



**Press Release**

**GCC delivers strong performance in Global Information Technology Report's Network Readiness Index 2008-2009**

*ICDL urges governments to focus on initiatives that empower the public to take advantage of widely available IT tools and services*

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ICT development remains an important component in the growth strategies of countries in the Middle East, as the region collectively delivered impressive results in the Network Readiness Index (NRI) of the Global Information Technology Report 2008-2009, which has been published by the World Economic Forum and Insead. The report revealed that nearly all countries in the region made it within the top half of the NRI, showing a growing trend wherein countries are leveraging ICT to increase economic prospects and improve global competitiveness.

The UAE has spearheaded the region's strong performance in the NRI as the country has been ranked within the top three from a list of 134 global economies in the category "Importance of ICT to government vision of the future," while placing fifth in "Government prioritization of ICT," 11<sup>th</sup> in "Government procurement of advanced technology products" and 32<sup>nd</sup> in "e-Government Readiness Index." Overall, countries from the GCC led the way among their Middle East peers in the NRI rankings with the UAE at 27<sup>th</sup> followed by Qatar (29<sup>th</sup>), Bahrain (37<sup>th</sup>), Saudi Arabia (40<sup>th</sup>), Oman (50<sup>th</sup>) and Kuwait (57<sup>th</sup>). Jordan was the only non-GCC among the seven top Middle East countries, figuring at number 44 on the rankings.

"The Global Information Technology Report has credited the Middle East for achieving significant gains in network readiness. This certainly is an important development that will further underpin the transformation of the region as a fast-emerging destination for international investors and business organisations. In particular, the rapid ICT development in the GCC has led the remarkable progress that has been seen across the Middle East, and GCC countries certainly deserve credit for their proactive efforts to elevate the level of infrastructure and the regulatory aspects of the IT environment in the region," said Jamil Ezzo, Director General, ICDL GCC Foundation.

"In view of the positive review by the Global Information Technology Report, we call on the governments to further enhance the impact of IT by creating complementary programs that cater to the specific IT requirements of the public in general. This will surely considerably increase public participation in the transformation to a knowledge-based society and optimise the utilisation of IT as a premier instrument for social and economic development," added Ezzo.

The NRI 2008–2009 has been established to assess the different countries' preparedness to leverage ICT advances for increased competitiveness and development. The NRI specifically measures the presence of an ICT-conducive environment; the degree of preparation needed to use ICT for the three main national stakeholders — individuals, the business sector, and the government; and the actual use of ICT by the above three stakeholders.

"According to the NRI, part of the criteria of the network readiness index is for the business sector, the government and the individuals to be able to optimally take advantage of the ICT infrastructure available. We believe that significant progress has been achieved in addressing the specific ICT requirements of both the government and the business sectors. However, with a significant number of people across the region still lacking the necessary skills and knowledge to leverage the existing ICT tools and services, we also believe that there remains much to be achieved in terms of empowering the public to harness the potential of various IT resources that are now widely available," concluded Ezzo.

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