Background

Global public policies for Internet Governance have been at the centre of global debate for the elapsing decade. Following both phases of the World Summit on Information Society, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) was established as a multi-stakeholder forum for policy dialogue on issues of Internet governance. During this global process, other regions started to establish regional mechanisms to regionalize the debate on Internet Governance and to take it further to the national level. Currently, there are at least 8 regional IGF in the world, in Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa. As the global IGF process has completed its final stage in Vilnius September 2010, an Arab framework should be in place in order to harmonize policies and actions on a regional level.

After establishing an online portal on the Arab Dialogue on Internet Governance¹, and during IGF-V in Vilnius, ESCWA together with the League of Arab States (LAS) co-organized a session on the same topic, which aimed at presenting a “Regional Roadmap for Internet Governance in Arab Countries”. This roadmap outlines objectives, strategies and envisaged accomplishments for the Arab region for the period 2011-2015 in order to attain Internet governance goals. This meeting is intended to review and further enrich this roadmap. Additionally, during ESCWA-LAS session in Vilnius, all panelists agreed on the importance of establishing an Arab IGF that will echo the global IGF process on a regional level. Panelists representing a wide array of stakeholders stressed the importance of commitments on the national level, and of a multi-stakeholder bottom-up approach towards this goal. This EGM will explore the idea further and will result in a proposal on this regard.

On another front, LAS, through its steering committee for the Arab Top-Level Domains Project, is currently finalizing the last steps for establishing the “.arab” and "ب.ع" registry policies. This meeting is intended also to review, and possibly enrich, these policies before the registry operator is selected by LAS towards end of 2010.

Objectives

This meeting aims at further empowering the Arab region in public policies pertaining to Internet Governance and Internet Arab Domain Names. The goal is to advance regional cooperation through a coordinated framework to harmonize action of different stakeholders for the period 2011-2015.

Topics and Outcomes

Three main topics are to be discussed during this meeting: (a) Details of the proposed regional roadmap, (b) Establishment of an Arab IGF process, (c) Details of proposed registry policies for the Arab TLDs “.arab” and "ب.ع". Two outputs are expected from the meeting, which may be presented to the highest decision making body in LAS; the first is the “Final Draft of the Roadmap”; and the second is a “Proposal from Arab Stakeholders to Establish an Arab IGF”.

Participants

Participation is open for a wide array of stakeholders: governments, businesses, ISPs, civil societies and individuals, who are interested in Internet Governance and Domain Names issues.

Organization and Inquiries

This meeting is co-organized by LAS and ESCWA, and will take place at the UN-House in Beirut, Lebanon, on 25 and 26 October 2010. Main working languages for these meetings are Arabic and English.

Inquiries can be addressed to: Mr. Marc Khayat, UN-ESCWA, at khayat@un.org, or +961-1-978543.