

## **Expert Group Meeting on Investment, Research, Development and Innovation in the ICT Sector Hammamet, Tunisia, 7-8 May 2013**

Part of the Arab Forum on the ICT Sector (Hammamet, Tunisia, 7-10 May 2013)

### ***Preliminary Information Note***

#### **A Background**

When compared to the information and communication technology (ICT) sector of countries that have developed their knowledge-based economies, the ICT sector in the Arab region remains underdeveloped. Investments in the sector have been limited and new developmental funds are few. Research has shown that the development of suitable financing instruments for the ICT sector coupled with institutional reforms supporting innovation and promoting competitiveness and ICT entrepreneurship are essential components for the development of sustainable knowledge-based economies in the Arab region. Investing in the ICT sector would create new job opportunities for the youth and skilled population, vitalize the region's economies and lead to further socio-economic benefits and rewards.

The Tunis Agenda, outcome of the 2005 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), stressed the need to enhance financial mechanisms aimed at building the ICT sector in developing countries and the importance of capacity-building to achieve this objective. In response to the WSIS outcome and building on a series of activities that date back to 2008, ESCWA currently developing 2013 a study entitled "Competitiveness of the ICT Sector in the Arab Region: innovation and investment imperatives". The study is expected to contribute towards the development of knowledge-based economies in the Arab region by providing guidance and practical recommendations that would boost competitiveness and promote innovation and investment in the ICT sector.

The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Investment, Research, Development and Innovation in the ICT Sector, subject of this information note, is jointly organized by ESCWA and the Union of Arab Banks, during 7-8 May 2013, in Hammamet, Tunisia. The EGM is organized as part of the Arab Forum on the ICT Sector, and will be followed by the Conference on Investment and Finance of the ICT Sector in the Arab Region, during 9-10 May 2013 in the same venue.

The EGM seeks to bring together the various stakeholders to share the latest developments in the Arab market, and promote cooperation amongst the participants that include investors, business entrepreneurs, bankers, and activists in the areas of developing a competitive ICT sector in the Arab region. It will also raise awareness and discuss a plan for promoting investments in the ICT sector and knowledge based economy in the post Arab spring period.

#### **B Objectives**

The main objective of the EGM on Investment, Research, Development and Innovation in the ICT Sector is to produce a vision and set recommendations for developing the ICT sector in the Arab region.

#### **C Topics**

The topics that will be covered during the EGM include:

- Competitiveness of the ICT sector and its contribution to the knowledge economy

- Financing ICT sector investments in the Arab region
- Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) in the ICT sector
- Roadmap and future outlook for promoting a competitive ICT sector at the national and regional levels
- Business models between the ICT and banking sectors

## **D Outcomes**

The main outcome of the EGM will be as follows:

- (a) Update of the study entitled "Competitiveness of the ICT Sector in the Arab Region: innovation and investment imperatives" that takes into consideration the recommendations proposed by participants;
- (b) Recommendations for the development of a competitive and innovative ICT sector in the Arab region that can benefit from the existing financial opportunities.

## **E Organization, venue and dates**

The EGM is jointly organized by ESCWA and the Union of Arab Banks, during 7-8 May 2013, at the Russelior Hotel in Hammamet, Tunisia, as part of the Arab Forum on the ICT Sector that is held during 7-10 May 2013, the same venue.

The Arab Forum on the ICT Sector encompasses the following two joint events:

- (1) Expert Group Meeting on Investment, Research, Development and Innovation in the ICT Sector, during 7-8 May 2013 [*Participation at no cost and by invitation*]; and
- (2) Conference on Investment and Finance of the ICT Sector in the Arab Region, during 9-10 May 2013 [*Participation might include UAB fees*].

## **F Participation**

Invited participants to the EGM include successful entrepreneurs in the ICT sector, and leaders in the private sector, investment bankers, high-level policymakers from investment authorities and ministries of ICTs, venture capitalists, and investment companies from the Arab region. Stakeholders from the financial world who work closely with ICT businesses are also invited to participate, as well as government officials who formulate or implement national ICT sector policies and strategies. Furthermore, the EGM will involve experts from research, development and innovation (RDI) centres and from incubators and technology parks involved in promoting the ICT sector in the Arab region.

## **G Working languages**

The working languages of the Forum will be Arabic, English and French. There will be simultaneous translation among the three languages.

## **H Additional information and correspondence**

Additional information is available through the [Forum Web page](#). Correspondences, submissions, and inquiries should be addressed to the organizers as follows:

Ms Mirna Barbar, ICT Officer, ICT Policies, ICTD, UNESCWA, Beirut, Lebanon  
Phone: +961-1-978552, Fax: +961-1-981510, [barbarm@un.org](mailto:barbarm@un.org)

Ms Zahr Bou-Ghanem, Research Assistant, ICT Policies, ICTD, UNESCWA, Beirut, Lebanon  
Phone: +961-1-978510, Fax: +961-1-981510, [bou-ghanem@un.org](mailto:bou-ghanem@un.org)