

**Minutes of SESRIC's Meeting with Representatives of OIC Member Countries on the
Sideline of the "International Conference on eGovernment: Sharing Experiences
(eGoveSharE2009)"**

In the outset, Mr. Hüseyin Hakan Eryetli, Director of Publications and IT Department of SESRIC, expressed his thanks to the participants for their positive reply to the invitation made by SESRIC to conduct the meeting. The meeting aimed at listening to innovative ideas and proposals from the concerned institutions of OIC Member countries to enhance cooperation among the countries in the area of eGovernment applications, laws and practices. Accordingly, Mr. Eryetli gave the floor to Mr. Haytham Zeinelabdin, Research Assistant, who made a brief presentation furnishing the participants with the mandates undertaken by SESRIC on and for the OIC Member Countries. He also informed the participants about the close technical cooperation carried out by the SESRIC with the other relevant regional and international organizations for the benefit of the OIC Member Countries.

Then, the participants took the floor and expressed their opinions and ideas as given below:

Mr. Omar Isbaitan

ICT Manager, Palestinian Standard Institute (PSI), Palestine:

"We are in need of scheme of international eGovernment applications. The scheme should be with defined terms and set bilingually. The scheme should be with information and security standards, because the standards are the key tool to develop such a scheme. The scheme could be adopted by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC)."

Mr. Aimal Marjan

Director General of ICT, Ministry of Communication and IT, Afghanistan:

"There is a perplexity as not knowing to start from is a problem for countries newly entering the ICT area. The models used by EU are not matching the needs of countries having their own economic levels. There is a need that the institutions should be informed each with another and in active contact. In addition to that, eGovernment applications should be started with laws and regulations morally suit the Islamic countries. The role of education is also very important in this regard. The syllabus is required to address this area. This will avoid being consumptive and lead to being productive. The SESRIC should conduct research and set up a toolkit to be used by the member countries. The involvement of private sector should also be considered."

In another intervention, he added that:

"Noticed is the absence of Islamic countries from international policies and dialogues. Also there is lack of information about international fora that should be attended. This can be

overcome by research conducted by SESRIC. Also, there should be fellowship programme related to ICT. The ICT leader should discuss these issues.”

Mr. Hussein Hiyassat
Project Manager, UNDP, Jordan

“In order to share their individual experiences with other countries, the OIC Member Countries may establish an e-practice community. The community may convene workshops, seminars...etc. There may also be some challenges facing this community, such as how to start the community, where to host it, who will manage it and the issue of its sustainability.”

Mr. M. Shakhawat Hossain Bhuiyan
ICT Professional, ERD, Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh

“Encourage OIC member countries with a clear guideline to introduce “Privacy Policy and Data Protection Act” regarding citizen data.” This will include how personal data will be processed, used or to be transferred to other countries lawfully as well as accurately keeping data subject’s rights or consent.

Dr. Salah Mandil
Senior Consultant, ITU and WHO

“The member countries' efforts in eGovernment development require the following supportive contributions from organisations such as SESRIC:

- a) Available materials: Make a listing of available materials on differing aspects of eGovernment so that countries could consider adopting and/or adapting them for their own purposes. SESRIC could have such listings reviewed by experts prior to its publication.*
- b) Priorities: In most events on eGovernment, including international meetings like this one, almost every issue gets cited, and there is a lack of prioritization. Priorities should be discussed and set. In this context, the sectors of education and health are key priorities in eGovernment applications. SESRIC could support countries to establish their requirements and set priorities.*
- c) Human Expertise: The issue of human resources development is an issue of high importance. Training events and support, starting with topics cited in points (a) and (b) above, could be organised by SESRIC.*
- d) Norms and Standards: There is also a need to define and set the norms and standards, and to promote existing standards. In this regard, SESRIC could prepare related guidelines on each standard or family of standards relating to eGovernment.*
- e) Digital Security: In all transactions, digital or otherwise, it is vital to ascertain the Authentication of users, to control the Access to data/information, to protect the Integrity of messages and transactions and to maintain logs and records to guarantee Non-Repudiation. Thus, the issue of digital security is a crucial one, and should be taken as a key building block of eGovernment applications. For example, the free e-signatures/e-certificates that can be downloaded over the Internet are poor and risky*

alternatives because their protection is not guaranteed, and each country must have its own Digital Security facilities and services. SESRIC could organise an event on, and/or publish practical guidelines on the "what?" and "how?" of digital security.

- f) Legislation: In the OIC countries the legislation related to eGovernment is lagging behind or non-existent. Without legislation, nothing can be formally introduced and will remain experimental. SESRIC could prepare a listing of the headings and sub-headings of the Legislation that is essential to start and spread eGovernment uses."*

Mr. Sadık Yıldız

Managing Director, Zenits Int., Turkey

"There is lack of technical know-how and financial resources. The meeting should be held annually. A committee of 5 to 8 people should be formed to meet regularly to decide on eGovernment applications. The financing of e-government issues can be raised in international OIC for a, and it is necessary to see the possibility of financing the OIC eGovernment initiatives by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB)."

Dr. Bouchaib Bounabat

Professor of ICT Strategies and E-Government, Morocco

"I agree that practice community should be established as essential platform to share both problems and solutions. However, it is too early for deciding on specific standards."

Fadwa Murad

Ministry of Communication and Technology, Syria

"In addition to what has been raised, I think it is necessary to find efficient and secure ways with reference to the issue of how to exchange experiences between the OIC Member Countries in the area of eGovernment applications."

Mr. Alik Isabaev

Director of Public Information Centre, Kyrgyz Republic

"Is it possible to consider the establishment of regional projects? To consider the possibility of initiating four or five eGovernment projects on regional level."

Mr. Ali Abu Helow

General Director, Ministry of Health, Palestine

"We should consider the means and ways that can keep us in touch. The priorities should be set. Following that, groups should be formed to work on different aspects of eGovernment."

Mr. Taleb Haj Mohammad

Director of Computech, MOEHE, Palestine

"Education is very important in this respect. E-Education should be included in the education system and share this electronically with other members. This may be an initiative under OIC."

Mr. Moosa Kharjooyi
Supreme Council of ICT, Iran

“Migration of brains to USA and Canada left ICT sector underdeveloped in OIC countries. We should have infrastructure for knowledge sharing and to finance and organize OIC-ICT market. The SESRIC is to organize and notify or brief about who’s who in this field. The establishment of one common Information portal is important. We should consider how to sustain eGov initiatives and share them with the public. This will lead to generate participants locally and then internationally.”

Ms. Huda Farhan
State of Kuwait
Ph.D Candidate, Sheffield University
Added two justified suggestions as follows:

“Point 1:

Research dealing with evaluating success and failure of e-government portals is very few. When it comes to user’s engagement in the evaluation process the research is even fewer if not absent. Prior to any attempt to establish standards and guide lines to the e-gov portals, and as a prerequisite to draw e-gov portals improvement road maps, there is a need to assess the current situation of the intended portals. The assessment should be from a user’s perspective. There is a need to investigate to what extent the current portals meet the potential user’s needs. What are the success and failure points? What are the difficulties end users are facing while dealing with the portals whether these difficulties are related to technical, information or skills issues. Doing so will identify potential user’s requirements and needs of the portals. Hence, enhance the usage of the portal, which is the main purpose of the existence of the portal. So, I suggest developing an evaluation tool or tools and select a number of e-gov portals of the OIC Member Countries as a sample on which the evaluation process conducted. Then, these evaluation tools can be distributed to the member countries as a standardized portal success evaluation tool. Also, the result of this assessment can help in identifying guide lines and standards that can be used to develop and maintain e-gov portals and adhere to the actual needs and characteristics of the member countries.

Point 2:

Facilitating access to information and services in an e-government portal is a crucial issue determining the usage of the portal. Hence, information and services need to be organized in a way that enhances search and retrieval. To do so, a classification scheme need to be implemented. I suggest that we develop a controlled vocabulary scheme such as thesaurus or ontology describing the e-gov terms and services and to be used to organize information and services at the e-gov portal of the member countries. The suggested controlled vocabulary is supposed to be general suiting all the member countries portal as well as flexible to be modified to match the peculiarity of each portal individually.”

Following the deliberation carried out by the participants, Mr. Hüseyin Hakan Eryetli, moderator of the Meeting, expressed his appreciation of the discussion made and the immensity of the ideas and proposals raised. He promised the participants that SESRIC will do its best to evaluate these issues at the earliest convenience and inform accordingly.