topics

The topics to be discussed at the Conference and Public Consultations are:

1. Overview of other regional and national IGFs including successes and lessons learned;
2. Defining the mandate and the nature of the Arab IGF;
3. Setting roles and responsibilities of involved stakeholders whether international/regional organizations, NGOs or the private sector;
4. Planning for the establishment of the Arab IGF secretariat, its leadership, members, scope, requirements, budget, host organization and its obligations;
5. Planning for establishing the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG), its role and plan;
6. Reviewing the themes to be discussed at the Arab IGF and formulating a rough schedule of work. The global IGF will be used as a reference to define the themes as well as the "Arab Regional Roadmap for Internet Governance: Framework, Principles and Objectives";
7. Setting the scope, objectives and activities to be included in the country agreement for hosting the annual Arab IGF;
8. Planning for input to the global IGF-VII (2012).

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<sup>4</sup> These documents were developed by ESCWA and were then made open for public consultation and viewing.

## IV. Outputs

Outputs of the Conference and Public Consultations are expected to be the following:

1. Roles and responsibilities of involved stakeholders, partners, and sponsors;
2. Specifying the Arab IGF Secretariat;
3. Specifying host countries for the four Arab IGFs and the host country obligations;
4. Formation of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG);
5. Budget requirements and financing/promotional plan;
6. Themes and programme format of the first Arab IGF;
7. Preparatory process timeline and major milestones;

**These outputs are to be shared with and presented to the ATICM Executive Bureau (Beirut, 2 February 2012).**

## V. Organization

The Conference and Public Consultations will be held at the **Habtoor Grand Hotel in Beirut on 31 January and 1 February 2012**. It will take place in conjunction with and directly before the following events: (a) the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the Arab Telecom and Internet Forum (ATIF) on 2-3 February 2012 and (b) the Executive Bureau of ATICM which will take place on 2 February 2012.

A number of national, regional and international entities are involved in this Conference and the Arab IGF process as a whole

- **Convener** United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)
- **Sponsors** Réseaux IP Européens (RIPE)  
Kuwait Information Technology Society (KITS)
- **Co-organizers** Presidency Council of Ministers - Lebanon  
League of Arab States (LAS)
- **In cooperation with** Al-Iktissad Wal-Aamal Group  
IGF Secretariat  
Arab Working Group on Domain Names and Internet Issues (AWGDNII)

Other organizations expected to be involved are the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (NTRA) - Egypt, ICANN, UNESCO, ECA North Africa Office, and the Arab Information and Communication Technologies Organization (AICTO). Other interested organizations and government institutions are welcomed to provide support to the whole process which will take place during 2012 - 2015.

## VI. Participants

The Conference is designed to be a multistakeholder event that includes regional and international organizations as well as governmental, non-governmental and private entities mainly from the Arab region. Participants will also include possible sponsors of the Arab IGF events planned for 2012 onward.

## VII. Language

English and Arabic are the working languages of the Conference. The main working language will be Arabic; however, English may be used especially during presentations and referencing technical material. Simultaneous interpretation will not be available.

## VIII. Travel and Accommodation

All participants are expected to inquire on their visa requirements to Lebanon and secure one ahead of their anticipated travel date.

## IX. Additional Information

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