ECDL Foundation and CERT signs a cooperation agreement to promote ICDL for enhancing IT literacy in the region

His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan signs the agreement

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European Computer Driving Licence Foundation (ECDL), the not-for-profit global governing body of the ICDL member countries, and the Centre of Excellence for Applied Research and Training (CERT), UAE, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to work together to raise IT skills regionally.

The agreement was signed by His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research and Chancellor of Higher Colleges of Technology, and David Carpenter, Chief Executive Officer, ECDL Foundation, Ireland. Carpenter, who was on a regional visit to study the growth of ICDL programmes in the Gulf States, briefed H.E. Nahayan, who is also the Chairman of CERT, on the rapid progress ICDL had made at the regional and global levels.

The two sides agreed to pursue joint initiatives to enhance IT skills in the industry, provide access for all to Information Society and raise the general level of computer skills in UAE and the region.

"Under the leadership of His Highness the President, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahayan, our country has one of the fastest growing economies in the world. We are well aware of the power of communication and information technology to accelerate and transform human activities, " said His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan. "Our challenge is to ensure quality and relevance in e-learning while preserving the benefits of easier implementation, flexible content and advancement of global and borderless education."

"Since our formation of the ICDL GCC Foundation a few months ago, ICDL program has recorded several gains all across the region," said Carpenter. "With the signing of the MOU with CERT, ECDL Foundation is taking yet another major step that will give strategic direction to our programs in the Middle East, particularly in the GCC. Both parties will ensure that regional-level initiatives are created to boost the position of ICDL programs and thus increase IT spread in all countries of the region. With over 3.5 million ECDL/ICDL participants worldwide, we foresee the Gulf region to be a major contributor in the further growth of the program in the coming months and years ahead."

"The ICDL program has proved to be highly successful in spreading computer literacy at the regional level, targeting a population of 35 million people," said Jamil Ezzo, Director General, ICDL GCC Foundation. "The new partnership with the Centre of Excellence for Applied Research and Training provides an ultimate endorsement for the ICDL programme, because it spells recognition from an organisation that has been working effectively to develop human resources in the UAE through the adoption of innovative technologies. The key to the success of the ICDL model is its vendor-

neutrality and methodologies that remove complexities associated with IT learning."

The MOU outlined a host of proposals, including exploring the possibility of instituting an international award to recognise outstanding achievements in the ICDL program, supporting ICDL GCC Foundation in developing an ICDL Quality Assurance Program for the region, working towards securing official endorsement from educational ministries for the ICDL program in the UAE, and hosting and participating in ICDL related international conferences.

As a result of the MOU, CERT will assist ECDL Foundation and ICDL GCC Foundation with the establishment of a representative ICDL GCC Board consisting of members from key officials regionally, including those from the ministerial level and will work together in developing tools and certification programs that meet the objective of the ECDL/ICDL Foundation.

ICDL GCC Foundation is the governing body of ICDL programme in the Gulf States and the regional arm of European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), the not-for-profit organisation dedicated to furthering IT literacy and inclusive information society. The ICDL certification program has achieved remarkable success in the Middle East since its introduction in 2001 by UNESCO Cairo Office. Currently education ministries, government organizations and academic institutions in the region are adopting the certification program as a benchmark for their employees' IT skills.