

*“ASREN is a non-profit company with limited liability (GmbH) and is officially registered in Germany, under the umbrella of the League of Arab States. The main goal is to connect Arab institutions among themselves and to the globe through high-speed data-communications networks. Such networks will enable sharing and access to a variety of R&E services and applications in addition to utilization of highly sophisticated and technologically advanced computing resources available only at very few institutions in the world.”*

### In this issue

First AfricaConnect3 connectivity milestone achieved: Tunisian R&E communities now connected to Europe and the rest of the world 1

Abu Ghazaleh: Muscat Declaration calls on Supporting the Development of National and Regional Research and Education Infrastructures 3

African Regional RENs Joint Statement on the Current Situation at AFRINIC 3

### First AfricaConnect3 connectivity milestone achieved: Tunisian R&E communities now connected to Europe and the rest of the world



The Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN), the regional networking organization responsible for the delivery of the EU-funded AfricaConnect3 project in North Africa, and the Tunisian Computing Center al Khawarizmi (CCK) have signed an agreement whereby ASREN will provide a dedicated 1 Gbps circuit between CCK and the pan-European GÉANT network with the co-funding support of AfricaConnect3. AfricaConnect3 fosters the development of high-capacity internet networks for research and education across Africa and their interconnection to Europe and further afield.

CCK, the Tunisian partner in AfricaConnect3, manages the Tunisian National Research and Education Network (RNU) and provides internet connectivity, applications and services to the research and education (R&E) communities in Tunisia.

Prof. Saoussen Krichen, General Director of CCK said: “We are very optimistic about this opportunity offered to our research and education community, especially in these difficult times of COVID-19. CCK will do the necessary steps with the support of ASREN to take advantage of this connectivity and set up a range of services available to the Tunisian R&E community.”

Having previously been a partner in the EUMEDCONNECT project since 2005, in 2015 Tunisia migrated along with other North African countries to the pan-African AfricaConnect2 project. In the light of high costs for dedicated R&E capacity, Tunisia opted initially for a lower spec but more cost-effective technical solution to re-start dedicated international connectivity, involving setting up in 2018 a ‘virtual tunnel’ through the standard Internet to ASREN’s Point of Presence (PoP) in London where it then connects to GÉANT.

Following targeted supplier engagement efforts conducted by ASREN and CCK during the successor phase AfricaConnect3 in 2020, the Tunisian telecom operators offered more affordable tariffs to support the Tunisian research and education communities. As a result GÉANT, tasked with the overall coordination and procurement activities within the project, contracted a 1Gbps circuit from Tunis to London which entered service in May 2021.

Erik Huizer, CEO at GÉANT: “We are delighted that Tunisia has yet again a firm place on the global R&E connectivity map. This achievement demonstrates the power of collaboration in our community to enable researchers and students in Tunisia to connect with their peers in Europe and other parts of the world. We are also pleased to see ASREN consolidating their role as unifying voice across the Arab region and building up their network management capabilities, including technical management for this circuit. We expect this and future connectivity achievements in North Africa to facilitate research and education collaborations across both shores of the Mediterranean.”

Yousef Torman, Managing Director at ASREN said: “On behalf of ASREN, I would like to thank the European Union for their contributions in the context of AfricaConnect3 that have been so critical for this achievement. This brings us closer to achieving our long-term objective of establishing a pan-Arab regional backbone network under our ‘ArabConnect’ initiative. More work is still needed to establish convenient and cost-effective hub locations in the region for a regional backbone networks as well as to tackle the challenge of restricted markets in our region.” Yousef concluded: “Our aim during AfricaConnect3 remains to secure affordable dedicated bandwidth for longer term capacity for all partners, though further regulatory and political support will be needed.”

## Abu Ghazaleh: Muscat Declaration calls on Supporting the Development of National and Regional Research and Education Infrastructures

The Omani Research and Education Network (OMREN) conducted its annual OMREN Technology Summit (OTS) on 31 May 2021 under the patronage and support of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and with the participation of the Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN).



The event attracted more than 500 participants from 20 countries, featuring 26 speakers. The focus of the discussions was primarily on enhancing research and education through the development of a robust, sustainable and reliable research and education (R&E) infrastructure typically provided by the Research and Education Networks at both regional and national levels.

In this light, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, ASREN and OMREN agreed to announce the “Muscat Declaration” as a call for action to recognize and foster the role of National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) across the Arab region and to advocate as follows:

- The necessity and urgency for developing an NREN in the countries that currently are without. This should be associated with governance and sustainability plans and actions.
- Supporting existing NRENs in the Arab countries by providing them with the required capacities, capabilities and funding following successful NRENs models in some Arab countries.
- The necessity and urgency for supporting the development of a regional Pan-Arab Research and Education Network to facilitate R&E collaborations across Arab countries and beyond by endorsing the ongoing mission of the Arab States Research and Education Network.

- NRENs in the Gulf region are called upon to join forces among each other and with ASREN for optimized national/international Internet capacity deployment, for creating an Arab-wide sharing and learning community and for ensuring participation in discussions and activities of the global R&E networking community.

HE Dr. Saif Al-Haddabi, Undersecretary of Scientific Research and Innovation at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, asserted on the importance of this declaration: “We are proud of OMREN’s achievements and what it has provided for the development of research and education in the Sultanate and beyond. This confirms how the Sultanate recognizes the importance of supporting and developing the infrastructure for research and education, enhancing its capabilities and providing it with the necessary resources. We call on all Arab countries to work on developing their infrastructure, and we are pleased to put our experience in Oman in their hands to benefit from it.”

HE Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, Chairman of ASREN, praised the cooperation with OMREN adding: “There are Arab countries that have achievements in the field of research and education infrastructure, and we call on other Arab countries to build research and education networks and strengthen them with the necessary resources and equipment to ensure their sustainability and development, especially in the fields of open science, open access and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals”.

The declaration focuses on addressing the official authorities in the Arab countries, including related ministries and stakeholders, in addition to joint Arab action institutions led by the League of Arab States to work on developing and improving the infrastructure for research and education at the national and regional levels in the Arab region.

The Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation in the Sultanate of Oman and ASREN recall the role of the late Dr. Abdulmonem Al-Kharusi, Director of OMREN, 2014-2021, with his significant contribution to OMREN and to the Arab NRENs as well.

## African Regional RENs Joint Statement on the Current Situation at AFRINIC

ASREN, UbuntuNet Alliance and WACREN are the regional research and education networks interconnecting national research and education networks (NRENs) across the continent (Northern Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa, West and Central Africa).



African RENs provide connectivity and other services to millions of end users in the education and research community (students, faculty, researchers, administrators, etc.), and INRs are critical for the delivery of these services.

The REN community is following with interest but also with concern the heated debate on the current lawsuit against AFRINIC that led to the freezing of its bank accounts, thus jeopardizing its operations.

Many years ago, members of the REN community expressed concerns about a risk for AFRINIC, when a resource member publicly said that AFRINIC will face bankruptcy if it dares consider reclaiming resources that many members thought were assigned wrongly, or at least were not used as initially indicated. It was, at that time, recommended to address this issue seriously.

And here we are.

Anyway: the current situation is very serious and our community and the friends of the African Internet community should stand together and fight against those who want to destroy and bury AFRINIC.

Yes, there are things to improve at AFRINIC. But in this critical situation, we urge all to stand by and support the Board and Management of our organization.

We say no to any attempt to move the management of Internet number resources attributed to Africa to any other organization.

Therefore, we, as representatives of the African REN community, express our full support to AFRINIC Board and Management and invite all Africans and friends of Africa to do the same.

**Arab States Research and Education Network**

TAGUCI Building

104 Mecca Street, Um-Uthaina, Amman, Jordan

P.O. Box: 921100 Amman 11192, Jordan

Email: [info@asrenorg.net](mailto:info@asrenorg.net) |  ASREN |  ASREN

**[asrenorg.net](http://asrenorg.net)**



This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union

The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of ASREN and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.