



ICTPOLICYREVIEW

Egypt 



UNITED NATIONS



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Egypt 



Arab Republic of Egypt
Ministry of Communications and
Information Technology



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NOTE

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PREFACE

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are increasingly widespread in the world and are of growing importance to economic and social development. The international community has recognized the potential benefits of ICTs and encouraged governments to elaborate comprehensive, forward-looking and sustainable national ICT strategies as an integral part of their development plans and poverty reduction strategies. Many developing countries have already put in place one or several national ICT plans and others are in the process of doing so.

Regular reviews of ICT policy plans, involving the different stakeholders, are important. Failure to take early steps to monitor the implementation of ICT policy measures can delay ICT developments and restrict future policy measures. At the same time, assessing the impact of policy measures and sector-specific interventions is a challenging task.

Against this background, UNCTAD has developed a model policy review framework. It draws on our ongoing work on ICT policies and on ICT measurement for economic development and trade. The core aim of the ICT Policy Review (ICTPR) is to assess the implementation of national ICT strategies by examining how ICT and e-business development issues have been operationalized in the development strategies and to identify policies, programs and implementation mechanisms favouring the development of the information economy.

At the request of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) of Egypt, UNCTAD has carried out this first ICTPR from 2009 to 2010. It focuses on selected policies and initiatives contained in *Egypt's ICT Strategy 2007-2010*, and proposes a set of recommendations intended to serve as inputs into the next national ICT strategy, which is currently being prepared. It should be noted that the Review was concluded before the "25 January 2011 revolution". Thus, it does not take into consideration the implications of recent political events in Egypt.

Egypt has a unique set of circumstances and strengths that could help the country emerge as a major ICT player among information economies in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. It is my hope that the Review will help the Government to quantify the main achievements regarding the implementation of ICT policy measures as foreseen in its ICT strategy. I also expect it to facilitate the identification of critical success factors, best practices and conditions, as well as reasons for failure to be able to adjust and reform ICT policies. Understanding past developments is important in formulating new and targeted policy proposals that can support and accelerate ICT penetration within government, businesses and the society at large. More broadly, the ICTPR can help the Government to evaluate the extent to which national ICT policies have contributed to the country's overall development strategy. In this context, the Review will also help other countries in their policy-making process by the sharing of best practices.

Based on consultations with the MCIT, it was decided that the ICT Policy Review of Egypt would concentrate on five areas:

- Development of infrastructure – with particular emphasis on broadband;
- Development of human resources/skills required by a growing ICT industry;
- Development of ICT use in education;
- Development of local content in key ICT applications (especially the Internet); and
- Promotion of an export-oriented ICT sector, notably in the area of ICT-enabled services.

The Review has benefited from excellent contributions from the MCIT, other government ministries and agencies, as well as representatives of the private sector and civil society. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all involved.



Supachai Panitchpakdi
Secretary-General
UNCTAD

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The aim of this Review, executed jointly by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT) Information Center and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), was to assess the implementation of Egypt's National ICT Strategy, which drove the development of the sector in the past era and to develop recommendations for policy makers to overcome the challenges that have emerged.

In that context, the Review has explored five main areas: the development of infrastructure – with particular emphasis on broadband; development of human resources/skills required by a growing ICT industry; development of ICT use in education; development of local content in key ICT applications (especially the Internet); and promotion of an export-oriented ICT sector, notably in the area of ICT-enabled services.

However, it is important to note that the analytical work related to the Review was completed at the end of 2010, before the “25 January 2011 revolution”, and hence, the Review did not incorporate the crucial implications defined by the pivotal role that ICT played in the recent political evolution of Egypt.

Looking forward, I view 2011 as the dawn of a new era for ICT in Egypt, with even more Egyptians joining and embracing the information society as we continue to work to forge a knowledge economy. We have seen Egyptians using ICT tools not only to express their desire for change, but also to realize it.

I believe that the coming period will witness greater use of ICT by Egyptians as they channel their dynamism through political debate to pave the future of the country. Many changes in the coming period are to shape the face of ICT for Egypt, starting with changing the communications law in order to prevent future abuse of the telecom services. The ICT will continue to play its role in improving the citizens' welfare and stimulating the economy's growth, and will add to it a new role in the political arena through electronic voting.

MCIT is proud to support this progress by promoting ICT for democracy, just as it has previously championed ICT for development. The present Review will be of great value in this context.



Dr. Mohamed Abdel Kader Mohamed Salem
Minister of Communications and Information Technology
Egypt

STATEMENT BY THE RESIDENT COORDINATOR, UNDP EGYPT

Over the past decades the United Nations, through its different specialized agencies, funds and programmes, has identified a wide variety of options to accelerate human development and liberate human capacities. The role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is one of these options as ICTs increase people's access to knowledge and information and provide new avenues for communication.

For its part, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has long recognized ICTs as important instruments of empowerment that contribute to developing an information society and, in so doing, creating job opportunities and fostering education. ICTs are also effective tools for social and political accountability, as was witnessed in the central role social media platforms played in mobilizing the public and communicating social and political demands during the events in Egypt earlier this year.

Since the 1990s, ICTs have witnessed unprecedented growth in Egypt and their impact on the Egyptian society has expanded. In this regard, I wish to commend the constructive role played by the Government of Egypt, and, in particular, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT), with which UNDP has had the honor of collaborating since its establishment in 1999. The MCIT has led the drafting and implementation of national plans, initiatives and strategies to develop ICT infrastructure in Egypt, especially in rural areas. In so doing, the MCIT has recognized the important role of ICTs in Egypt's development process, and the benefits to be derived from partnerships between the public and private sectors, and with international partners, such as UNDP.

During this period, fixed lines, mobile services, personal computer (PC) access, Internet and post office services have experienced significant growth, with better quality and lower prices. Today, the different platforms of the Web 2.0, such as Facebook and Twitter, reflect how the younger generation chooses to interact and exchange information.

This ICT Policy Review offers the opportunity to build on past experiences and lessons learned, to ensure that ICTs continue to expand opportunities for Egyptians, and to build a more inclusive and just society. I congratulate all those involved with its preparation.



James W. Rawley
UNDP Resident Representative
Egypt

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The UNCTAD team comprised Cécile Barayre and Torbjörn Fredriksson, as well as two international consultants, Shahid Akhtar and Richard Labelle. Overall direction was provided by Mongi Hamdi and Anne Miroux.

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CONTENTS

Preface.....	iii
Statement by the Minister of Communications and Information Technology	iv
Statement by the Resident Coordinator, UNDP Egypt	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Contents	vii
List of Abbreviations	x
Executive Summary	xiii
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
A. ICTs for development and the role of policies	1
B. The UNCTAD ICT Policy Review	1
C. Egypt – a pioneer in leveraging ICTs	2
D. Structure of the Review	3
CHAPTER II: ASSESSMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT	5
A. Main achievements	5
1. Deregulation of the telecommunications sector.....	5
2. Broadband development in main cities and business parks.....	5
3. Mobile and Internet uptake.....	6
4. Introduction of converged services to compounds around Cairo	6
B. Challenges	7
C. Recommendations	7
1. Make technological choices based on the demand side.....	8
a. Quantify in time and space the demand for broadband	8
b. Encourage the development of municipal broadband solutions.....	9
2. Promote greater competition and infrastructure sharing	13
a. Develop models of open access and share broadband infrastructure	13
b. Make use of the alternate fiber-optic networks owned by public corporations and utilities for extending Internet access	14
c. License other operators for fixed line telephony and data services.....	14
d. Encourage private sector investment in network infrastructure and fiber deployment	15
e. Identify and deal with network quality of service issues.....	15
3. Promote underserved areas access to broadband using Universal Access Funds.....	16
4. Allow VoIP and Wi-Fi mesh networks for community based connections, especially in rural,	

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