Press Release

GCC Leading the World in e-Readiness according to UN e-Government Survey

Digital Literacy is the primary indicator for e-Readiness

Dubai, UAE, (29 July 2012): The ICDL GCC Foundation, the sole body responsible for the globally recognized and accredited International Computer Driving license (ICDL) computer literacy initiative across the GCC and Iraq, today provided an expert insight into the findings of the 2012 UN e-Government Readiness Survey as they apply to the Gulf States.

The survey is carried out every 2 years and takes a deep look into how countries around the world are progressing towards achieving true e-Government status. This year's report illustrates that many have put in place e government initiatives including the acceleration of the adoption of ICT across the public sector in order to deliver more efficient, more transparent, more inclusive and more sustainable government to all citizens. Countries that lead the index and those that have moved up have moved beyond basic e services to integrated systems that link different institutions and departments offering a single point of contact to the public. This is where Gulf countries shine.

"Although the UN 2012 surveys shows that no country has a single sign on integrated portal, the UAE, Bahrain and Qatar are among the ten closest to such a feat: comments Jamil Ezzo, Director General of the ICDL GCC Foundation. "The UAE, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia also appear in the top 25 leaders of emerging countries in e Government development, ranking 8th, 16th and 21st respectively. This proves the seriousness of the e government agenda cross the Gulf region" continued Ezzo.

The report highlighted other notable achievements of Gulf States in the survey as compared to 2010. The UAE was highly visible as it advanced 21 positions in the global rankings to take 28th place as compared to 2010 and 5th in Asia. In fact the rapid progress made by the UAE is cited as best practice case of how effective e government can lead economic and social development. With double the population and three quarters of the GDP per capita, the United Arab Emirates has achieved around the same level of online services as those offered in Norway, a global leader in 8th position. Saudi Arabia jumped 18 places in the global list from 58th position in 2010 to 41.

Digital literacy is one of the key indicators used by the UN report to measure a country's progress in e-readiness. ICDL GCC Foundation issued its own e-Literacy report for the same 2010-2011 time period as the UN report, highlighting that over 150,000 people from the Gulf region had enrolled on its programmes, a marked improvement over the preceding 2 year period. A closer analysis showed that women enrollments increased by 7%, youth by 12% and senior citizens by 1.5%. ICDL attributes these improvements to the ongoing funding and support from private and public sector partnerships. The region as a whole demonstrated substantial improvement in participation in digital literacy particularly in the UAE and Qatar with a 6.1% and 4.5% rise respectively.

"The UAE government has been a driving force in expanding its services online and closing the digital divide, as well as embracing the knowledge economy" added Ezzo. "However, it is not alone in this regard. For example, Saudi Arabia achieved a best practice case through the introduction of its eDashboard portal, which verifies the identity of the citizen and serves as a single sign on portal. Then there is the Hakooml initiative from the Qatar government, a technology gateway that brings together government services and programs that are accessible through the internet but also mobile devices."

The 2012 survey concluded that all Gulf States bar Bahrain and Kuwait made considerable progress on the index and rankings. The UAE rose to 28th in 2012 as compared to 49th in 2010, Saudi Arabia to 41 forms 58, Qatar to 48 from 62, Oman 64 from 82 thus illustrating the focus, significance and resources being applied to the region's e-Government agenda.

The International Computer Driving License (ICDL) concept is a global computer literacy initiative developed to raise the level of knowledge about Information Technology (IT) and

increase the level of competence in using personal computers and common computer applications for all the citizens of the world. The ICDL GCC Foundation is the sole body to implement and disseminate the program across the GCC States and Iraq with the support of leading educational institutions and accredited bodies. The ICDL GCC Foundation mission is to enable proficient use of Information and Communications Technology that empowers individuals, organizations and society, through the development, promotion and delivery of quality certification programmes throughout the world.

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