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The Hashemite
Kingdom of Jordan

Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial Meeting on the Digital Economy 30th September 2014, Brussels

PRESS RELEASE

Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministers in charge of the Digital Economy launch new digital cooperation initiatives

EU Commission Vice-President Neelie Kroes, Jordanian ICT Minister H.E. Azzam Sleit and UfM Secretary General Sijilmassi, together with the Heads of Delegation from 43 countries around the Mediterranean yesterday launched new Digital Economy initiatives.

Barcelona, 1 October, 2014. Digital Economy Ministers and representatives of ministries, the UfM Secretariat, telecoms regulators, development banks and EU institutions yesterday pledged closer cooperation to reap the benefits of the digital economy for Euro-Mediterranean citizens, consumers and businesses.

Gathered in Brussels for the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial meeting, participants agreed to forge closer ties on the use of **open data** and **e-government**, and to step-up dialogue between **national telecoms regulators** around the Mediterranean. They also agreed to improve connectivity between **scientific and research** communities and to work on a long-term **eHealth** cooperation strategy.

European Commission Vice-President Neelie Kroes said: *"The European Commission aims to promote a fair, modern, open, competitive and transparent market for communications, a connected ICT research environment, an open and vibrant use of the internet for all and a diverse media environment. Today's agreement with our Southern Mediterranean neighbourhood and partner countries means we can share experiences and learn from each other in ways that are not always possible in other sectors."*

H.E. Dr. Azzam Sleit, Minister of Information and Communication Technology, from the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Co-President commented: *"It is widely recognized that the growth of the digital economy has a far-reaching impact on the whole economy, and this is attributed to the influence of ICT services have on all IT sectors, such as transportation, health education, environment and financial services. Despite the promising potential that digital economy holds for us, there remains a set of challenges for which we need to find solutions."*

UfM Secretary General Mr. Fathallah Sijilmassi stated: *"The Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are a driving force for the modernization of both the private and public life, and thus, for the further development, integration and sustainable economic growth of the entire Mediterranean region. The UfM Secretariat stands ready to actively participate in the cooperative initiatives outlined today and to move forward the agenda for the advancement of the Digital Economy."*

The Heads of Delegation adopted an achievable, forward-looking and focused declaration which responds to the rapid pace of digital change and the huge potential of the digital technologies for the economy and society. They committed to:

- Build closer ties to foster the use of **open data and e-government**, leaning on the principles already developed in the 2013 G8 Open Data Charter such as *open data by default*;
- Boost e-infrastructures connectivity between **scientific and research** communities –also as a means of exploiting open data;
- Establish a regular **recommendations-based dialogue between functionally independent telecoms regulators and Euro-Mediterranean ICT Ministries** in order to create a harmonized, pro-competitive and investment-friendly environment in the sector, and to accelerate the development of the EU-Southern Mediterranean Information Society;
 - Through the UfM, to **promote more cross-border business** through the use of electronic business transactions and eSignatures;
 - Work on a long-term **cooperation strategy for e-Health** and to expand the deployment of e-Health solutions; and



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- Support the current global discussions on **Internet governance**.

The UfM framework and ICT stakeholders

Ministerial representatives also welcomed the contribution that key stakeholders can make to ensure that the UfM is focusing and listening to the right issues and that it has the means to achieve results. As such, the UfM provides a stable and pro-active political framework for cooperation. Development banks can facilitate financial support and incentives in key areas. Regulators and ICT ministries can play their respective roles. Ministers also underlined the need to reach out more to include civil society, bloggers, young entrepreneurs, digital champions and ICT innovators both in the EU and in southern Mediterranean countries.

EU commitment

The EU is committed to helping its Southern and Eastern neighbours in their paths to peace, democracy and socio-economic development. Around €8.3 billion in EU funding is foreseen until 2020 for bilateral and regional programmes targeting southern Mediterranean countries.

Background

The previous Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) was held in Cairo in February 2008. The UfM itself was created in 2008 as a platform for political dialogue, coordination, cooperation and consensus building. It currently encompasses 43 Members: 28 EU member states and 15 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries. The European Union assumed the permanent northern co-presidency of the UfM in February 2012. Jordan assumed the southern co-presidency in June 2012.

The [Secretariat of the UfM](#) focuses on implementing regional cooperation projects and initiatives in cross-cutting areas such as energy, environment, education, transport, business development and social affairs. The Secretariat works in close collaboration with governments and with an active network of Euro-Mediterranean partners to assist project promoters throughout the entire project cycle.

Official Documents

[UfM Ministerial Declaration EN](#)

[UfM Ministerial Declaration FR](#)

[UfM Ministerial Declaration AR](#)

[Speech by UfM Secretary General](#)

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