



**Press Release**

**ICDL urges educational authorities and schools to put IT Security at the Top of Their Agenda**

**Awareness among educators is key to protecting our children and society**

**Dubai, UAE (23, October 2012)** - ICDL GCC Foundation, the governing body and certification authority responsible for advocating digital literacy and promoting the worldwide recognized ICDL digital competency programme across the GCC and Iraq, today urged educational authorities and schools across the region to intensify awareness on IT Security among educators to safeguard students from the increasing threat posed by the Internet.

This is a subject that is being debated within the highest echelons of global organizations like the United Nations. To address the issues and challenges around cyber security and cybercrime, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) through the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) organized a Special Event on “Cyber Security and Development” which brought together



Member states, the United Nations system, public and private sector and other civil society organizations interested in this field. The discussions acknowledged a disparity between nations and that developing countries do not have sufficient capacity to combat cyber attacks and cyber crimes. It also concluded that cyber security is a global issue that can only be solved through global partnership.

At the same time IT security awareness among educators, parents, students and law enforcement bodies is not widespread. In a recent survey carried out by ICDL in partnership with Canon Middle East on perceptions on valuable ICT skills for work and everyday life, the least useful skill cited by the 488 student respondents was protecting computers against viruses and online threats with only 4.8% considering this important. In a similar vein, when asked about what was the most useful ICT skill used every day, the least popular was again deemed to be protecting computers and data, ranking at only 5.68%. In another survey, carried out by Symantec which included 580 parents, 58% felt that the subject of IT security must be handled by schools.

Through its' extensive work and research in this field, ICDL has identified severe gaps exist not only in the awareness level of IT security among students but also a lack of policies, procedures and resources within the educational system to tackle such a threatening issue. For instance, students attacking school networks for fun without understanding the consequences of their actions or the fact that inadequate policies exist in schools, universities and colleges for cyber bullying which is a common practice. Furthermore, detecting, reporting and resolving cyber crimes in the region is a major challenge.

It is not only students and educational institutions that need to understand IT Security but parents also as they need to be aware of what their children are doing online in order to protect them from predators and unsavory characters. Parents also happen to form a large proportion of the regional workforce and consumer base so being fully aware of IT Security is important to them too.

Evidence of this is highlighted in a report conducted by Frost and Sullivan, a leading, global research firm, in which it states that the region was witnessing a growing need “for added protection for consumers from an ever increasing number of threats.” The report said that whilst overall IT spending was set to rise more than 10% while the Middle East network security market is expected to average 18% growth between 2012 and 2018. With persistent cyber attacks that aim to access critical and confidential data, it



said sectors such as banking, government and defense, oil and gas, online retail and social networking sites, were among the most vulnerable in the Middle East.

In response to this growing need, ICDL GCC Foundation has been working tirelessly with educational and law enforcement authorities to launch an IT Security syllabus that covers the main concepts of cyber safety and its components and is 'IT Security for All'. It is aimed at education institutions, teachers, students as well as parents. Endorsed by regulatory bodies, interior and education ministries throughout the GCC region, this is the Foundation's next step as it continues to embark on a comprehensive IT security programme. The syllabus will be promoted through a comprehensive communication campaign that includes the distribution of student booklets, brochures and announcements to schools, universities and colleges. It is also planning to release further unique educational tools and materials to support the learning and adoption of 'IT Security for All' in the coming months.

Mr. Jamil Ezzo, Director General of ICDL GCC Foundation stated "The entire region is experiencing a surge in technology adoption and the GCC boasts the highest internet growth rate amongst the Arab World with around 4 million users and growing exponentially. Hence, the threat is closer to home than people realize. For that purpose, ICDL is working closely with the concerned authorities and other experts across the GCC region with the aim of raising the level of IT security awareness among the general public. We are fully committed to bringing IT Security to the top of the agenda and we call on all the educational and law enforcement authorities to accelerate their efforts to raise awareness on the significance of IT Security among students and educators."

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**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.**