TRA
TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY AUTHORITY
هيئة تنظيم الاتصالات

United Arab Emirates

UAE'S SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL E-GOVERNMENTS

REGIONAL E-GOVERNMENTS
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Contents

Overview

Over the past decade, the GCC countries have made great strides in digital transformation, due to many factors, including close cooperation between these countries at all levels. They have succeeded in providing advanced government services to the public, and they exerted great efforts in absorbing modern technology and catching up with the latest trends in the age of 4IR.

The UAE plays a pivotal role in promoting progress in the Gulf region towards digital transformation, taking precedence over this as it was the first e-government in 2001.
In 2013, His Highness Shaikh Mohammad bin Rashid, UAE vice president, prime minister and ruler of Dubai, launched the Smart Government Initiative. The primary aim of this initiative is to ensure the happiness of all UAE citizens. Shaikh Mohammad describes Smart Government as one that never sleeps (working 24 hours, 365 days a year), is as welcoming as a hotel, provides fast delivery and robust procedures, is innovative and adaptive, serves the citizens at any time and everywhere inside and outside the country, improves lives and responds to expectations.

Believing in its exceptional impact in the light of fast global changes, The UAE Government gives great importance to the ICT sector and uses it to serve all the sectors in the country. With its regional commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals and WSIS Action Lines, the UAE also committed to supporting of regional players to achieve digital support.
What the UAE seeks to achieve is to reach government services to the level of leadership and excellence so that these services become a factor of happiness and sustainable development. It believes that this can be achieved through collective action at the regional and global levels, away from the culture of a silo.

In this context, the UAE hosted several meetings and workshops of the International Telecommunication Union as well as other global events related to the ICT. The UAE also hosted and chaired several international events related to the ICT sector. One of the latest and most relevant events in this regard was the Regional eGovernment Experts Workshop 2019.

Hosting the Regional eGovernment Experts Workshop 2019 (ReGE19)

In light of its leading role at the regional level regarding eGovernment development, the UAE, in cooperation with other GCC states, hosted the Regional eGovernment Experts Workshop 2019 (ReGE19) to discuss the challenges faced by the stakeholders within the eGovernment Survey. The UAE Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) took the initiative to gather experts in order to explore the challenges under one roof and share its outcome with the rest of the world. As a result, the framework of the Regional eGovernment Experts Workshop 2019 (ReGE19) was designed to bring key international experts together in order to explore issues and challenges concerning the eGovernment development indicators, learn from the best practices and share knowledge.

The ReGE19 meeting included H.E. Hamad Al Mansoori DG of the UAE TRA, the GCC eGovernment Leaders of Bahrain, Oman and Saudi Arabia, Mr. Vincenzo Aquaro - Chief Digital Government DESA as well as UN, international and regional expert.

Purpose of the ReGE19

With eGovernment being at the core of building a strategic sustainable development framework, the focus of ReGE19 is to identify ways of improving the eGovernment development indicators and effectively utilize them in the future in cooperation with all member states.

The key objectives of the workshop include:

1. Exploring issues, new opportunities, and challenges related to the eGovernment development indicators;
2. Learning from the best practices and experiences;
3. Sharing knowledge from experts in the eGovernment and ICT field;
4. Ensuring that countries are using the U.N. indices to advance and enhance their service delivery and ensure that no one is left behind;
5. Using such indices in their development strategy at a national level and embrace them in their Key Performance Indicators (KPI).

Arabic version of the U.N. e-Government Survey

H.E. Hamad Mansoori and Mr. Vincenzo Aquaro jointly launched the Arabic version of the U.N. e-Government Survey Report. They both signed 20 copies with personal messages for the members of the workshops. The objective of launching the Arabic version is to share knowledge with the Arab countries, especially those who are working in the Government domain.

The survey shall allow all Arab governments an opportunity to become familiar with global attempts, advanced practices and reports in the field of digital transformation and the standards required to enable them to progress towards such transformation. The TRA initiated this step and issued the Arabic version of the U.N. E-Government Survey 2018, with cooperation from Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG), formerly named as the Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM).

Collaboration with GCC eGovernments

Four GCC countries were represented at the Regional e-Government Experts workshop on the U.N. e-Government Survey, Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The GCC countries noted the importance of the U.N. e-Government Survey. They are using it both as a digital development tool and as benchmarking against other countries. The GCC members made the following points:

- The U.N. Survey is seen as an excellent report full of information and knowledge
- They welcome the Arabic version of the report
- The weight of the three indexes should be modified giving more weight to the Online Service Index
- The Infrastructure Index should remove landlines as an indicator since the world is going mostly mobile
- The human capital index should have less weight and have indicators for digital literacy

ReGE19 Recommendations

The areas of focus and recommendations below were discussed in detail:

The eGovernment Survey 2018 and 2020

UNDESA should reconsider the distribution of EDGI as more weight to OSI and less weight to TII and HCI. This would make the report more focused towards digital transformation.

There are some components in both TII and HCI that should be dropped, and there need to be some new components introduced into the HCI to make it more relevant.

The GCC Strategic Position

The strategic position of the GCC countries as leading the Arab region in the OSI could lead to greater opportunities to share success stories with other countries in the Arab region that are below the world average. There are a number of case studies that could be shared with other countries in the region that will help those countries in their respective digital transformation.

Future-Focused Government

The future-focused government must revolve around industrial revolution 4.0 and how to develop excellent education, lifelong learning, skills to create new jobs. A strategy needs to be in place in the Arab region that will look at the specific skills that will be required in the future and start the educational development process now. This will develop a cadre of IT savvy men and women in the region, which will enable the private sector to find quality talent.

Diversified Knowledge Economy

The GCC countries can play a major role in South-South cooperation, sharing knowledge, know-how, e-services, and content with LDCs. Countries need to work hand in hand to build a diversified knowledge economy that contributes to the wellbeing of their societies.

Happy and Cohesive Society

The UAE has set a good example of declaring 2019 as the Year of Tolerance. GCC countries have initiatives that aim at developing a happy and cohesive society. The implementation of the Year of

Tolerance and other pertinent initiatives will enable to country's diverse and innovative population to continue to live in peace and prosperity.

Global Initiative for Further Digital Cooperation

Support a global initiative for further digital cooperation. The GCC countries should be more active in the international forums that are related to digital government. This would allow them to collaborate and cooperate with a greater number of countries, where they can impart their respective digital transformation knowledge, showcase their respective success stories, and adopted innovative trends from other countries.

Conclusion

Finally, the ReGE19 discussed trends that government should identify as critical factors for them to fully implement a digital strategy and take full advantage of the new digital economy. The following are the key trends:

- Developing strategies for new technologies and linking them in the overall development strategies. Trending technologies include artificial intelligence, block-chain technologies, internet of things, cloud technologies, robotics, virtual reality, augmented reality, and data analytics.
- Focus on digital skills, which means to have lifelong learning programs, knowledge creation policies, and enhancement of skills required by the private sector.
- Improving customer service, user-centric design, especially on the portals, to make sure people have a good experience;
- Enhancing e-participation tools and engaging citizens using crowdsourcing and living Labs;
- Investment on innovation, launching more incubators to guide young entrepreneurs;
- Achieving sustainability by strong leadership, providing future-proof infrastructure;
- Enhancing the principle of tolerance by open government, inclusion, inclusive policies and strategies and the right of getting digital services;
- Not only focus on open government data (OGD) but also to develop data scientists, develop OGD policies and guidelines, and launch data sharing platforms.

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