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Union for the Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting on the Digital Economy

30th September 2014, Brussels

Draft Declaration

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The Ministers in charge of ICT/Digital Economy, under the Union for the Mediterranean Co-Presidency of H.E. Dr. Azzam Sleit, Minister of Information and Communication Technology of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and of H.E. Ms Neelie Kroes, Vice-President of the European Commission and Commissioner for the Digital Agenda of the European Union, gathered to reaffirm their shared commitment to the Digital Economy and emphasise that it continues to be an unique tool for social and economic development and a creator of growth and jobs on both sides of the Mediterranean.

Recalling that:

The 2008 ICT EUROMED Ministerial in Cairo emphasized a stronger commitment to a ‘EUROMED Information Society’ by intensifying cooperation in areas such as network connectivity, the digital divide, Internet governance, research, electronic multilingual contents, on-line health science and services. Parties also committed to strengthen the regulatory framework exchange between national telecommunications regulators, which resulted *inter alia* in the founding of the EMERG (Euromed Regulator Group) in July 2008 in Malta.

Information and Communication Technologies have an economic, social, political, and environmental impact. They are a vector of modernisation of private and public life, as well as a lever of growth and job creation, and provide fertile ground for innovation and creativity.

Stressing that important developments have led to this UfM Digital Economy Ministerial meeting:

The rapid developments in the Digital Economy continuously transform the world's economies and societies, bringing people closer together globally, within the EU and within the Mediterranean region. Worldwide, for example, there will be up to three billion Internet



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users with 2.3 billion mobile-broadband subscriptions by the end of 2014, almost five times as many as in 2008.

Partly building on some of the openings presented in the 2005 Tunis Declaration, recent changes in the Arab world marked a historical milestone in the countries of the Southern Mediterranean and opened up new cooperation opportunities. The call for dignity, democracy, respect for human rights, freedom of expression, privacy & data protection and more inclusive growth has influenced the entire region. Issues such as Internet availability and access have become focal points bringing together voices of citizens and journalists calling to express and share opinions, as well as businesses and entrepreneurs wanting to foster international trade and develop e-business, or governments willing to promote transparency and e-government solutions. Impediments to Internet availability and access have been challenged wherever and whenever these occurred.

ICT continues to be a strong source of economic growth and jobs on both sides of the Mediterranean. The continuing success of this digital breakthrough will depend on a multitude of factors that are shaping the societies and businesses of the future, in particular appropriate infrastructures, commonly agreed and used standards, interconnected networks, cross-border regulatory and administrative cooperation, and the availability of skills making users and developers fit for the global digital competition.

Common challenges that have emerged due to the pervasiveness of the Digital Economy such as big data, data protection, cloud computing or the governance of the Internet must be addressed.

Requests for UfM involvement have increased from ICT EU/Southern Mediterranean stakeholders such as those reflected in the joint statement of the 'Southern Mediterranean Dialogue on E-Communications & the information Society' or the common conclusions of the 'E-signature for e-business explanatory seminars', together with calls for an increased role of the UfM and a continued interest in ICT developments.

Digital technologies also raise new issues. The amplification of online business, for example, makes it necessary to create new tools, such as electronic signature, or new legal frameworks to protect operators on the Internet. The question of Universal services also emerges.

Have adopted the following Declaration:

a. Common Digital Economy issues



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1. The Ministers agreed that the ICT solutions are crucial to address economic and societal challenges. They underlined:

- Both the potential and the challenges posed by the development of the Digital Economy;
- The opportunity in the area of cooperation in the development of digital services, in particular open data, big data, and e-infrastructures. In this respect it is necessary to have further public and private investment in increasing the interconnection between Mediterranean and European connectivity systems and research networks in order to facilitate and achieve the mutually beneficial exchange and sustained interconnection between Mediterranean education and research networks within and between regions, and the access to and use of educational, health, scientific and research resources (e-infrastructures), while respecting national sovereignty interests;
- The potentials of promoting cross-border and national e-transactions for e-business, and the role of interoperable solutions such as e-signatures and related e-trust services;
- The importance of ensuring the right regulatory environment to facilitate the creation of a harmonized, pro-competitive and thus investment-friendly environment in the electronic communications sector, and with that accelerate the development of the EU-Southern Mediterranean Digital Economy;
- The need to maintain a safe and reliable cyberspace to ensure trust and confidence in the Digital Economy;
- The need to promote capacity building to maximize the potential of the Digital Economy; and
- The importance of Euro-Mediterranean spaces for dialogue, such as the ICT4All Forum which fosters exchanges between all ICT stakeholders.

2. The Ministers stressed that one of the more straightforward ways of building closer ties between the Mediterranean countries is to enhance the **exchange of good practices**, at bilateral and regional levels, in key areas for the Digital Economy.

3. The Ministers also expressed their explicit **support to the ongoing work streams and projects** related to the Digital Economy of the Mediterranean such as:

- The connections between Mediterranean countries, in particular through the jointly funded project EUMEDCONNECT, and the Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN). The Ministers agreed that the connection of the research and education networks to the European network GEANT is highly beneficial and that



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increased funding for this purpose is necessary in order to develop ultra-high speed connectivity between the EU and the Mediterranean.

- The cooperation in the telecommunications sector in the form of the Euromed Regulator Group EMERG. In particular, the Ministers expressed appreciation for the EMERG recommendations on the topics of universal services, licensing regimes, retail price regulation, net neutrality, network security, Next Generation Access (NGA), cost accounting methodologies and number portability. In the light of the increasing professionalization and the steps towards self-sufficiency, the Ministers welcomed the Commission's intention to continue its financial support to EMERG.

4. In order to benefit from the **new impetus** in the Euro-Mediterranean area, the Ministers furthermore decided:

- To prioritise efforts to develop an interoperability framework between the EU and Southern Mediterranean countries and between themselves. The first priority in this development shall be **electronic trust services including e-signature**, using elements of the EU eIDAS Regulation (Regulation 910/2014 on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions) as the common reference. This would also facilitate the realisation of cross-border markets for goods and services, provide a higher degree of protection against fraud, a greater climate of trust between economic operators and lower costs of service providers.
- To consider the general principles part of the **Charter on Open Data** (adopted by the G8 on June 18, 2013) as guidelines for cooperation right up to their potential adoption in the form of a Euro-Mediterranean charter in this area. The June 2013 charter would constitute a significant first step for further cooperation in this field that should be taken into consideration. Other important and recent milestones such as the review of the EU Re-use of Public Sector Information (PSI) Directive and the adoption of Commission's guidelines on recommended standard licences, datasets and charging for the re-use of PSI can also be considered.
- To instruct their digital economy Senior Officials to develop recommendations for a possible long-term strategy in the field of **e-Health** in the Mediterranean region, with reference also to the data protection dimension. The Ministers referred in particular to telemedicine, prevention, home care, remote illness monitoring, electronic patient files and m-Health (medical and public health practice support by mobile devices such as smart phones, patient monitoring devices, tablets and other wireless devices). To exploit the full potential of these solutions, governments should involve all stakeholders in establishing appropriate rules, in particular regarding accessibility and the use of personal data.



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- To encourage UfM countries to avail more actively of the **twinning** opportunities in the region.

b. Global developments in the area of Internet governance - An open and vibrant internet for all

5. The Ministers welcomed the outcome of the NetMundial Internet Conference of April 2014, as well as the conclusions of the London ICANN High Level Conference of June 2014 and the Istanbul Internet Governance Forum meeting of September 2014. They stressed the importance of implementing an open, multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance, to keep the Internet as a single, un-fragmented network, subject to the same laws and norms that apply in other areas of day-to-day life; where individuals can benefit from their rights and from judicial remedies when those rights are infringed; and where core Internet governance decisions are truly globalized.

The Ministers endorsed current global efforts to work out mechanisms to implement a multi-stakeholder model where roles and responsibilities are well-defined for a better understanding.

6. The Ministers underlined the need for all stakeholders to cooperate on concrete and actionable steps leading to:

- A strengthened framework for the governance of the Internet, built on democratic multi-stakeholder processes, ensuring the meaningful and accountable participation of all stakeholders;
- An open, participative, consensus-driven governance for the Internet which is accountable, equitable, distributed and collaborative, and that places the Internet's core values at the centre, namely as a single, open, free, secure, reliable and un-fragmented network and providing non-discriminatory access to knowledge;
- Efficient and effective capacity-building and empowerment, including via measures such as remote participation and adequate funding, as well as access to meaningful and timely information;
- Improved communication and coordination between technical and non-technical communities;
- The development, by all organizations with responsibilities in the Internet governance ecosystem, of principles for transparency, accountability and inclusiveness;
- A strengthening of the Internet Governance Forum by the end of 2015, including an extension of the IGF mandate beyond the five-years term, and guaranteed, stable and



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predictable funding, as well as the adoption of mechanisms to promote worldwide discussions through inter-sessional dialogues and improved outcomes; and

- The globalization of ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned names and Numbers) and IANA (Internet Assigned Numbers Authority) and the strengthening of transparency and accountability mechanisms through a process taking into account: the protection of the global functioning of the Internet as a primary condition in cooperation with all stakeholders; inclusiveness; the establishment of clear checks and balances; and the protection of human rights and rule of law.

c. Mechanisms to implement these decisions

7. The Ministers agreed to pursue a regular, specific recommendations-based regulator/ministry exchange at Senior Official level, with the involvement of further other Euro-Mediterranean digital economy stakeholders. This would include an exchange and cooperation between Ministries and functionally independent Regulators as a key factor for the development of the regulatory framework both at a national, regional and EU-Southern Mediterranean level.

8. The Ministers also agreed to establish a Euro-Mediterranean Digital Economy and Internet Access Expert Working Group which would include the UfM Secretariat which would assist the digital economy Senior Officials in creating synergies among current initiatives, provide input to future actions, exchange information and good practices, including funding possibilities. The contribution so far made by the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstructions and Development (EBRD) was appreciated. Further areas which could be developed in this context with a possible view to establishing a working programme in further areas such as the approximation of regulation and legislation relevant to information exchanges, secure e-transactions, e-commerce, e-services and e-government, and taking into account good practices in the use of ICTs.

9. The Ministers called upon the UfM Secretariat to intensify its involvement in the Digital Economy by identifying, managing the process of labellization and developing regional projects with relevant stakeholders together with all UfM Members, with the objective of promoting inclusive economic development and creating decent jobs particularly for small and medium enterprises, young people and women. The UfM is requested to bring together financing stakeholders concerning ICT-related industry enhancing projects, namely in the fields of research and development, innovation, infrastructures, logistics, company clusters, training and education.

10. The Ministers agreed to develop all the discussed and future common activities in close and clear consultation with - and involvement of - the relevant stakeholders.



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11. The Ministers agreed to meet again to discuss the progress of the actions agreed in this Declaration and decide on further concrete steps in enhanced cooperation on the Digital Economy.