

Muscat Declaration
Fourth International Platform on Integrating Arab e-Infrastructure
in a Global Environment

MUSCAT --- December 11, 2014 ---- Under the patronage of His Highness Sayyid Taimur Bin As'ad Al Said and Chaired by His Excellency Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh (Chairman of ASREN), the 4th “International Platform on Integrating Arab e-infrastructure in a Global Environment, e-AGE 2014” concluded with a wide high level participation and delegates from over 40 countries.

It has been recognized that the Arab region has attained a certain level of development towards developing advanced e-Infrastructure and it is important for the Arab States Research and Education Network to make use of its current potential in strengthening research connectivity and make it available for use on a regional scale as well as developing regional points of exchange, one of them currently operational in London and another to be established in Fujaira.

It is our duty at ASREN to provide regional e-infrastructure networking and services, for the benefit of the research and educational institutions that are members of ASREN together with the wider regional research and education community.

The e-AGE platform organized by ASREN on December 10-11, 2014 has set among its priorities, the development of pan-Arab e-Infrastructure and services, coordination with regional e-infrastructures, and enhancement of research and education cooperation in a wide range of activities, among the Arab countries and with communities in Europe, the US, Canada, Latin America, Africa, and the world at large.

In addition, it is our objective that a suitable medium for dialogue is created to facilitate investments needed for regional links and capacity for research and education through preparation and execution of national and regional e-Infrastructure projects. It is important that this dialogue and debate are based on objective grounds motivated by the long-term strategies and interests of our countries in the Arab region.

We deem it inspiring that e-AGE was attended by esteemed speakers, policy makers, experts, and scientists representing all the Arab countries, Europe, the US, Africa,

Latin America, Canada, Asia, and international organizations and companies in a larger audience scale, representing over 40 countries. We see this as a manifestation of the sound basis and the respectable sustainability of the dialogue environment towards developing Arab research and education networks.

It is of the utmost importance that we build on the success of e-AGE and take necessary steps towards developing Arab e-Infrastructure and linking to the world research and education communities on a global scale.

It is also of great importance that we make use of the support of the League of Arab States, the European commission, and the international donors to initiate cooperation and develop sustainable projects towards connectivity and ensurance of a sense of self dependence.

It is of significant value that the Arab NRENs, the European GEANT, the US Internet2, and the Asia Pacific APAN have come together and declared to continue cooperation in order to develop sustainable and interoperable e-Infrastructures, providing support to scientists and researchers across the world.

After presenting topics, holding meetings and deliberating between delegations and participants, e-AGE concluded,

- To address deep thanks and appreciation to His Highness Sayyid Taimur Bin As'ad Al Said in the name of the participants for his highness's support
- To address a thanks and appreciation to the Research Council for their host and support
- To follow His Highness mandate in establishing links to China and far east
- To adopt ASREN programs and strategy for the upcoming stage, with focus on a pan-Arab e-infrastructure and inter-continental connectivity
- To strengthen collaboration with the League of Arab States and the Arab countries themselves towards developing an e-integration of educational networks in the Arab countries
- To continue to focus on the ASREN main exchange points, now operational in London, currently being deployed at Fujairah with UAE Ankabut and planned in Alexandri in cooperation with Egypt Universities Network

- To plan for the fifth e-AGE in December in 2015

also concluded on a concrete basis:

- To accelerate the integration of Arab e-infrastructure and connecting them with the European, the US, the Latin American, and the African research and education Networks through ASREN main exchange points in London and Fujaira
- To continue to support the relatively well established NRENs such as in Jordan, Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Palestine, especially where facing temporary sustainability issues
- To continue to support the development of research and education infrastructure in Lebanon, Bahrain, Yemen, Libya, and Iraq
- To continue to support peering of emerging networks in Oman and Qatar
- To emphasize the importance to extend effective participation of ASREN, integrate Arab unified e-infrastructure and promote the role of research and education communities in the Arab world.
- To encourage the participation of Arab NRENs in ASREN regional network and peering at ASREN hubs in London and Fujairah
- To deploy network services of direct benefit to Arab NRENs and researchers including EduRoam, EduGain and Science Gateway as well as seamless access to services and repositories
- To benefit from and build upon the success of the EUMEDCONNECT, CHAIN-REDS and other EC funded projects in the field of developing cooperation and coordination between Arab and European researchers, and should tackle joint scientific research projects that use scientific infrastructure between countries
- To encourage and attract donors, research foundations and supporting organizations in the Arab region, Europe and the world to support ASREN development as well as research infrastructures in the Arab world.
- To promote private sector's participation and cooperation in developing research and education

This year e-AGE has witnessed the launch of ASREN's exchange point in London and international linkage between Jordan and UK for research and education at a capacity of 155 Mbps and supported by Talal Abu Ghazaleh Organization. It has also witnessed the announcement of the continuing support of EC to Arab e-Infrastructure in the context of EUMEDCONNECT

A strong and high level participation from the European Commission DG Connect has been witnessed in an effort to support and create research cooperation with Oman and the Gulf research communities.

It is also encouraged to provide a full report on the fruits of the EC funding in support of Arab e-Infrastructure and services as well as to develop a proposal for long term cooperation in the context of Horizon 2020.

On behalf of the Research Council, the League of Arab States, the shareholders of ASREN, EUMEDCONNECT, CHAIN-REDS, and the participating organizations, we thank all those who have contributed to e-AGE and we hope that it has successfully served as an effective medium in attaining a convincing environment towards achieving our goals in developing stronger research and education communities in the Arab region and beyond.

With all respect and appreciation,

Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh
Chairman of ASREN