

ARABCOM 2006 wrap-up

The 9th Arab International Conference for Telecom Development in the Arab States,

ARABCOM 2006, calls for adopting next-generation networks and convergence, as a major approach to achieving sustainable development

The 9th Edition of ARABCOM 06 which was held in The Emirates Towers Hotel Dubai on 11 and 12 April has concluded its work.

Held under the patronage of H.E. Eng. Sultan Bin Saeed Al Mansouri, Minister of Development of Government Sector in UAE, ARABCOM 06 was attended by International and regional public and private sector participants. Several Arab Ministers of Telecom from the UAE, Algeria, Iraq, Palestine, Sudan, Lebanon, and Tunisia, representatives of Arab ministries of Telecom, heads of regulatory authorities, CEO of global telecom and IT corporations, GSM operators, carriers, Service providers, telecom experts, eminent consultants, application providers attended the two days summit.

The opening ceremony was attended by Arab and foreign ambassadors representatives of diplomatic corps in the UAE, national dignitaries, representatives of State's economic, scientific, media, and technology entities, owners of leading enterprises in the Emirates, a number of distinguished personalities from the Gulf region involved in the services sector which is underpinning the development of other sectors, guest businessmen and investors, in all 500 participants from over 50 states.

In his inaugural address, **H.E. Eng. Sultan Bin Saeed Al Mansouri**, Minister of Development of Government Sector in UAE, expressed his appreciation of the efforts deployed by Arabcom Group chaired by Mrs. Katia Tayar to achieving and maintaining Arabcom success. Al Mansouri praised the high level of attendance and participation, and the critical topics which are discussed for the first time in the region. He paid tribute to Mrs. Tayar for her role in diffusing and advocating telecom culture and techniques in modern society industries towards improving peoples life and promoting institutions up to the standards of the new millennium. He emphasized the need for upgrading communication networks infrastructure and commended UAE dedication in this respect in line with the high policy pursued by the Government.

Mrs. Katia Tayar, Conference president and organizer, welcomed Conference guests from Arab and foreign countries and said that with next-generation networks, high-tech/telecom, and third and fourth-generation mobile network systems we are standing at the threshold of a second technological revolution in telecommunication. Tayar stressed that the Arab World with its two sectors should not overlook the importance of keeping pace with such vital developments in the telecom industry, and that the Conference would highlight the latest networks, systems and technologies that should be used, alongside stories of success and reliable know-how. Tayar hailed the role of the Emirates as well as Government's efforts in this domain. She said that intra-Arab cooperation must be intensified so as to face the new challenges of this accelerated technological break through embodied in next-generations networks, the Internet Protocol, the tightened links between wired and mobile networks and wireless systems, especially the Wimax, HSPA and others, that enable telecommunications and wireless mobile services converge and spread widely, thus making information and communication means accessible to far more people in the developing world.

Mrs. Katia Tayar pointed out that the choice of Dubai to host the 9th Edition of ARABCOM 06 has been to mark new operator's introduction in the State, which confirms the liberalization of the sector and the opening of Emirates' market to competitiveness. She commented the benefits offered yearly to the Arab World by ARABCOM, which is considered to be not only a regional technological platform for decision-makers and private sector but also a catalyst to unifying efforts and achieving synergies in the work frame of its recommendations and directives intended to build up the information society. Tayar praised Arab operators' endeavor to expand across the Arab World and to open up regionally after the Sector was liberalized, which is conducive to strengthening our position on the new global economic map. Ministers from Arab countries addressed the audience.

H.E. Dr Boudjemaa Haichour, Minister of Post & Information Communication Technologies in Algeria, paid tribute to ARABCOM role and to Mrs. Tayar year-long efforts and good results achieved so far at the Arab level. He placed emphasis on the rising role of the telecommunication and information sector to further modernize economy, governance and institutions. He said that Algeria has issued appropriate rules and laws to free and open its market, boost the sector, and couple provided services with quality, cost-effectiveness and rapid delivery, as liberal legislations help boosting investment.

Describing our era as one of integrated telecommunication services and widespread internets, **H.E. Gamal Al-Khodary**, Minister of Telecommunication in Palestine, called for intensifying telecommunication services as they are instrumental to fulfilling development, social, cultural and economic needs. He said that inter-Arab coordination was a must and a necessary step for Arab countries to form together a bloc in the telecommunication sector, in the manner of other international entities.

H.E. Dr. Joan Maassoum, Minister of Communication in Iraq, spoke of the work performed by the Ministry to optimize national network coverage and speed, in addition to interlinking governorates, training cadres in institutes, and increasing telephonic density over the coming three years from 3% to 15% using telecommunication technology.

Mr. Ali Ghodbani, President of Tunisia's National Telecommunications Authority, spoke on behalf of **H.E. Montasser Ouaili**, Tunisia's Minister of Communication Technologies, who praised in his address ARABCOM efforts and positions in relation to raising awareness, advocating cognitive culture, and moving towards the realization of the information society. He paid tribute to Mrs. Tayar's efforts in fostering Arab and regional cooperation, and drew attention to the huge gap between communities as to the rate and aspect of utilization of communications and information representing for some a mere luxury item with no output. To put the challenge into perspective, he said that the only 19% of world population are internet users, of whom only 1% are found in Africa. But Tunisia took the lead in adopting a comprehensive strategy to develop its communication sector, as part of a politico-civilizational project focused on human welfare, drawing laws, promoting education, upgrading infrastructure, and sensitizing people to lay the foundation of the knowledge society.

In his address, **H.E. AL Zahawy Ibrahim Malak**, Minister of Information Technologies and Communications in Sudan, underlined ARABCOM role since 1998 as to boosting Arab joint work, expressed thanks to Katia Tayar for her efforts to enhance communication in Arab countries since 1993, valued ARABCOM annual outcome, and spoke of communications development in Sudan.

The Conference witnessed throughout the two days impressive success asserted by all delegates, sponsors, exhibitors, visitors, and media agents from various capitals of the world who came over to cover the event. Participants and guests praised the good organization of the Conference, the relevance of topics, papers, level of specialization, and satisfactory rate of participation among decision makers, which would pave the road for participating entities to extend their activities in this region and find opportunities of cooperation. Official authorities expressed their appreciation of ARABCOM which made it possible to exchange views, acquaint with latest technologies, share know-how, examine issues of interest to the region especially now that the wired and mobile networks are linked and about to play a key role in outreaching new services i.e. audio, data, video, and Internet protocol networks to serve sustainable development in accordance with the guidelines of the World Summit on the Information Society.

Operators' participation was remarkable especially the Saudi delegation which was composed of 15 managers, MTC group, Mobily, Etisalat, Algeria Telecom, new UAE telecom firm Du, Jawal, Oman Mobile, OmanTel, ORASCOM, Qtel, Sriyan Telecom Establishment, Spacetel Yemen, Telecom Egypt, Tunisie Telecom, Telecom Malaysia, Wataniya Telecom, Wataniya International, AL MADAR, Belgacom, Cyprus Telecom, Detecon, Shyam Telecom, Strom Telecom, TeliaSonera, and others.

ARABCOM 2006 recommendations

that could be enforced to enable the Arab region to keep pace with the second telecommunication revolution

1. To address a thank-you message to the Conference patron H.E. Eng. Sultan Bin Saeed Al Mansouri, Minister of Development of Government Sector in UAE, for his support, generosity and hospitality to the participant delegations.
2. To call upon Arab Governments to adopt next-generation networks, and link wired and mobile networks as they are a major approach to achieving comprehensive development.
3. To initiate more efforts intra and inter-Arab States at both the official and private levels to use communication services and next-generation new networks to serve human development and growth.
4. To call upon Arab organizational entities to expedite the liberalization process, the opening of markets, and the updating of their laws and regulations relating to the issuing of new appropriate licenses for HSPA, VoIP, WiMAX, next-generation Networks, Wired & Wireless broadband Internet Protocol and W.Max.
5. To call upon Arab Telecom authorities and in-line government bodies to carefully liberalize the markets while maintaining national economy profit levels.
6. To coordinate between Arab States to select modern communication networks to contribute to boosting the economy and avoid the occurrence of technical problems among States.
7. To initiate organizational entities, communication administrations and competent Arab Governmental bodies to conduct a feasibility study on 3G, and the real needs of users at the national level before granting licenses.
8. To call upon decision-makers, organizational entities, GSM operators, and service providers to collaborate to educate consumers about the importance of using the new mechanisms to connect to the services provided for their upgrading and achieve cognitive democracy and self-expression towards building up the Information Society.
9. To work to legislate the expansion of communication networks in villages, and remote areas the aim being to provide the internet to as much segments of Arab population as possible with the rise of various solutions thanks to next-generation networks.
10. To stimulate the utilization of the Broadband Optical Wireless which guarantees high-speed and low-cost connection techniques that contribute to providing next-generations networks.
11. To call upon Arab communications authorities and Governments to document and provide information on the communication and information technology sector to use such information in upgrading the sector, the ultimate aim being to provide new services to customers.
12. To emphasize the importance of adopting the new networks as they are more flexible and capable of absorbing modern services constantly.
13. To stimulate women involvement in the elaboration of strategies and decision-making considering their major role in raising children, developing the cognitive society and participating in economic life.