

**Honorable Audience,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let me start by welcoming you all in Egypt on behalf of H.E. Minister Tarek Kamel, who could not join us today due to previous commitments. Allow me to begin by expressing my sincere personal pleasure to be among this distinguished gathering today; first to be inaugurating this elite workshop which we are happy to be co-organizing with the Internet Society, whose role in generating and enhancing the enormous tool of the Internet is unquestionable and second to be addressing African friends and partners, who have always been our companions and who share with us the same culture, views and dreams.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Talking about the Internet has eventually turned into every-day talk with this awesome tool becoming a main pillar and indispensable component of both the global and national information and knowledge society. The Internet has presented itself as a pre-requisite for development to an extent that has literally made the world a "small global village". Thanks to telecommunications, the need to travel has decreased, the scope of research has expanded, and the thirst for information has been increased.

Egypt has always been on the top countries taking part in the development of the Internet, especially with Minister Tarek Kamel being on the top of the Internet development process in Egypt. The Internet Society and the Egyptian chapter have always played a role in developing the internet course of development in our country.

His Excellency's personal keenness on the development of the Internet in Egypt is closely related to his early involvement in the ISOC activities. As most of you already know, Dr. Kamel is a former member of the Internet Society Board of Trustees, a former ISOC Vice President of Chapters, and a co-founder of the Internet Society of Egypt (the Egyptian ISOC chapter); co-organizing a workshop with ISOC makes us among old friends and companions. It is worth alluding in this regard to the early efforts of the African group of Internet experts and their collaborative work, which has equally advanced the development of the Internet in Africa and has resulted in many successful initiatives and organizations such as AfriNIC, AfNOG and others.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This workshop will be examining the challenges and opportunities facing our African Nations regarding Internet Governance. The discussions will help in setting the scene for

African countries in preparation of the upcoming Internet Governance Forum in Sharm El Sheikh mid November this year. The world is changing around us and every day we see more and more integration between all kinds of stakeholders. The rising need for regional clusters and national IGFs are becoming more & more pressing; hence the importance of our workshop today.

With the preparations getting at its most for the IGF meeting, communities are highly engaged in crystallizing their agenda, prioritizing their demands and fine tuning their Internet demands. As Africans, we have started the process early on 2006 when Egypt took the initiative to coordinate African needs, stances and contributions before the first inaugural meeting of the IGF in Athens. *Africa on the Road to Athens* was the kick start for a long process of African coordination and here we are gathering again to elaborate even more on our needs and how we can best utilize the IGF mechanism for the welfare of the African community. Having this done with the support of the Internet Society adds more asset to the coordination process, thanks to the well known and long standing experience and history of the ISOC in promoting and developing the Internet all over the world.

The inevitable need for the Internet Governance process has proven itself in the past four years. The IGF has successfully continued to present itself as an excellent platform for multi-stakeholder interactions and exchanges. It manages to gather all stakeholders and acts as a catalyst for exerting more effort and creating more initiatives for further cooperation and coordination and should continue to be so.

The Internet should continue to be an area of cooperation, inclusion and integration and not a field of contest and here where regional cooperation plays its imminent role. We have always been keen to coordinate stances with different partners that share with us the same perspectives and views, chief among which are the Africans. The African partners key players in the process and today we share with them again our IG regional ideas and dreams for the benefit of the global Internet community.

I believe that this workshop would be an excellent opportunity for all participants to shed light on major issues of significance. Internet governance is still a fertile area, and all of us should cooperate in this mission of providing healthy and well-established formation.

Thank you for your attention, and I wish this meeting all the success.