

**Stéphanie Truillé-Baurens, “International Cooperation in an Era of Information Explosion”, International Cooperation Officer, European Commission, Belgium**

Stéphanie Truillé-Baurens started by expressing her sincere thanks to the Lebanese authorities to host this event, to the American University of Beirut for their warm welcome and for being such a great host to all and to ASREN for organising this event.

Stéphanie Truillé-Baurens identified regional and global cooperation as important means for development and prosperities of societies in an era of information explosion. She pointed out that ICTs are now part of our daily lives and digital technologies, including the internet, are being adopted in the whole world at an unprecedented rate – faster than any other technologies in the past. The reason for that trend is that E-infrastructures are an important tool as they give access to unique facilities and data. They are also extremely valuable to increase the efficiency of many services, in areas such as health, education and governance.

She outlined the importance of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, with focus on “the spread of information and communication technology and global interconnectedness with great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies”.

She added, “connectivity and affordability that many take for granted do remain a problem both across and within regions and there are large variations in connectivity between high and lower income countries and between cities and rural areas. This is why the European Commission is supporting projects which aim at improving infrastructure networks and at connecting European research and education institutions with peer institutions in partner countries, examples of such projects include EUMEDCONNECT 3 for Mediterranean countries or AfricaConnect 2 for African countries.”

Stéphanie concluded by acknowledging the participation to this event of representatives of other regional Research and Education Networks: GÉANT for the EU, WACREN for West and Central Africa and the UbuntuNet Alliance for East and South Africa. It shows that this is not only about technical networks but more importantly about human networks.