**Workshop on:**
**Electronic/Mobile Government in Arab States:**
**Building Capacity in Knowledge Management**
**Through Partnership**
**18-20 November 2008**
**Beirut, Lebanon**

**U N I T E D   N A T I O N S**

**DIVISION FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT**
**(DPADM)**
**DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS (DESA)**

## Opening remarks

## Ms. Haiyan Qian, Acting Director, DPADM/UNDESA

I am pleased to welcome you to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) workshop on: Electronic/Mobile Government in Arab States: Building Capacity in Knowledge Management Through Partnership.

I would like to thank ESCWA for agreeing to host this meeting at a very short notice. The support and professionalism that they provided us was greatly appreciated and has strengthened our partnership.

This is the second regional workshop on e-government to build capacity in knowledge management. The first one was held for the Asia region in Shanghai, People's Republic of China on 27 – 28 May 2008. UNDESA will be holding similar workshops for the African, Latin American and East Europe regions in 2009. The purpose of these workshops is to strengthen the e-government capacity of key decision-makers in government and to provide a forum where innovative ideas can be easily transferred and shared among the participants. Consequently, South-South cooperation and interaction will also play a critical role to the success of this workshop.

As more and more countries begin to implement e-government solutions to improve their service delivery to their respective citizens, the issue of treating the citizen as a client becomes critical. Too many countries view e-government solely as a means to automate their existing services to make them more efficient without taken into account the views of their respective citizens. As a result, many e-government solutions have not fully met their objectives, which is to transform government to empower citizens to participate in the democratic process.

Many Arab countries have started to invest resources in developing e-government solutions and services. They are revamping their existing web sites and portals to be more citizen-friendly by providing more information and services online. The use of mobile in the Arab region has expanded tremendously over the last couple of years and thus the opportunity to link mobile to e-government solutions and services will be critical to the transformation of these countries. Several of these countries have requested assistance from UNDESA to assist them in developing policies and guidance on implementing e-government solutions and services.

In line with meeting the UN Millennium Development Goals and the implementation of the WSIS Action line 7 on e-government, I will like to take this opportunity to share with you the development and launching of the Electronic and Mobile Government Knowledge Resource (EMGKR) project. The main objective of the EMGKR project is to create an Internet-based repository on e/m Government in the Arab regions, as part of the Global Repository to be posted on the EMGKR portal. The technical platform for this repository has been developed, financed and will be maintained by UNDESA and will be offered to our UNPAN development partners as well as the countries in the region to manage the knowledge, information and data that will be collected, organized and packaged. The content framework of the inventory has been designed by UNDESA in consultation with our development partners, which includes, but not limited to:

1. national e/m government strategies including their implementation plans;
2. related legal and regulatory framework;
3. institutional structure (the national institution, department or ministry in charge of e-government development, the existence of a Chief Information Officer (CIO) or a similar officer);
4. best e/m government practices;
5. focal points for e/m Government policies.

The EMGKR should be considered as a knowledge portal that will house key e-government documentation and information on individual countries. UNDESA sees this portal as an important tool in building the e/m government capacity in government civil servants and wants to ensure that Member States, our UNPAN partners, NGOs, international institutions and our development partners have a cyber space to their knowledge on e-government. UNDESA also views this initiative as a means to strengthen regional integration in the Arab region and create a robust network of e-government practitioners that will provide innovative e-solutions and e-services to others in the region.

I am looking forward to the discussions and debates that will take place over the next three days and invite all participants to take an active role during the workshop. As you have noticed from

the agenda, we have a mix of international, UN and country presentations, which will support workshop's objectives of:

1. Explore the challenges and barriers to e/m government development, review current research, including concepts and approaches of e/m government in the Arab region;
2. Map innovative practices of e/m government development citing best practices and lessons learnt;
3. Facilitate an active dialogue between the UN and the various regional stakeholders and Member States towards a framework of assessment on e/m government development in the Arab region;
4. Provide training on knowledge management on the development of the UN Global Knowledge Repository for Arab Region through the UNPAN tools;
5. Forge partnerships for the future work on the UN Global Knowledge Repository in Arab region; and
6. Promote regional cooperation and the regional perspective in e/m-government development, through discussions and presentations regarding the fundamentals of the enabling environment.

The results of the UN e-Government Survey shows that the majority of countries represented in this room today is in the upper 50% of the countries surveyed, with the United Arab Emirates leading the way at 32, followed closely by Bahrain at 42, Jordan at 50, Qatar at 53 and Kuwait at 57.

| Country | Ranking |
|---|---|
| U.A.E | 32 |
| Bahrain | 42 |
| Jordan | 50 |
| Qatar | 53 |
| Kuwait | 57 |
| Saudi Arabia | 70 |
| Lebanon | 74 |
| Egypt | 79 |
| Oman | 84 |
| Syria | 119 |
| Iraq | 151 |
| Yemen | 164 |

The e-Government Survey also shows that the development of integrated e-services and e-solutions through back-office integration and the use of e-participation tools are challenges for the region as a whole. A number of countries have requested the assistance of UNDESA to strengthen their e-government service delivery, policies and content. UNDESA has already provided support to Bahrain, Oman and Tunisia in the last six months and is available to assist other countries.

I hope that the next three days will be a good learning experience for all the participants. I urge you all to take advantage of the UNPAN training on the third day and when you return to your

respective countries, you will also take advantage of the various e-government training available online also through UNPAN.

In addition to the discussions and debates on e-government that will take place over the next three days, I hope that you also have fun during these three days. Learning and sharing become easier when they are fun. Please take full ownership of this workshop and UNDESA is ready to listen to your needs and provide you with the support needed.

Thank you.