



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Executive Board

Hundred and seventy-seventh session

177 EX/24

PARIS, 18 September 2007
Original: English

Item 24 of the provisional agenda

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A REGIONAL CENTRE FOR INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN MANAMA, KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN, AS A CATEGORY 2 CENTRE UNDER THE AUSPICES OF UNESCO

SUMMARY

Background: The Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain proposed to UNESCO to establish on its territory a regional centre for information and communication technology placed under the auspices of UNESCO and requested the Director-General's assistance in preparing the necessary documentation to be submitted to UNESCO's governing bodies.

Purpose: The present document consists of a report by the Director-General assessing the feasibility of the proposal, supplemented by an Annex containing the draft agreement between UNESCO and the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain concerning the proposed centre. This feasibility assessment was undertaken in conformity with document 33 C/19 relating to the principles and guidelines for the establishment and functioning of institutes and centres under the auspices of UNESCO (category 2) as approved by the General Conference in 33 C/Resolution 90.

Decision proposed: paragraph 35.

Introduction

1. The Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain has proposed the establishment of a regional centre for information and communication technology as a category 2 centre placed under the auspices of UNESCO with the aim of using modern information and communication technologies towards fostering knowledge creation, acquisition and sharing in the six Member States of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Bahrain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Sultanate of Oman, State of Qatar and State of Kuwait, and Yemen.

2. This document outlines the background and the nature of the proposal and the foreseeable consequences of the creation of the centre, especially with regard to the benefits that the centre will bring to Member States and the centre's relevance to UNESCO's programmes.

3. On the basis of this document, the Executive Board may wish to approve the establishment of the centre as a category 2 centre placed under the auspices of UNESCO authorizing the Director-General to sign the agreement between UNESCO and the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain, which establishes the centre, in accordance with document 33 C/19 and 33 C/Resolution 90 of the General Conference concerning the establishment of international or regional centres under the auspices of UNESCO.

Challenges and opportunities

4. The challenges and opportunities offered by advances in communication and information, and the new paradigms of knowledge acquisition and sharing have triggered transformations that have a significant potential for contributing to the attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular poverty reduction and sustainable development, as well as creating mutual understanding among peoples and societies.

5. Knowledge increasingly defines the line between wealth and poverty, between capability and powerlessness and between human fulfilment and frustration. A country able to acquire and share knowledge can rapidly raise its level of development, help all its citizens to grow and flourish and take its proper place on the twenty-first century global stage.

6. The strategic and effective use of appropriate media and information and communication technologies (ICTs) is essential to reach the education for all (EFA) goals. Education systems around the world are under increasing pressure to use ICTs to teach students the knowledge and skills they need in the twenty-first century. ICTs are also key vehicles for ensuring a broader access to scientific and technical knowledge, including the popularization of scientific innovations, and its wider dissemination, especially in the developing world.

7. However, the dramatic changes caused by ICTs and the societal transformations that they generate require new approaches to bridge international knowledge gaps while ensuring cultural and linguistic diversity. There is a clear need to continuously harness new technologies and processes to develop knowledge societies that are people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented.

Framework

8. The international framework, in which the centre is proposed to be established, is characterized by a variety of international and regional declarations and action plans that shape the strategies, and programmes of many governments, intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the private sector, and which must be taken into account when establishing the centre.

9. Main references were established by the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) which defined the vision to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information

Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge.¹
Actions to realize this vision include:

- ICT capacity-building programmes, materials, tools, educational funding and specialized training initiatives, especially for regulators and other public-sector employees and organizations;
- regional backbone infrastructure, regional networks, network access points and related regional projects, to link networks across borders and in economically disadvantaged regions which may require coordinated policies including legal, regulatory and financial frameworks, and seed financing, and would benefit from sharing experiences and best practices;
- ICT applications and content aimed at the integration of ICTs into the implementation of poverty eradication strategies and in sector programmes, particularly in health, education, agriculture and the environment.

10. Action line “C4” related to “capacity-building”² of the Geneva Plan of Action, that is intended to realize the vision of WSIS, identifies a number of areas that are entirely applicable to the objectives and functions of the future centre, including:

- ensuring that young people are equipped with knowledge and skills to use ICTs, including the capacity to analyse and treat information in creative and innovative ways, share their expertise and participate fully in the information society;
- encouraging governments, in cooperation with other stakeholders, to create programmes for capacity-building with an emphasis on creating a critical mass of qualified and skilled ICT professionals and experts;
- working to remove the gender barriers to ICT education and training and promoting equal training opportunities in ICT-related fields for women and girls;
- empowering local communities, especially those in rural and underserved areas, in ICT use and promote the production of useful and socially meaningful content for the benefit of all;
- designing and implementing regional and international cooperation activities to enhance the capacity, notably, of leaders and operational staff in developing countries and LDCs, to apply ICTs effectively in the whole range of educational activities.

11. A number of provisions of the Geneva Plan of Action echo the “Dakar Framework for Action”,³ adopted in 2000, highlighting the need for ICTs to support education for all (EFA) goals at an affordable cost.

12. In Arab States, improving capacity-building is a high priority particularly in the four sectors of professional development, curriculum development, educational infrastructure, and institutional linkages with special emphasis on sustainability, scalability and policy implications.

13. Such results have been established through a UNESCO study to assess the integration of ICTs in education systems throughout the GCC countries, Jordan and Egypt.⁴

¹ WSIS-03/GENEVA/DOC/4-E.

² WSIS-03/GENEVA/DOC/5-E, paragraph 11.

³ www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/framework.shtml.

⁴ Research study conducted by UNESCO, based on an expert mission to Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait and Qatar (January 2006).

14. The Plan of Action for Building the Information Society in Western Asia⁵ prepared by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) as a follow-up to the first phase of WSIS (Geneva, 2003) taking account of a variety of other regional consultations,⁶ highlights the importance of “capacity-building for the region [...] beyond expanding basic ICT skills among the population by actually developing expertise in various ICT fields” and proposes a model for ICT capacity-building based on developing three areas, namely, human resources, research and development and ICT enterprises.

15. The Plan of Action also recognizes that “ICT in education and scientific research is transforming access to knowledge, the learning process and information delivery. This does not necessarily mean that traditional practices should be abolished but, rather, that conventional teaching, learning and research approaches are merging with new ones that facilitate education and scientific research at any time, in any location as required, while also addressing individual and institutional needs. New educational methods for solving problems and using appropriate tools for learning, collaboration and for building the information society. Moreover, lifelong learning coupled with accredited and certified training attached to defined skills, jobs and career paths are providing competitive advantages to labour as well as institutions. Within this new context of learning, the learner has become a continuous consumer of knowledge seeking autonomy and innovations in education systems”.

16. The Arab Human Development Report 2003 underlines the large deficiency in knowledge capacity in the Arab countries, both in the acquisition and production of knowledge, and points out that only by overcoming this shortcoming can Arab countries succeed and prosper in the modern age.⁷ The report stresses the importance of knowledge to Arab countries as a powerful driver of economic growth through higher productivity.

17. The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) has pointed out that for the purpose of enhancing ties between Member States in the productive sectors, utilizing economies of scale, achieving economic integration, and improving the distribution of integration benefits among them, Member States shall take measures necessary to support, finance, and form joint projects, both private and public, including adopting integrated economic policies between the Member States for infrastructure projects and basic services including communications, information technology and education.⁸

Experiences in using ICTs for knowledge acquisition and sharing in the Arab region

18. Many initiatives have been taken throughout Arab States to take advantage of ICTs towards improving knowledge acquisition and sharing systems, and providing opportunities for lifelong learning and skill development with the aim of improving local economies and reducing unemployment rates. Major examples include the Arab Open University (AOU),⁹ the Egyptian Education Initiative (EEI),¹⁰ the Jordan Education Initiative (JEI),¹¹ the Saudi Arabian “Watani”

⁵ E/ESCWA/ICTD/2004/4, 2005. <http://www.escwa.org.lb/wsisis/conference2/RPoA.pdf>.

⁶ For example, Pan-Arab Regional Conference on WSIS, Cairo, 16-18 June 2003; ESCWA Round Table on Strategies and Plans of Action for Building the Information Society in Western Asia, Beirut, 21-22 June 2004; Second Regional Preparatory Conference for WSIS, Damascus, 22-23 November 2004.

⁷ Arab Human Development Report, 2003, *Building A Knowledge Society*.

⁸ Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, The Economic Agreement Between the GCC States, 31 December 2001, <http://www.gcc-sg.org/Economic.html>.

⁹ <http://www.arabou.org/> – The Arab Open University is a model of hybrid education involving face-to-face instruction as well as distance education (through satellites and video) as well as e-learning. It is the largest such effort in the region of Arab States.

¹⁰ <http://www.eei.gov.eg/> – Both the EEI and the JEI are models of public-private partnerships towards the utilization of modern ICTs to improve school education in Egypt and Jordan respectively. Both initiatives are led by the World Economic Forum (WEF).

¹¹ <http://www.jei.org.jo/>.

project, the Open University of Sudan,¹² the Syrian Higher Education and Research Network (SHERN)¹³ and the Syrian Virtual University.¹⁴ The EEI and the JEI are good models of public-private partnerships initiated by the World Economic Forum.

19. A good example for a successful subregional initiative is the AOU with headquarters in Kuwait and branches in Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Funded by AGFUND¹⁵ and sustained through its own revenue model it uses various models of distance education and e-learning combined with face-to-face instruction to reach students in Arab States.

20. The Kingdom of Bahrain has over the past year engaged in an overall new strategy for harnessing ICTs for knowledge acquisition and sharing exemplified by the successful operations of the branch of the AOU attracting students both from Arab and Asian countries. UNESCO helped deploying an open-source course management system to serve educational content to students.

21. Furthermore, in 2004, the Kingdom of Bahrain launched the “Schools of the Future” project, with the aim of creating a single school network served by a central e-learning portal. The project, implemented in cooperation with Microsoft, aims at transforming textbooks into interactive e-books, at equipping every classroom with the tools to constitute an effective e-learning environment, and at training teachers to use these e-learning systems.

22. Additionally, Ministry officials have been put through an intensive ten-day dot NET boot camp. This training is addressed at developers to master the development of teaching material on state-of-the-art multimedia, accessible anytime online and offline. With roughly 200 schools in the Kingdom of Bahrain, a more decentralized approach is required to extend the training to them all. Consequently, the plan is to create 40 “super trainers”, who will in turn create enough trainers around the country to pass on their knowledge and skills to the Kingdom of Bahrain’s 8,000-strong teaching population.

23. In 2005, following a donation made by the Kingdom of Bahrain, the “UNESCO King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa Prize for the Use of Information and Communication Technologies in Education” was established. The purpose of the prize is to reward projects and activities of individuals, institutions and other entities or non-governmental organizations for excellent models, best practice, and creative use of ICTs to enhance learning, teaching and overall educational performance.

24. However, in spite of the foregoing efforts, the need to share resources, experiences and know-how among the six Member States of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) and Yemen remains strong in order to be able to fully harness the potential of ICTs for knowledge acquisition and sharing, including developing high quality educational and training content in Arabic. There is a clear need to develop common strategies, establish joint programmes, share existing resources and identify new resources including contributions from the private sector and other partners to capitalize on existing efforts.

25. Therefore, this study examines the feasibility of using ICTs towards fostering knowledge creation, acquisition and sharing in the six Member States of the Cooperation Council for the Arab

¹² <http://www.ous.edu.sd/> – Sudan’s Open University has been established with direct UNESCO support to utilize distance education systems in order to reach the marginalized learners throughout Sudan in spite of the deficiencies in the country’s networking infrastructure.

¹³ <http://www.shern.net/> – A UNESCO-UNDP project to build a wide area network connecting all Syrian universities with local area networks established within each university campus. The project was officially launched in June of 2004.

¹⁴ <http://www.svuonline.org> – The Syrian Virtual University is a direct outcome of the SHERN initiative which uses e-learning as a model of learning for the Syrian higher education system.

¹⁵ <http://www.agfund.org/> – AGFUND is a non-profit regional development institution, established in 1980 by the initiative of HRM Prince Talal Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, with the support of the leaders of the Arab Gulf States that constitute its membership and contribute to its budget.

States of the Gulf (GCC) and Yemen through a regional centre for information and communication technology.

Consideration of the feasibility of the proposed centre

Overview of the proposal

26. The proposal for the establishment of regional centre for information and communication technology in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain, as a Category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO made by the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain addresses the requirements specified in document 33 C/19, as approved by the General Conference in 33 C/Resolution 90.

27. Among the most salient aspects are the following:

(a) Objectives of the centre

The centre will contribute to the development of the Arab region by harnessing the power of ICTs for creating capacity in knowledge sharing and acquisition through the establishment of a knowledge hub for the six Member States of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) and Yemen by:

- (i) fostering creativity, innovation and practical implementations of ICTs towards capacity-building and lifelong professional skills development;
- (ii) enabling design, development, effective production, and dissemination of knowledge products for sustainable development;
- (iii) promoting the creation and dissemination of Arabic digital content;
- (iv) facilitating the consolidation of resources, know-how and private sector contributions towards ICT applications.

(b) Functions

The functions of the centre will be tailored to contribute to use ICTs in knowledge acquisition and sharing for fostering sustainable development. In particular, it will have the following functions:

- (i) laboratory of ideas for developing strategic plans, policies and practices through networking of regional professionals, including the organization of face-to-face meetings and the establishment of virtual community of practices in the area of its competence;
- (ii) clearing house on theories, experiences and best practices in the area of the application of ICTs for knowledge sharing and acquisition worldwide;
- (iii) capacity-builder providing education and training for trainers in the areas related to capacity-building in ICTs for knowledge sharing and acquisition, including system development, applications development, computer literacy, information literacy, etc.;
- (iv) research centre for developing and coordinating cooperative research on technology solutions for knowledge acquisition and sharing;
- (v) technology hub providing state-of-the-art computing infrastructure in order to advance large-scale data-processing applications, scientific research and high-performance computing.

(c) Structure and legal status

The centre shall enjoy on the territory of the Kingdom of Bahrain, under the authority of the Minister of Education, the personality and legal capacity necessary for the exercise of its functions, in particular the capacity to contract, institute legal proceedings, acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property.

(d) Constitution

The Constitution of the centre shall include provisions concerning:

- (i) legal status granting to the centre, under national legislation, the autonomous legal capacity necessary to exercise its functions and to receive subventions, obtain payments for services rendered, and acquire all necessary means;
- (ii) a governing structure for the centre allowing UNESCO representation within its governing body.

(e) Hosting

The centre will be hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain's Ministry of Education as an independent entity exerting its functions and executing its activities and programmes using its own capacity and drawing on the capabilities of the Kingdom of Bahrain's government, universities, national research centres and other governmental and non-governmental organizations in the Kingdom of Bahrain and those in the GCC region and Yemen, in accordance with the regulations of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

(f) Functioning

The Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain will take appropriate measures, in accordance with its prevailing laws and regulations, to ensure that the centre has its functions as required for UNESCO category 2 centres. This includes:

- (i) appointment of a Director of the centre by the Chairperson of the Governing Board in consultation with the Director-General of UNESCO;
- (ii) guidance and supervision by a Governing Board, whose membership comprises a representative of the Director-General of UNESCO. Its structure would be defined by the annexed agreement (Annex II). The Minister of Education of the Kingdom of Bahrain or his representative will be the Chairman of the Board of Governors and the Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Bahrain shall have, in addition to the Minister of Education, a permanent representation within the centre's governing body.

(g) Financial matters

The Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain will cover the costs of the facilities, including equipment, utilities, communications, secretariat staff and maintenance of infrastructure, projects, training and other educational and scientific activities of the centre. It is understood that UNESCO may only contribute to concrete activities/projects of the centre if those are deemed to be in line with UNESCO's programme priorities and as foreseen in the budget approved by UNESCO's governing bodies. UNESCO will not, however, provide financial support for administrative or institutional purposes. Furthermore, the centre may require the support of UNESCO in securing additional resources from UNESCO Member States and other regional and international organizations, in which case UNESCO will assist the centre in the mobilization of funds.

(h) Areas of cooperation with UNESCO

The cooperation expected from UNESCO once the proposed centre is established is as follows:

- (i) providing advice towards the formulation of the short-, middle- and long-term vision and strategy of the centre;
- (ii) encouraging intergovernmental, non-governmental and private sector entities, as well as Member States of UNESCO, to provide financial and technical assistance and to propose appropriate projects to the centre, and facilitating contacts with other international organizations relevant to the functions of the centre;
- (iii) providing the centre with relevant UNESCO publications and other pertinent materials and disseminating information on the activities of the centre via the UNESCO “WebWorld” website, newsletters and other mechanisms at its disposal;
- (iv) participating, when appropriate, in the educational, scientific and training activities/meetings held by the centre.

28. Relationship between the activities of the centre and UNESCO’s objectives and programmes

The activities of the centre will contribute to fostering the use of digital technologies and building of knowledge societies, as essential conditions for development, which constitutes one of the priorities of the Organization as part of its overall mission to contribute to the building of peace, the alleviation of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information.

In particular, the centre’s activities will contribute to achieving Overarching Objective 5 “Building inclusive knowledge societies through information and communication” of UNESCO’s draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2008-2013 (34 C/4).

The activities of the centre are also closely linked to actions aimed at developing new approaches to knowledge dissemination and utilization in the corresponding Draft Programme and Budget for 2008-2009 (34 C/5) (Major Programme V “Communication and Information” and the intersectoral platform on “ICT-enhanced learning”).

29. As a specific contribution to the building of national capacity in Bahrain, the centre will:

- (a) conduct research studies in the area of e-learning, and its applications, and provide educational and technical support and expertise in this area to participating countries undertaking or willing to undertake e-learning projects;
- (b) disseminate information related to the use of ICTs in education among participating countries as well as the exchange of such information with specialized centres;
- (c) support existing projects involving ICTs in education in the participating countries and liaise with the respective national organizations within these countries;
- (d) prepare databases in the areas of e-learning management, e-content production and e-learning resources in order to facilitate knowledge sharing on national and regional scales;
- (e) provide direct technical support to Bahrain’s King Hamad’s Schools of the Future Project, and similar regional initiatives, to help it evolve as an exemplary model in the region.

30. Regional and international impact of the centre

(a) Coverage

The centre will carry out its activities in the six Member States of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) and Yemen. The centre will seek involvement from other countries in the region that are willing to contribute to and benefit from the centre.

(b) Potential impacts

Currently, a regional, state-of-the-art centre on ICTs in capacity-building and knowledge at local and regional level does not exist. The centre is thus expected to contribute to enhanced technical, educational and scientific cooperation and knowledge transfer in related topics at both regional and international levels. The potential impact of the centre on scientific and technical cooperation at inter-regional levels is thus significant.

(c) Technical cooperation

Technical cooperation with other established or proposed institutes and centres being part of UNESCO or placed under its auspices, is envisaged. Other relevant international and regional agencies and scientific NGOs can be linked to the centre through UNESCO. Furthermore, the centre has the intention to obtain the auspices of the World Economic Forum. Cooperation with other United Nations entities, including ITU, UNDP, UNCTAD and UNIDO, is envisaged. Furthermore, strong cooperation with the leading IT private sector companies is foreseen for this centre.

31. Results expected from UNESCO's contribution

(a) Role of the centre in executing the Organization's programme

As pointed out in paragraphs 2, 4, 5 and 6 of this document, the centre fits well with UNESCO's objectives in general and the "ICT in capacity-building" programmes in particular. The preparatory work for the establishment of the centre facilities and capacity has demonstrated that it can collaborate with a great number of activities as specified in the biennial sectoral priority of Major Programme V "Communication and Information" entitled "Promoting innovative applications of ICTs for sustainable development" as well as the "ICT-Enhanced Learning" intersectoral platform between both the Education Sector and the Communication and Information Sector.

(b) Potential impact of UNESCO's contribution on the centre's activities

The assistance of UNESCO to the centre is necessary from a dual standpoint:

- (i) UNESCO's catalytic function during the start-up period of the centre is to lend its technical and organizational expertise;
- (ii) UNESCO's role as a bridge to other countries, international organizations and relevant NGOs working on ICTs in capacity-building issues is essential for successful exposure of the centre.

32. Summary evaluation of the proposal submitted

- (a) From the previous paragraphs it is clear that the establishment of the centre is fully in line with UNESCO's objectives and programmes and that the centre would contribute to the execution of the UNESCO's programmes while UNESCO's sponsorship is necessary for the centre's international standing and development.

- (b) The strong national drive shown since 2004 by the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain through its “Schools of the Future” initiative, AOU-Bahrain branch and “UNESCO King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa Prize for the Use of Information and Communication Technologies in Education” is a favourable precondition.
- (c) The proposed institutional structure of the centre is compatible with the decision taken at the 33rd session of the General Conference on the guidelines for the establishment of a centre as a category 2 centre placed under the auspices of UNESCO.
- (d) UNESCO expects to associate the centre with some of the relevant activities of its Draft Programme and Budget for 2008-2009 (34 C/5), achieving a dual effect: supporting the start-up period of the centre while having it associated with the execution of its programme.
- (e) The risks that UNESCO could incur in the establishment of the centre would be low, due primarily to the strong support from the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain providing an appropriate infrastructure and core funding for the centre.

33. The points cited above indicate that the viability of the proposed centre under the auspices of UNESCO is high and that UNESCO's governing bodies should give it due consideration. A draft agreement is attached (Annex I) that addresses the legal, managerial and administrative aspects of the proposed centre. The draft agreement for the proposed centre has been elaborated through a process of consultation between the government authorities of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the UNESCO Secretariat.

34. The Director-General welcomes the proposed establishment of the centre in the Kingdom of Bahrain. He recognizes that the establishment of the centre could only be of benefit to UNESCO, the international community and the Kingdom of Bahrain. The centre would be established in line with the guiding principles for UNESCO's strategy for harnessing the potential of ICTs for knowledge acquisition and sharing. Furthermore, the centre would be in conformity with the provisions of Resolution 33 C/90.

Proposed draft decision

35. In the light of the above report, the Executive Board may wish to consider a decision along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 33 C/Resolution 90 and 175 EX/Decision 11,
2. Having examined document 177 EX/24 and its Annex,
3. Welcomes the proposal of the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain to establish the regional centre for information and communication technology under the auspices of UNESCO, as being in line with the guiding principles of UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy regarding applications of ICTs to harness the potential of ICTs for knowledge acquisition and sharing, as well in conformity with 33 C/Resolution 90;
4. Recommends to the General Conference at its 34th session to approve the establishment of the regional centre for information and communication technology (CICT) in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain, as a centre under the auspices of UNESCO (category 2), and to authorize the Director-General to sign the Agreement presented in the annex to document 177 EX/24.

ANNEX

DRAFT AGREEMENT

between

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN

and

THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

concerning the establishment of

THE REGIONAL CENTRE FOR INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

in Manama, Bahrain

Preamble

Bearing in mind the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, adopted on 16 November 1945,

Considering the proposal by the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain to establish on its territory a regional centre for applications of ICTs to harness the potential of ICTs for knowledge acquisition and sharing placed under the auspices of UNESCO,

Bearing in mind that the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain has already taken effective steps to provide the necessary facilities for the Centre,

Considering that the Director-General of UNESCO has been authorized by the General Conference of UNESCO to conclude with the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain an agreement in conformity with the draft which was submitted to the General Conference,

Desirous of defining the terms and conditions governing the contribution that shall be granted to the said centre in this Agreement,

Have agreed as follows:

ARTICLE 1
Interpretation

In this Agreement, "UNESCO" refers to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain is hereinafter referred to as "the Government".

ARTICLE 2
Establishment

The Government shall agree to take measures that may be required for the establishment of the Regional Centre for Information and Communication Technology (CICT) (hereinafter referred to as "the Centre") located in the premises established by the Kingdom of Bahrain's Ministry of Education (hereinafter referred to as MoE) in Manama, Bahrain as provided for under this Agreement.

ARTICLE 3 Participation

1. The Centre shall be an autonomous institution under the authority of the Minister of Education at the service of Member States of the Organization, which by their common interest in the objectives of the Centre's activities in ICTs for sustainable development of educational and scientific resources, desire to cooperate with the Centre.

2. Member States of UNESCO wishing to participate in the Centre's activities, as provided under this Agreement shall send the Director-General of UNESCO notification to this effect. The Director-General shall inform the Centre and the Member States mentioned above of the receipt of such notifications.

ARTICLE 4 Purpose of the agreement

The purpose of this agreement is to define the terms and conditions governing collaboration between UNESCO and the Government concerned and also the rights and obligations stemming therefrom for the Parties.

ARTICLE 5 Juridical personality

The Centre shall, under the authority of the Minister of Education, enjoy on the territory of the Kingdom of Bahrain the personality and legal capacity necessary for the exercise of its functions, in particular the capacity:

- to contract;
- to institute legal proceedings;
- to acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property.

ARTICLE 6 Constitution

The Constitution of the Centre shall include provisions concerning:

- (i) legal status granting to the Centre, under national legislation, the autonomous legal capacity necessary to exercise its functions and to receive subventions, obtain payments for services rendered, and acquires all necessary means;
- (ii) a governing structure for the Centre allowing UNESCO representation within its governing body.

ARTICLE 7 Objectives and functions

1. The Objective of the Centre is to contribute to development of the Arab region by harnessing the power of ICTs for creating capacity in knowledge sharing and acquisition through the establishment of a knowledge hub for the six Member States of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) and Yemen by:

- (i) fostering creativity, innovation and practical implementations of ICTs towards capacity-building and lifelong professional skills development;

- (ii) enabling design, development, effective production, and dissemination of knowledge products for sustainable development;
- (iii) promoting the creation and dissemination of Arabic digital content;
- (iv) facilitating the consolidation of resources, know-how and private sector contributions towards ICT applications.

2. The functions of the Centre will be tailored to contribute to use ICTs in knowledge acquisition and sharing for fostering sustainable development. In particular, it will have the following functions:

- (i) laboratory of ideas for developing strategic plans, policies and practices through networking of regional professionals, including the organization of face-to-face meetings and the establishment of virtual community or practices in the area of its competence;
- (ii) clearing house on theories, experiences and good practices in the area of the application of ICTs for knowledge sharing and acquisition worldwide;
- (iii) capacity-builder providing education and training for trainers in areas related to capacity-building in ICT for knowledge sharing and acquisition, including system development, applications development, computer literacy, information literacy, etc.;
- (iv) research centre for developing and coordinating cooperative research on technology solutions for knowledge acquisition and sharing;
- (v) technology hub providing state-of-the-art computing infrastructure in order to advance large-scale data processing applications, scientific research and high-performance computing.

3. The Centre shall pursue the above objectives and perform the above-mentioned functions in close coordination with the Organization's programmes in the area of harnessing the potential of ICTs for knowledge acquisition and sharing.

4. The Centre's capability to perform the above functions will depend on the extent to which international and regional support can be mobilized.

ARTICLE 8 **Governing Board**

The Centre shall be guided and supervised by a Governing Board composed of:

1. Permanent members as follows:

- (a) the Minister of Education (to which the UNESCO National Commission reports) or his/her representative will be the Chairman of the Board;
- (b) a representative of the Private Communication and Information Sector;
- (c) a representative of the Ministry of Education in addition to the Minister or his/her representative;
- (d) a representative of the University of Bahrain;
- (e) a representative of the Director-General of UNESCO;

- (f) a representative from each of the Member States of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) and Yemen;
 - (g) a representative from the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States.
2. Temporary members as follows: according to the decision of the representatives of the Governing Board a seat shall be accorded to a limited number of Member States from the region who have sent notification to the Director-General of UNESCO and who make a substantial contribution to the annual budget or running of the Centre.
3. The Governing Board shall:
- (a) approve the long-term and medium-term programmes of the Centre;
 - (b) approve the annual work plan and budget of the Centre, including the staffing table;
 - (c) examine the annual reports submitted by the Director of the Centre;
 - (d) issue the rules and regulations and determine the financial, administrative and personnel management procedures of the Centre;
 - (e) decide on the participation of regional intergovernmental organizations and international organizations in the work of the Centre.
4. The Governing Board shall meet in ordinary session at regular intervals, at least once every calendar year; it shall meet in extraordinary session if convened by its Chairperson, either on his or her own initiative, or at the request of the Director-General of UNESCO.
5. The Governing Board shall adopt its own rules of procedure. For its first meeting the procedure shall be established by the Government and UNESCO.
6. The Chairperson of the Governing Board will be the representative of the Minister of Education.
7. The Governing Board shall establish the terms and the indicators for the internal evaluation of the Centre and appoint the evaluators.

ARTICLE 9 Executive Committee

In order to ensure the effective running of the Centre between its sessions, the Governing Board may delegate to a standing Executive Committee, whose membership it fixes, such powers as it deems necessary.

ARTICLE 10 Technical Advisory Committee

1. The Governing Board will request technical advice from a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).
2. The TAC will be composed of:
- (a) “standing members” selected in representation of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) and Yemen (one member per country). They will be identified by the GCC itself and appointed every four years on a rotational basis by the Governing Board;

The standing members will contribute in identifying regional and local activities that may require specific expertise from the Centre.

- (b) “advisory members” who are representatives of other Member States, private sector, NGOs and international experts shall also be invited. They will be identified from the UNESCO ICT in Education network pool of partners and experts.

The advisory members will be identified and nominated by UNESCO’s Secretariat and shall be appointed for a period of four years on a rotational basis by the Governing Board.

When needed, the advisory members will be invited by the Director of the Centre in consultation with the Governing Board to seek their advice to broaden the scope of the services provided by the Centre, carry out its projects and activities, expand the Centre’s fund-raising strategy and strengthen its capacities.

ARTICLE 11 Secretariat

1. The Centre’s secretariat shall consist of a Director and such staffs as is necessary for the proper functioning of the Centre.
2. The Director shall be appointed by the Chairperson of the Governing Board in consultation with the UNESCO Director-General.
3. The other members of the Secretariat may comprise:
 - (a) members of UNESCO’s staff who would be temporarily seconded and made available to the Centre, as provided for by UNESCO’s regulations and by the decisions of its governing bodies;
 - (b) any person appointed by the Director, in accordance with the procedures laid down by the Governing Board;
 - (c) government officials who may be made available to the Centre, as provided by the Government’s regulations.

ARTICLE 12 Duties of the Director

The Director shall discharge the following duties:

- (a) direct the work of the Centre in conformity with programmes and directives established by the Governing Board;
- (b) propose the draft work plan and budget to be submitted to the Governing Board for approval;
- (c) prepare the provisional agenda for the sessions for the Governing Board and submit to it any proposals that he or she may deem useful for the administration for the Centre;
- (d) prepare reports on the Centre’s activities to be submitted to the Governing Board;
- (e) represent the Centre in law and in all civil acts.

ARTICLE 13 **Contribution of UNESCO**

1. UNESCO shall provide the technical assistance required to formulate the Centre's short-term, mid-term and long-term programmes.
2. The Organization will encourage international governmental, non-governmental and IT private sector financial entities, as well as Member States of the Organization, to provide financial and technical assistance and to propose appropriate projects to the Centre and will facilitate contacts with other international organizations relevant to the functions of the Centre.
3. The Organization will provide the Centre with relevant publications and other pertinent material, and will disseminate information on the activities of the Centre through UNESCO's "Web-World" website, newsletters and other mechanisms at its disposal.
4. The Organization will participate, when appropriate, in educational, scientific, technical and training meetings held by the Centre.
5. UNESCO may only contribute financially to concrete activities of the Centre if those are deemed in line with UNESCO's programme priorities and if such contribution is provided for in UNESCO's Programme and Budget. UNESCO will not provide financial support for administrative or institutional purposes.

ARTICLE 14 **Contribution of the Government**

The Government shall secure all the resources either financial or in kind needed for the administration and proper functioning of the Centre. The Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain shall secure financial resources for the implementation of the programme and the activities of the Centre. The contribution of participating governments in the establishment and operation of the centre involve:

- (a) the Board of Governors will decide on the size of the financial contribution that each of the participating countries, particularly the GCC countries and Yemen, should make;
- (b) other Arab States will also be encouraged to join the Centre and make a financial contribution, the size of which shall also be determined by the Board of Governors;
- (c) the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain through its hosting of the Centre and chairmanship of the Board of Governors, shall be entirely accountable for the maintenance of the premises and making available the administrative and technical staff necessary for the performance of its functions.

ARTICLE 15 **Other conditions**

1. Assistance by the Organization shall not preclude the Government from receiving additional assistance from other United Nations Agencies or Member States of the Organization, whether under unilateral action or bilateral agreements with the Government, or from private foundations.
2. The Government shall inform and consult the Organization regarding assistance described in the preceding paragraph.

ARTICLE 16 **Responsibility**

As the Centre is legally separate from the Organization, the latter shall not be legally responsible for it and shall bear no liabilities of any kind, be they financial or otherwise, with the exception of the provisions expressly laid down in this Agreement.

ARTICLE 17

Evaluation

1. UNESCO and the Government jointly and/or separately may, at any time, carry out an evaluation of the activities of the Centre in order to check:
 - whether the Centre makes an important contribution to the strategic goals of UNESCO;
 - whether the activities effectively pursued by the Centre are in conformity with those set out in this Agreement.
2. UNESCO and the Government shall agree to submit to the Governing Board of the Centre, at the earliest opportunity, a report on any evaluation.
3. Each of the contracting parties shall reserve the option of denouncing this Agreement or of requesting a revision of its contents, following the results of an evaluation.

ARTICLE 18

Use of UNESCO name and logo

1. The Centre may mention its affiliation with the Organization. It may therefore use after its title the mention “under the auspices of UNESCO”.
2. The Centre is authorized to use UNESCO’s logo or a version thereof on its letter-headed paper and documents in accordance with the conditions established by the governing bodies of UNESCO.

ARTICLE 19

Entry into force

This Agreement shall enter into force, following its signature by the contracting Parties when they have informed each other in writing that all the formalities required to that effect by the domestic law of the country and by UNESCO’s internal regulations have been completed. The date of receipt of the last notification shall be deemed to be the date of entry into force of this Agreement.

ARTICLE 20

Duration

This agreement is concluded for a period of ten years as from its entry into force, and may be tacitly renewed.

ARTICLE 21

Final clauses

1. Notwithstanding the above, both UNESCO and the Government shall be entitled to denunciate this Agreement unilaterally upon written notice to the other Party, in which case the Agreement shall end ninety (90) days after the date of receipt of such a notification. Nevertheless, the denunciation shall not affect the obligations established under this Agreement and entered into by the Parties which have not been fulfilled on the date of notification mentioned above.
2. This Agreement may be revised by consent between the Government and UNESCO.
3. Any dispute between UNESCO and the Government concerning the interpretation or application of this Agreement, if not settled by negotiation or any other appropriate method agreed to by the Parties, shall be submitted for final decision to an arbitration tribunal composed of three members, one of whom shall be appointed by a representative of the Government, another by the

Director-General of UNESCO, and a third, who shall preside over the tribunal, shall be chosen by the first two. If the two arbitrators cannot agree on the choice of a third, the appointment shall be made by the President of the International Court of Justice. The Tribunal's decision shall be final.

4. The obligations entered into by UNESCO and the Government under this Agreement shall be respected beyond the term of the Agreement in as much as required by the commitments made with respect to the withdrawal of the Organization's personnel, funds and property and the settlement of accounts between the Parties to this Agreement.

Done in Paris on 2007, in two original copies.