Report on the implementation of the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace

The government of the Arab Republic of Egypt sponsors projects promoting Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace thus complying with the recommendations of the UNESCO regarding these issues. Up till now, there are no legislative or judicial measures that have been taken pursuant to the UNESCO's Recommendation concerning these issues. This document goes through some of the ICT projects implemented by Egypt.

I. Development of Multilingual Content and Systems

H.E. Dr. Tarek Kamel in his speech in the "Workshop on Multilingualism: *Towards a Global Multilingual Internet: Avoiding the Risk of Fragmentation*" 2006, explained that with the dominance of the English content on the internet; the issue of multilingualism becomes more vital for the societies that are not Anglophone; these represent 70% of the internet users. Especially in countries where second language is usually uncommon, language barrier comes as a hindrance that faces national governments in their endeavors to increase the internet uptake and promote online services. He added that increasing the Internet outreach and promoting national e-services initiatives can only be accomplished if people are enabled to use the Internet in their native languages.

A. Eternal Egypt

Eternal Egypt is a premiere website that uses the state-of-the-art technology to present the Egyptian civilization from the dawn of the pharaohs to the modern era of independence, and brings the awe-inspiring experience of Egypt to the world through a project known as the Eternal Egypt. This website (www.eternalegypt.org) is a joint project between Ministry of Communications and Information Technology represented by CULTNAT, Center for Documentation of Cultural and Natural Heritage, Ministry of Culture represented by the Supreme Council of Antiquities, and IBM Corporate.

The centerpiece of Eternal Egypt is a trilingual website (English, Arabic and French) which offers the most robust repository of information and media about Egyptian cultural history available on the web today. High-resolution two- and three-dimensional artifact scans, 360° panoramas of locations, annotated multimedia animations, virtually-reconstructed environments, and real-time photos from webcams are woven into a multi-epoch journey through the museum that is Egypt itself. Ease of use and diversity of options for interacting with the wealth of content characterize the advanced functionality available on the Eternal Egypt website. Text-to-Speech technology enables spoken narration of the content throughout the website and nicely complements the viewer. In addition to the personalization features of the website including "My Collection", it has a persistent "notebook" which allows the visitors to assemble their favorite elements from the site.

Although the site was already launched in February 2004, the addition of new elements each month is on-going.

Awards and Recognitions

The Eternal Egypt project has been recognized around the world for its contributions to the fields of cultural heritage management, Egyptology, web design, and technology. As a result, the project has received several major awards including the World Summit Award in e-Culture in 2005 because it promotes Multilingualism as it is trilingual (English, Arabic and French) and encourages tourism to Egypt.

B. Arabic E-content Initiative

Many Arabic speakers lament the lack of Arabic-language material on the World Wide Web. With statistics showing that Arabic-language e-content accounts for only 0.3 percent of the global total – in sharp contrast to the massive contribution of Arab culture and civilization in human history – the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) has made it a national priority to rectify this situation and develop a strong Arabic-language presence on the web. With this aim, MCIT has already taken a number of steps.

In May 2005, MCIT launched the e-Content Initiative following the signing of a cooperation protocol with the Federation of Egyptian Publishers and the e-Learning and Business Solutions Union. The underlying strategy is based on the creation and promotion of an Arabic e-content portal, which aims to bring into existence 2,000 addresses and 300 software programs over a four-year period. The e-Content Initiative has a fund of LE 70 million to cover its first three years and it is expected that there will be up to 300,000 titles available on the portal by June 2007.

The Arabic e-content initiative has been launched in May 2005 to assure the role of Egypt as an electronic hub for culture and civilization. The initiative aims to improve the access for all to high-quality digital content on the global networks, and to support the increased availability, use and distribution of Arabic digital content.

The initiative objective is to avail the Arabic content in a digital form for local, regional and global markets. The initiative aims to support the private sector working in ICT industry in Egypt. The initiative will improve the industries related to content provision in Egypt and improve their competitiveness, in addition to create new job opportunities for youth in ICT field.

The initiative will provide the technical solutions for the project, including converting content into digital format, portal implementation, content securing tools, online payment applications and ecommerce, and tools for settling accounts with the various involved parties in the project.

A business model is being formulated with involved parties who are the content providers, e-payment companies, and the existing portals who are offering the digitized content of the initiative.

"The target of the Digital Arabic Content portal is to promote the use of digital technology to present Arabic content in the fields of literature, culture, history, social

sciences, art and music." explained Dr. Hoda Baraka. first deputy to the CIT Minister and Director of MCIT's information infrastructure. Already, digitized content covers a broad spectrum of categories and topics in the form of books, magazines, directories, news, business resources, movies, music, and sports, arts and entertainment resources.

Goals

1- Preservation of the Arabic content.
2- Conceptualization of added value for ICT
3- Increasing local, regional and international demand on Arabic content by having new markets for the digital content.
4- Developing the industry of electronic content creation, web applications development and content hosting and all related content industries.
5- Maximizing the base of utilization practice. Furthermore, it will help increasing both personal and professional competence of Egyptians, especially the youth & fresh graduates. and the local ICT industry.
6- Offering a multitude of job opportunities in an elite business sector, which is ICT .

II.   Facilitating Access to Networks and Services

A. The Information Technology Industry Development Agency ITIDA is a governmental entity that has been established through Law 15 of the year 2004. This agency aims at paving the way for the diffusion of the e-business services in Egypt capitalizing on different mandates of the authority as activating the Egyptian e-signature law and supporting an export-oriented IT sector in Egypt

- The main objectives of the ITIDA are:

    - Increasing exports of ICT products and services.
    - Regulating the electronic signature related activities.
    - Supporting and encouraging e-business in Egypt, especially among the small and medium enterprises.
    - Guiding and encouraging investments in the ICT sector.
    - Supporting R&D in the ICT sector and implementing its output.

- **ITIDA holds the Egyptian Contest for Electronic Content within the framework of the International Contest held in November 2005 in Tunis by the International Summit of the Information Society.**

B. **IT Clubs:** The Egyptian government through the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology is also keen on increasing the access to internet though IT clubs. "A cooperation agreement between the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) and the Ministry of Higher education aims to expand the number of IT clubs to all national universities and college campuses. The

clubs are geared to provide computer services, training on computer and IT skills and the use of the Internet, in the context of their educational curricula".

Under the agreement, the Ministry of Higher Education provides the premises of the planned clubs, and MCIT provides equipments, Internet connection and programs. In 2005, 500 IT clubs were established across Egypt's governorates.

Currently, some 1,080 existent IT clubs are being assessed to track their growth and development, and to highlight any problems faced.

C. **Free Internet:** In addition to the governmental endeavors in Multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace there is a parallel effort done by the government. Ambitious projects like the PC for every home and the Free Internet are living examples of public private partnerships. In both the ministry has not just launched an initiative, but actually formulated strategies, determined policies, stipulated regulations and got stakeholders together then supported the whole initiative.

Using one of the free numbers (0777-0000 or 0707-0000), that Telecom Egypt launched for Internet Service Providers (ISP's) in 2002, enables Egyptians to access the web without paying a subscription fee to an ISP, however they will pay the normal local rate of the call. Many other numbers are working in the same way also.

D. **ICT Training for the universities staff members.** The Supreme Council of Universities which is responsible for planning the policy of the university education and scientific research as well as to coordinate among the Egyptian governmental universities are keen on improving the Quality and Relevance of University Education. ICT Training is a project, which is to being implemented through a small unit housed at the Supreme Council of Universities (SCU), and administered and delivered using the computer classrooms established at each university. As a result, it is expected that training will have been delivered to 6,000 faculty members and instructors, 700 trainers (20% approximately of all staff including trainers); and 3,600 administrative staff (12%). They are planning on inclusion of online and distance learning as a delivery method for training.

III. Development of Public Domain Content

A. **PC for Every Home initiative (PCFEH):** In accordance with the national goal of developing the Information Technology and Communication (ICT) business sector, the Egyptian government represented by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) has launched a "PC for Every Home" Initiative on November 2002, providing PCs to the Home users in an affordable way. This initiative allowed a multitude of families to own a PC at affordable monthly installments, making the state-of-the art technology within everyone's reach and reaffirming MCIT support of the ICT sector.

B. **DSL (Digital Subscriber Line)** The government has paved the way for IT companies to provide internet access through DSL service in collaboration with Telecom Egypt co. (the governmental company handling all the phone connection in Egypt) with a relatively low rate.

C. e-government: The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology in cooperation with the Ministry of State for Administrative Development, and all other Ministries and government bodies established a complete framework for automating the services that the government provides and that sum up to over 700 services through the E-Government project. The web portal is considered the first step towards establishing an Egyptian E-Government that levels with the international governmental systems worldwide and that is supported by the latest technologies.

Objectives

1- To Provide services efficiently to Citizens, companies, and Investors through ensuring the following

- Outreach to all beneficiaries

  The aim is to extend congregated services to citizens regardless of their location or proximity to governmental service provider bodies. This concept will eliminate the need for physical location in governmental offices whenever essential services are required.

- Timely and efficient delivery

  Services will be provided to citizens, companies. and investors in a manner that meets their expectations- and within a convenient time framework. This will be achieved through upgrading governmental procedures, omitting unnecessary tasks, eliminating obstacles, and providing services for longer hours, and during weekends.

- More productivity/ quality performance

  The target of efficient service provision can be achieved through restructuring services dynamically to meet citizens' expectations. and personalizing delivery to each recipient's demands.

2- To Deploy a new philosophy and work methodology in government offices in a mode that would help

- Smooth transition of the Egyptian government operations to accommodate changes in the new globalization era

  Egypt's participation in international agreements (e.g. the European union partnership agreement) requires that government performance be maintained at a level equivocal to governmental systems worldwide. The E-Government project will contribute to the transition by providing and integrating the latest technology required for best performance.

- Government expenditure reduction:

The approach is expected to minimize government expenditure through proposing a new mechanism of government procurement, enterprise resource planning (ERP). and efficient allocation of government resources.

- Accurate updated information to decision makers

   Providing decision makers with accurate and updated information that support the decision making process, and enable constant follow up on the progress of the development projects.

IV. Reaffirming the Equitable Balance Between the interests Rights-Holders and the Public Interest

E-Signature Law

The e-Signature Law No 15 was approved by Parliament in April 2004. Its implementation is among the strongest mandates of the newly established Information Technology Industry Development Agency (ITIDA). This move will help improve the efficiency of government services while putting Egypt on an equal footing with global competitors in a world where e-signatures are becoming the norm. The Law regulates and formalizes the use of electronic transactions, guaranteeing that they are accorded the same legal merit as paper transactions.

V. Final Comments

In conclusion, the Ministry of Communications and Information technology of Egypt promotes the development of Multilingual Content through offering the Arabic e-content WSA award and by making the websites for the governmental organizations bilingual. The Egyptian Ministries collaborate to add to the Multi lingual content on the website. In their forefront are the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and the Ministry of State for Administrative Development. The other ministries nonetheless provide their websites in both Arabic and English. This is in addition to the individual. large scale companies and SMEs efforts in providing digital multilingual content on the web.

Of course the government alone can not bring to life Egypt's Information Society. MCIT has chosen to partner with the private sector to bring to life many of the projects that have now become part of our daily life. "All MCIT initiatives are implemented through the public-private partnerships," said Tarek Kamel, Minister of Communications and Information Technology. Ambitious projects like the PC for every home and the Free Internet are living examples of public private partnerships. In both the ministry has not just launched an initiative, but actually formulated strategies, determined policies. stipulated regulations and got stakeholders together then supported the whole initiative.