



TELETIMES MEDIA LLC

# INTERNATIONAL teletimes

Issue 215  
June  
2023

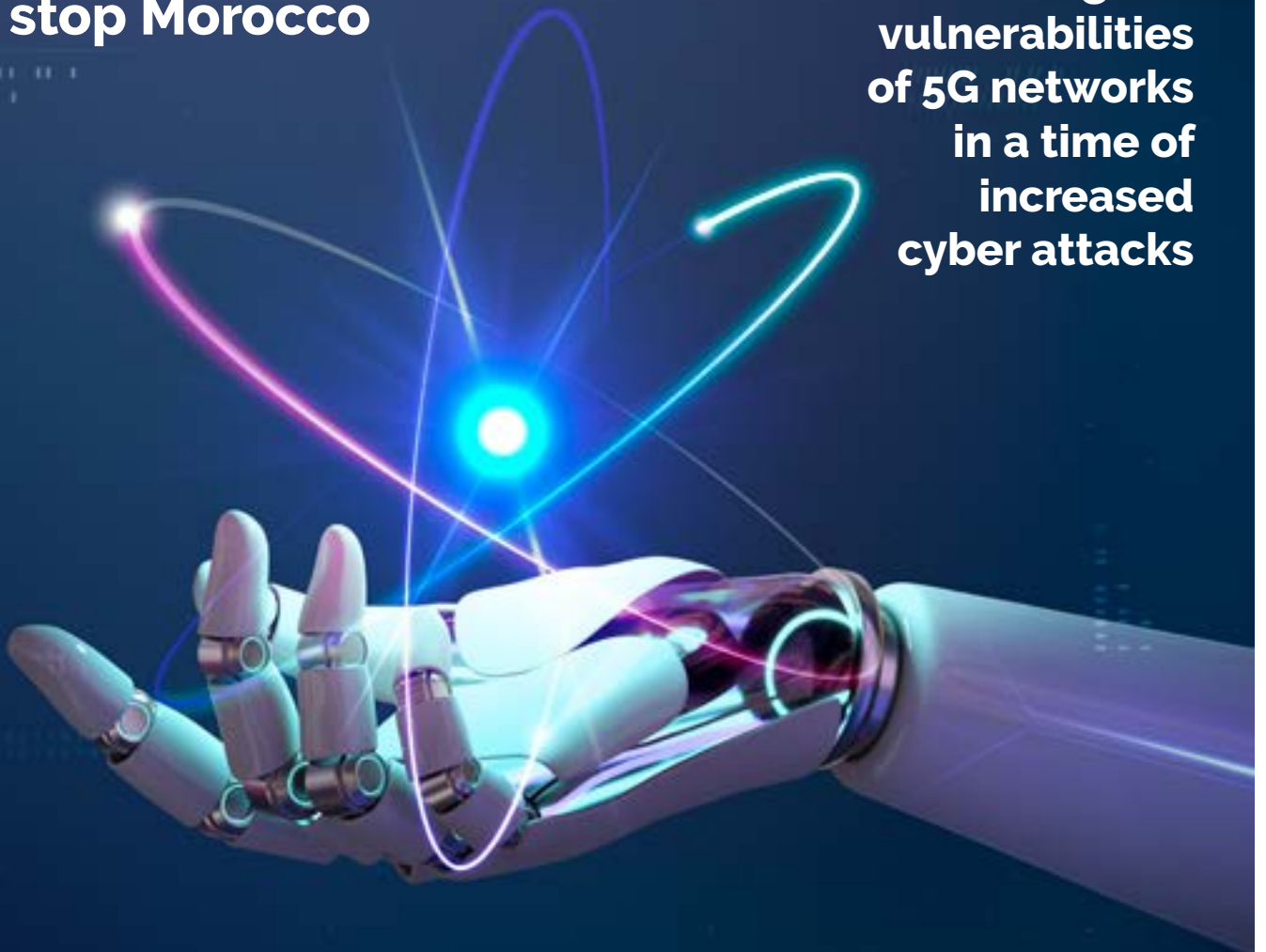
*The latest in Telecom, ICT and SatCom sectors of the Middle East, Asia and Africa*

## GITEX

arrives in Africa,  
first stop Morocco



Understanding the  
vulnerabilities  
of 5G networks  
in a time of  
increased  
cyber attacks



Generative AI tools like ChatGPT  
turning into potential game changers  
for Telecom industry

Satellite services for Television,  
Telecommunications, Broadband  
and Government networks across  
the Middle East, North Africa  
and beyond.



Corporate  
Networks



Playout



VSAT



Government  
Services



Television  
Broadcasting



Teleport  
Services



Cloud and  
Hosting



Telecommunication  
Services



Mobility  
Services

*Space to deliver your vision*



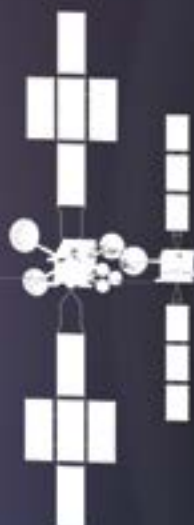
[www.eshailsat.qa](http://www.eshailsat.qa)





Russian Satellite  
Communications Company

# Satellite Communications. Sign from the Universe.



Find more about  
RSCC services

[eng.rsccl.ru/infrastructure/?space=countries](http://eng.rsccl.ru/infrastructure/?space=countries)

**Founder** Prof. Nasreen Khalid  
**Chairman** Dr. Zafar Khan OBE  
**Publisher & Chief Editor** Khalid Athar  
**Executive Editor** Syed Zulfiqar Ali  
**Associate Editor** Gulraiz Khalid  
**Assistant Editors** Jassem Hariri  
 Abdul Majid  
 Aftab Raza Khan

**Technology Writer** Ken Herron  
**Sub Editor** Fakhre Dawar

**Business Coordinator** Usama Yousaf

**Director Sales (MEA)** S.A. Burney  
**Business Dev. Manager** Tahir Alam

**Special Correspondents**

**Barcelona** Mohammed Tanveer  
**Dubai** Masood Kahout  
**Cape Town** Peter Stoffberg  
**Jeddah** Akram Asad  
**Amman** Eng. Mohammad Sirrieh  
**Doha** Ashraf Siddiqui  
**Brunei** Imran Ul Haq  
 Farah Muhammad

**Bureaux**

**U.K**  
 235A, Old Brompton Road, London SWFO OEA  
 Ph: (+44) 0783 1418 072

**Spain**  
 Todo Los Accesorios De Moviles  
 C/Vidre 7, Local 2 CP: 08002, Barcelona.  
 Ph: (034) 699 82 2090

**KSA**  
 P.O. Box 100598, Jeddah, 21311  
 Ph: (+966) 5098 35514

**Canada**  
 126-1055B Forestwood Dr L5C 2T8 Mississauga  
 Cell: +1 (647) 425-4111

**APAC**  
 No. 09, Simpang 95 JLN Ban5, Kampong  
 Kilanas, BF2780, Brunei Darussalam.  
 Cell: (+673) 863 2798

**Asia Office**  
**Islamabad**  
 PPA Publications,  
 # 6, Street 39, G-6/2, Islamabad, 44000  
 Cell: (+92) 300 9559879  
 Marketing Coordinator - Imran Rasheed  
 Printer: Khurshed Printers (Pvt) Ltd.

**18<sup>th</sup> YEAR OF PUBLICATION**

*Recipient of*

**"MEA Business Award 2021 for Best Telecom Publication"**  
**"Best IT & Telecoms News Outlet Award 2020"**  
**"International Arch of Europe Award for Quality"**  
**"Teradata ICT Excellence Award for Media"**



Scan to download PDF version



**TELETIMES MEDIA LLC.**  
 P.O. Box 239031,  
 Dubai - UAE  
 +971 50 1305097

**Media Partner to:**



	US\$	AED	SAR	PKR	€	GBP
Price per copy	8	25	25	500	7	5
One year	80	250	250	5000	70	50

# <caisec=/<23>

cyber & information security  
exhibition & conference

Supported by



## CYBERSECURITY IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER

12-13 | 20  
JUNE 23  
THE NILE - RITZ CARLTON  
CAIRO

Official Sponsors

DELL Technologies | intel

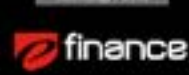
Title Sponsor



Platinum Sponsors



Strategic Partner



Technical Partner

Security Partner



Network Sponsors



Platform Sponsors



Official Bank



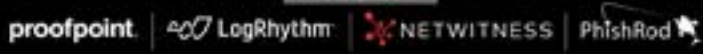
Cloud Service Sponsors



Gold Sponsors



Silver Sponsors



Exhibitors



Endorsed by



Organised By



www.caisec.org

# Contents



## Interview

- 26 "Our results reflect company's strong performance and continued growth in the telecommunications industry"

*Ahmad Abdulaziz Al Neama  
CEO, Group Regional, Ooredoo*

## Events

- 08 GITEX arrives in Africa, first stop Morocco
- 25 IBC2023 set to drive future innovation, best practice and collaboration across Global Media Technology Industry
- 37 CommunicAsia 2023-Singapore  
Adopting AI-enabled network automation  
What are the challenges and what are the opportunities in Asia?

## Articles

- 32 Generative AI tools like ChatGPT turning into potential game changers for telecom industry, says GlobalData
- 45 New-age telcos have emerged with the arrival of 5G



## Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the latest edition of Teletimes International.

The month of June brings our attention to Gitex Africa, the inaugural event by the Gitex Global team in Dubai, set to be one of the leading tech events in Africa. Scheduled to take place in Marrakesh, Gitex Africa is expected to host 20,000+ Trade Buyers, 125+ govt. delegations and over 900 exhibitors & startups. Teletimes is a media partner to the event and our editorial team will be present at the event for interviews and coverage. You can find a pre-event report in this edition of the magazine.

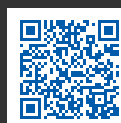
Further on the editorial side, I would recommend reading the interview with Ahmad Abdulaziz Al Neama, Group Regional CEO at Ooredoo. Ahmad highlights Ooredoo's achievements in this exclusive interview and provides insight into its corporate vision.

As always, you will also find the latest news and updates in this edition of Teletimes. Your feedback is welcome on [info@teletimesinternational.com](mailto:info@teletimesinternational.com)

Enjoy Reading!

**Khalid Athar**

Chief Editor



Scan to download PDF version

Follow @TeletimesIntl on Twitter

## News & Reports

- 15 Huawei and SAMENA hosted the 5.5G Leaders' Summit
- 17 Huawei MECA President stresses that thriving digital economy depends on sustainable connectivity and a large pool of skilled local talents
- 21 stc Group achieved the highest quarterly revenues in its history as revenues for Q1, 2023 compared to the comparable quarter of last year increased by 7.45% , and it distributes SAR 0.40 per share dividends for the 1st quarter of 2023
- 23 Unveiling of 'Zain Omantel International' (ZOI) to revolutionize the telecommunications landscape
- 35 e&'s AGM approves a dividend per share for H2 2022 of AE 0.4, representing a total dividend of AED 0.8 per share for FY2022
- 41 ITU targets USD 100 billion by 2026 to accelerate global digitalization
- 42 ZTE committed to building sustainable green FTTH networks
- 47 The longest subsea cable in the world landed in Jeddah and Yanbu

...and much more

# GITEX arrives in Africa, first stop Morocco

Dubai-based Gitex Global will debut the African version of its event in 2023. After 40 years since its birth, the organisation has decided to broaden its horizons. Marrakech has been chosen to host this new event from 31 May to 2 June 2023.

With more than 5,000 exhibitors from 170 different countries, 800 start-ups, around 1,000 speakers... Gitex Global is undoubtedly one of the largest high-tech trade fairs in the world. KAOUN International, the Dubai World Trade Center's (DWTC) overseas event organiser, will lead the partnership for this highly anticipated business endeavour in the coveted tech region, officially launching the global "Go There" campaign for the GITEX AFRICA campaign.

In front of a packed house, the signing of the creation of Gitex Africa Morocco was formalised in one of the exhibition halls. At the official announcement of the fair and the signing ceremony, Mohamed Drissi Melyani, Director General of the Digital Development Agency, said: "We are honoured to organise this event in a continent that is experiencing great dynamic, economic and social growth in many fields".

"Morocco is playing a crucial role in helping and supporting Africa's development under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohamed VI and linking it economically with the rest of the world. We are deeply committed to contributing to the success of this first edition of GITEX AFRICA and will work very hard to make it exceptional for all of us," he said.

At the confluence of Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, Morocco is well positioned to transform itself into a regional trade hub by leveraging its strategic geographic location, political stability and world-class infrastructure. Morocco is Africa's fifth largest economy, the second largest African investor in sub-Saharan Africa and the largest African investor in West Africa, while



**Mohamed Drissi Melyani** - Director General Digital Development Agency

also ranking third among all African countries in the World Bank's ease of doing business index.

Foreign investment in Morocco is increasing, particularly in export sectors such as manufacturing, through favourable macroeconomic policies, trade liberalisation, investment incentives and structural reforms.

In 2021, Africa recorded the highest financing for start-ups with USD 2.1 billion for 563 companies across the continent. Start-up financing in the region has grown six times more than the global average. Analysts predict that the tech market is on track to grow from \$115 billion to \$712 billion by 2050, while growth in start-up funding is six times higher than anywhere else.

African talent development is also at an all-time high. Global tech titans Microsoft and Google are already establishing multi-billion dollar innovation and talent hubs in Africa, while the number of people with internet access has risen to 522.8 million, or 40% of the African population.

Microsoft, through its Africa Transformation Office (ATO), aims to provide resilient cloud



**Trixie Lohmirmand** - Executive VP Dubai World Trade Center

services in Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe through its partnership with Liquid Cloud.

The relationship between Google and Africa began about 15 years ago, some nine years after the company's official launch. The company, now worth more than \$1 trillion, has built and championed some Africa-focused initiatives while running its sub-Saharan business from South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya. It launched an AI lab in Accra, Ghana in 2018, where it would conceptualise and execute AI projects on the continent.

"Organising the African version of this prestigious fair is in line with the Kingdom's efforts to promote digital and investment in the technology field," the ADD Head explained on this occasion. For her part, Trixie Lohmirmand, Executive Vice President of Dubai World Trade Center, said she was "delighted with the creation of this African version of the event and this long-lasting partnership with the Kingdom", noting that "like Dubai, Morocco is a true regional hub and it was completely logical and legitimate to establish this partnership with the ADD to open up more to the African continent." ■





Ministry of Industry  
and Commerce

Under the Patronage of  
**H.E. Abdulla Bin Adel Fakhro**  
Minister of Industry and Commerce



Join the 11<sup>th</sup> EDITION of



CONFERENCE



EXHIBITION

**July 4 - 6, 2023**  
Gulf Convention Centre  
Gulf Hotel, Bahrain

**Achieving Sustainable  
Development Through  
Digital Transformation**

Industries

Businesses

Governments

The Leading  
ICT Event  
in **BAHRAIN**



For Conference and  
Sponsorship, contact:

**Korina Dela Rosa**  
Project Manager

✉ info@meetict.com

For the Exhibition,  
contact:

**Katheryn Santosidad**  
Project Coordinator

✉ info@bitexbh.com

Contact our team for inquiries at +973 6670 8601 or +973 17002280

Training Partner



Technology Partner



International  
Media Partner



Digital Media Partner  
- Oman



Research Partner



Media Partner



Exclusive Digital Media Partner  
- Bahrain



Affiliated Partners:



Organized by:



**Register Your Interest**

Conference: [www.meetict.com](http://www.meetict.com) | Exhibition: [www.bitexbh.com](http://www.bitexbh.com)

Facebook Instagram meetictbahrain

Facebook Instagram bitexbahrain

# African leaders defy lacklustre global economy to forge ahead with digital transformation collaborations at inaugural GITEX Africa

African ministers, government and private sector leaders are set to converge in a powerful cross-continental forum in Marrakech this month to press on with digital transformation alliances as the tech world reorganises itself in the wake of the global digital upheaval.

Against the biggest market correction in recent years, Africa continues to march onwards to empower and unify a continent on the cusp of transformative ICT growth, with the GITEX Africa Digital Summit the new focal point steering a pursuit of a unified digital vision.

The influential summit will spearhead an inspiring conference program at the inaugural GITEX Africa 2023 – the largest tech and start-up show in the African continent, taking place from 31 May-2 June – unifying 500-plus policy makers, government heads, investors and academics to explore how technology and connectivity are redrawing the boundaries of sustainable social-economic development for African government, business and society.

Lacina Koné, the Director General and CEO of Smart Africa – the pan-African organisation driving the continent’s digital transformation agenda – is a headline speaker. Koné said digital technologies offer new avenues for economic growth in Africa by accelerating job creation and talent development, supporting access to public services and increasing productivity and innovation. However, challenges remain.

“The lack of connectivity in remote and rural regions along with insufficient data protection and high cost of African connectivity have brought new challenges to businesses, governments, and people,” said Koné, who oversees the process of defining Africa’s digital agenda in addition to advancing key continental initiatives.



**Lacina Koné** - DG & CEO, Smart Africa

“Intra-governmental cooperation is the key enabler of digital services adoption and acceleration, while mitigating these associated challenges across the African continent.”

Koné will be part of a panel at the GITEX Africa Digital Summit titled: ‘Uniting Towards One African Market’. He will share how Africa’s leaders are building a secure, resilient and sustainable digital future. “Agile enabling regulations are needed to quickly respond to market developments, facilitating entry of new competitors

for the benefit of consumers in a united African continent,” he said.

The GITEX Africa Digital Summit will arrive amid a remarkable period of African ICT and broadband growth, with statistics showing the continent has the world’s fastest-growing internet population, up by 20 percent in just one year. Africa’s digital economy has become one of the main drivers of cross-continental progress, coupled with strong talent development and a spike in public private sector investments.

Jérôme Hénique, CEO for the Middle East & Africa at Orange, France; Tonny Bao, Vice President of Huawei, China; and Saad Toma, General Manager of IBM MENA, are among the foremost private sector leaders speaking about the critical pathways advancing the continent’s digital transformation missions, from building a more digital and inclusive Africa to exploring the social and economic impacts of 5G, or how AI can drive business transformation and sustainability.

Other headliners at Africa’s most impactful leadership conference



**Dr. Adel Alsharji**  
COO, Presight

program include H.E. Syed Amin Ul Haque, Minister of Information Technology and Communications in Pakistan; and Babajide Sanwo-Olu the Governor of Lagos Nigeria, who will deliver a keynote address on what is accelerating Africa to become the next Silicon Valley. The state of play in Africa's digital economy will be another key discussion point, addressed by H.E. Belete Molla, the Minister of Innovation and Technology in Ethiopia; and H.E. Cina Lawson Minister of Digital Economy and Transformation in Togo.

"I am honoured to be part of the GITEX Africa hosted by Morocco," said H.E. Molla. "It creates opportunities to governments, innovators and leading experts from around the world to discover new ideas, build new partnerships, and connect with inspiring mentors and investors. It would help Ethiopia to get connected to the global tech space and leading players."

**Accelerating the epic race for African AI dominance**

The next wave of digital transformation accelerated by the power of generative AI along with AI's impact on African societies will meanwhile stimulate curious discussions at a dedicated AI track on day three of GITEX Africa, where the brightest minds and most innovative thinkers share their insights on AI's ability to revolutionise industries, from agriculture to finance.



**Jérôme Hénique**  
CEO, ME & Africa, Orange

Dr. Adel Alsharji, Chief Operating Officer at UAE-headquartered Presight, the Middle East's leading international big data analytics company powered by AI, will deliver the keynote address on the Societal Impact of Artificial Intelligence.

"The societal impact of AI is multifaceted and far-reaching globally, and it is already reshaping sectors, such as healthcare, finance, agriculture, education, and manufacturing and therefore the way we live," said Dr. Alsharji.

"The African continent is showing a speedy AI adoption rate and a readiness to explore and harness the potential of AI for driving economic growth and addressing local challenges, ultimately benefiting the greater good of people.

"As AI advances, we can anticipate further innovation and positive applications. It is crucial, however, to embrace AI responsibly, ensuring ethical considerations are in place as we navigate this transformative landscape."

Mustapha Zaouini, the Chairman of AI in Africa, will speak on a panel on Responsible Generative AI. He said while Africa has unique challenges such as disparity in internet access, the continent is steadily embracing AI.

"Africa is exploring AI to solve pressing issues like poverty, unemployment, and inequality,"

said Zaouini. "However, readiness varies across countries, and there's a need to invest in infrastructure, education, and policy-making to fully harness this fast-evolving technology.

"Access to AI technologies can level the playing field so it is essential not to be left aside. Ensuring equitable access to technology and bridging the digital divide are crucial steps to prepare for AI's impact in Africa."

**Digital cities evolution and plotting the path to a net zero future**

With the global push towards a net zero economy, technology's role in advancing sustainability is more important than ever.

A panel at GITEX Africa's Digital Cities conference track will explore how technology can advance an African-centric Net Zero agenda, addressed by Dr. Shaoshan Liu, Founder and CEO of PerceptIn in the USA; Mohammed Essaidi, MEA Chairman of the Global Cities Alliance, IEEE in Morocco; Laurent Roussel, President of Francophone Africa & Islands at Schneider Electric; and Gilles Babinet, French Government Representative of Digital Champions Group (EU) in France.

Other preeminent speakers at GITEX Africa include Emmanuel Gadret, CEO of Francophone Africa at Deloitte, who will share his insights into charting Africa's path to prosperity by unlocking economic and data sovereignty; and Dr. Ray Johnson, CEO of the Technology Innovation Institute in the UAE, who will dive into generative AI's ubiquitous role in fuelling economic growth.

**A historic launch in the world's next biggest digital economy**

The inaugural GITEX Africa will make its historic debut from 31 May-2 June 2023, welcoming more than 900 exhibitors, start-ups, and visiting delegations from 80 countries for three days of intensive outcome-focused public-private sector collaborations in the world's next biggest digital economy.

More than 250 hosted investors from 34

countries with US\$200 billion worth of assets under management will also seek breakthrough technologies and potential African tech scale-up co-investment opportunities. As the ultimate start-up incubator and magnet for flourishing VC funds, GITEX Africa will deliver an unmatched scouting platform for these investors, of which 70 percent are coming from outside of Africa.

GITEX Africa is held under the High Patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, and hosted by the Digital Development Agency (ADD), the public entity leading the Moroccan government’s digital transformation agenda under the authority of the Moroccan Ministry of Digital Transition and Administration Reform.

KAOUN International will lead the partnership for this much awaited business endeavour, urging the global tech community to go to Africa, leveraging the power of the trusted GITEX Global brand in Dubai, the world’s largest tech event.



**Dr. Ray Johnson** - CEO, Technology Innovation Institute

With tech-friendly policies in a continent that is now far more accessible, African investment is rocketing. Analysts predict the tech market is on track to scale from \$115 billion to \$712 billion by 2050, while according to Briter Bridges, African start-ups raised a total of US\$5.4 billion across 900+ deals



**Mustapha Zaouini** Chairman, AI, Africa

in 2022. Meanwhile, a youthful populace coupled with Africa’s rapid urbanisation is accelerating digital economic growth, with 70 percent of the Sub-Saharan African population under 30 years of age and 45 percent of Africans set to live in cities by 2025. **T**

## Lexar to unveil next-generation memory solutions at GITEX Africa 2023

Lexar will be showcasing its next-generation product portfolio at GITEX Africa 2023, one of the most important events in the African technology industry. The event will be held from May 31st to June 2nd, 2023 in Marrakech, and Lexar will be exhibiting at their stand on Central Aisle, Booth 4C-35

“Lexar has been a trusted leading global brand of memory solutions for more than 25 years. Our participation at GITEX Africa 2023, is a part of our long-term strategic vision, to meet the growing demand for technology across the continent. The company is actively present in Morocco, as the country is certainly playing a crucial role to assist and support Africa’s rapidly expanding digital economy,” said Fissal Oubida, General Manager – Middle East,



Africa, CIS and Indian subcontinent, Lexar.

GITEX Africa 2023 is a perfect opportunity for Lexar to showcase its award-winning

portfolio designed to specifically meet the unique needs of African consumers that are focused on quality, performance, and reliability. Lexar’s state-of-the-art photography, videography, and gaming portfolio of memory and storage solutions, which includes, SDXC™, SDHC™, microSD™, CFExpress™ cards, card readers, DRAMs, internal SSDs, portable SSDs, and USB flash drives.

“We foresee many opportunities for Lexar, as there is an increasingly rapid technology adoption and growing demand by the urban African population. We are looking forward to developing strategic engagements, building connections, and meeting with key stakeholders from the African tech ecosystem,” concluded Oubida. **T**

# GITEX

## leads global tech communities to Africa for historic launch in the world's next biggest digital economy

GITEX AFRICA marks first international venture for world's mega tech showcase, in partnership with Morocco's Digital Development Agency

New geographic launch spearheaded by KAOUN International, the overseas events organising company of Dubai World Trade Centre

- *Pardon Mujakachi*
- *Mohammed Drissi Melyani*
- *Trixie LohMirmand*
- *Maryam Al Mehairi*
- *Ramez El-Serafy*

GITEX GLOBAL, the world's mega tech showcase, is embarking on a new journey into Africa, leveraging a 42-year legacy of connecting tech titans, governments, start-ups, investors and global innovation hubs, to accelerate, collaborate, and explore new ventures in the world's rising tech continent.

The inaugural GITEX AFRICA will take place from 31 May-2 June 2023 in Marrakech, Morocco, rallying the tech world's attention to the vast potential of the globe's youngest continent, and shaping the vision for a more connected, sustainable, inclusive, and tech-driven digital economy.

The landmark event is the first overseas venture for GITEX GLOBAL, the influential tech brand trusted by international tech executives. It was announced today at a press launch during GITEX GLOBAL 2022, which this year outran capacity at the Dubai World Trade Centre venue to cross two million sq. ft. with more than 5,000 exhibitors from 90 countries.

GITEX AFRICA is launched in partnership with



the Digital Development Agency (ADD), a strategic public entity leading the Moroccan government's digital transformation agenda under the authority of the Moroccan Ministry of Digital Transition and Administration Reform.

KAOUN International, the overseas events organising company of Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC), will lead the partnership for this much awaited business endeavour in the highly sought after tech region, officially launching the "Go There" global campaign for GITEX AFRICA campaign.

At the show's official announcement and signing ceremony, Mohammed Drissi Melyani, General Director of the Digital Development Agency, said: "We are honoured to organize this event in a continent which is seeing great dynamic, economic and social growth in many fields.

"Morocco is playing a crucial role to assist and support the development of Africa under the leadership of His Majesty The King Mohamed VI and to link it economically to the rest of the world. We are deeply engaged to contribute to the success of this first edition of GITEX AFRICA and will work very hard to make it

exceptional for us all."

Trixie LohMirmand, CEO of KAOUN International and Executive Vice President of Dubai World Trade Centre, organiser of GITEX, added: "The time for Africa is now. Against a stuttering world tech market, Africa has risen and punched well above its weight recently, with big tech investments rocketing and start-ups funding recording the best year ever in 2021 at six times over the global average.

"It takes a lot to build and sustain an outstanding tech event. GITEX has a global following of communities that trust the brand's motivation in discovering new tech geographies and marketplaces for greater empowerment and knowledge sharing in the new generation economies.

"The Digital Development Agency Morocco is committed to accelerating wide scale digital transformation of its society and the tech modernisation of the wider African continent. The unified commitment from the stakeholders embodied in GITEX AFRICA shall amplify the African tech opportunities and bring to forth the world's next biggest digital economy."



**One Africa, limitless opportunities in world’s burgeoning tech frontier**

With tech-friendly policies in a continent that is now far more accessible, African investment is rocketing. Analysts predict the tech market is on track to scale from \$115 billion to \$712 billion by 2050, while growth in start-up funding is six times higher than anywhere else. In only six years, Africa went from zero to seven unicorns, with four all born last year.

African talent development is also at its fastest. Global tech titans Microsoft and Google are already setting up billion-dollar innovation and talent hubs in Africa, while the number of people with internet access has grown to 522.8 million, or 40 percent of the African population.

Meanwhile, a youthful populace coupled with Africa’s rapid urbanisation is accelerating digital economic growth, with 70 percent of the Sub-Saharan African population under 30 years of age and 45 percent of Africans set to live in cities by 2025.

The pervasive confidence and upbeat outlook on the African tech landscape are shared by global start-ups and investors, accentuated by the unrivalled opportunities, global visibility and economic impact brought about by the debut of GITEX AFRICA.

“I’m thrilled to learn about GITEX AFRICA next year,” said Ramez El-Serafy, CEO of

Flat6labs, the Middle East and North Africa’s leading early stage venture capital firm, and an existing exhibitor at GITEX GLOBAL’s North Star start-up showcase.

“Africa is a rising market with boundless opportunities for bold expansion, where start-ups, investors, accelerators, Venture Capitalists, multinational corporations and the entire tech ecosystem can construct sustained growth.

“At Flat6Labs, we see first-hand the impact and connections GITEX has continued to drive for regional and global businesses. Our presence at GITEX is crucial for us and our start-ups every year, and with Flat6Labs’ expanding footprint across Africa, GITEX’s expansion into Africa in Morocco is just fantastic news for us.”

Pardon Mujakachi, Vice President of Strategy & Partnerships at Chipper Cash, an African unicorn fintech platform offering mobile, cross-border money transfer services, added: “We’re excited to hear that GITEX is coming to Africa, and believe this a watershed moment for Africa’s future digital economy.

“GITEX AFRICA will create more opportunities for tech entrepreneurs to shine on the global stage, with Africa a key focal point of innovation and sustainable expansion in emerging economies. Converging the entire tech ecosystem, GITEX AFRICA will propel the continent forward in the incubation of start-ups, scale-ups, and unicorns such as Chipper Cash.”

**Enabling Morocco – Africa’s emerging tech hub**

At the confluence of Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East, Morocco is well-positioned to transform into a regional business hub by leveraging its geographically strategic location, political stability, and world-class infrastructure.

Morocco is Africa’s fifth-largest economy, the second biggest African investor in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the largest African investor in West Africa, while it also sits 3rd of all African countries in the World Bank’s ease of doing business index.

Foreign investment in Morocco is rising, particularly in export sectors like manufacturing, through favourable macroeconomic policies, trade liberalisation, investment incentives, and structural reforms. New Moroccan national strategies emphasise value-added industries such as renewables, automotive, aerospace, textile, pharmaceuticals, outsourcing, and agro-food.

**Amplifying GITEX GLOBAL’s enduring African association**

For years GITEX GLOBAL has advanced the African agenda, in 2022 welcoming its most heightened participation from the African tech ecosystem yet. This was amplified by ‘Africa Fast 100’ at its North Star start-up showcase, the largest ever gathering of African start-ups to be hosted under one roof outside of Africa.

In its largest edition yet, GITEX GLOBAL 2022 also featured involvement from key African unicorns, such as Jumia, Flutterwave, and Chipper Cash, while welcoming ministerial delegations from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Morocco, and many more.

GITEX AFRICA 2023 will build on these achievements, curating the most powerful innovations emerging from the world’s next most sought-after market across the fast-growing sectors of fintech, e-commerce, cloud, IoT, AI, telecom, and security. ■

# Huawei and SAMENA hosted the 5.5G Leaders' Summit



Huawei Middle East & Central Asia and SAMENA Telecommunications Council jointly hosted the 5.5G Leaders' Summit at Atlantis the Palm, Dubai, UAE, with a theme "10Gbps, Striding towards the 5.5G Era".

The 5.5G Leaders' Summit brought together ICT leaders, regulators, industry organizations, including GSMA and WBBA, vendors, enterprises, analysts, chipsets, application ecosystem partners, and other experts to share their ideas, discuss various topics on creating sustainable 5.5G connectivity, and ecosystem aggregation platforms to foster collaboration, accelerate digital economic growth.

Since the first launch of the 5G network almost four years ago, adoption has accelerated in the ME region. 5.5G is the essential upgrade for 5G, a key milestone for the increasingly integrated intelligent world, while 6G is still in early study. It will offer 100 times more business potential with a ten-times-better network experience



**Mohammed Al Ramsi, Deputy Director General, TDR UAE**

than 5G.

Mohammed Al Ramsi, Deputy Director General, TDR UAE, gave an opening speech at the summit: "Technologies are developing and renewing and presenting us with great challenges and greater opportunities. Providing a sound regulatory environment is crucial for embracing 5.5G's

potential fully. As such, the UAE has taken several steps, including the establishment of the ICT regulatory sandbox."

"I am quite sure that this session will lead to relevant and actionable insights on how we can leverage 5.5G technology to drive sustainable development and digital innovation in the UAE and globally."

In his opening speech, Mr. Steven Yi, President of Huawei Middle East and Central Asia, said: "Sustainable digital economic growth relies on three powers: transmission, computing, and storage. To build these powers, it is crucial to consistently invest in connectivity infrastructure like 5.5G, prioritize green deployment methods, and foster local digital talent."

Dr. Philip Song, Chief Marketing Officer of Huawei Carrier BG, delivered the keynote about 'Striding towards the 5.5G Era,' stating: "With the arrival of the 5.5G era, people will be able to enjoy true-to-life experience such as 3D video. With the maturity of the RedCap technology and the innovation of the Passive IoT technology, the industry digitalization process will be



*Steven Yi - President, Huawei Middle East and Central Asia*



*Vanness You - Vice President, ME&CA CNBG, Huawei*

accelerated. We hope that all device and application partners, local content partners and policy makers can work together to create more values to society with the 5.5G era."

In his speech, Martin Creaner, Director General of the World Broadband Association, emphasized: "The WBBA is bringing together service providers, suppliers, users, investors and governments to remove the barriers and help realize the socioeconomic benefits of Giga/10Giga Society for the region."

During the summit, Mr. Rashid Alahmedi,



*Dr. Philip Song - Chief Marketing Officer, Carrier BG, Huawei*

COO of InfraX, said: "5.5G with 10x network capabilities compared to 5G, will address the current technology gaps and enable various digital services in the power grid industry. However, business model innovations based on the new opportunities and close collaboration among stakeholders are key to driving the digital transformation in the power grid as well as many other industry sectors in the 5.5G era."

Stephen Wilson, Omdia Senior Principal Analyst, delivered a keynote and said: "The demands on broadband networks are developing rapidly, pushed by a combination of rapid growth in connected

devices, increasingly bandwidth hungry applications, and greater reliance on the cloud. Service providers need to invest in next-generation broadband technology to not only meet such demand, but also create new business models that will enable future revenue growth and ensure fast RoI."

As part of this summit, Huawei also launched FWA<sup>2</sup>, a new generation HBB service that is supported by advanced 5.5G technology. During the launch, Mr. Vanness You, Vice President of Huawei ME&CA CNBG, said: "With the large-scale commercial use of multi-carrier aggregation terminals and the development of RedCap technology, it's time to upgrade from FWA standard to FWA<sup>2</sup>. FWA<sup>2</sup> includes FWA Pro represented by up to 1 Gbps speed, FWA Lite and FWA Biz with the feature of low-cost and high-reliability. This is the first wave of use cases that can be generated by 5.5G."

At the summit, led by the UAE TDRA, etisalat by e&, du, infraX, Quanray, HTC, Lierda, and Huawei jointly launched the 5.5G OpenLab. The lab is dedicated to building a 5.5G ecosystem alliance, testing ecosystem interoperability, and developing advanced use cases for consumers, homes, and industry sectors. ■





## MECA President

*stresses that thriving digital economy depends on sustainable connectivity and a large pool of skilled local talents*

In his opening keynote at the SAMENA Leaders' Summit, where the leading telecom and ICT leaders in the region gathered, Steven Yi, President of Huawei Middle East and Central Asia, addressed the audience with futuristic but also pragmatic ICT industry viewpoint, reflecting on the company sustainable approach – Thriving Digital Economy Depends on Sustainable Connectivity. He reiterated that the Gulf countries continue to lead the global 5G deployment and commercialization and offer a fertile environment for the development of 5.5G.

Steven said: "It is widely acknowledged that the digital economy plays a pivotal role in driving global economic growth. AI as the key technology, will help to build an intelligent world and boost digital economic progress. The rapid rise of AI technology has significantly increased computing power demand. To train and increase accuracy, AI systems need large volumes of data, which must be transmitted rapidly, processed efficiently, and stored safely."

It is estimated that by 2030, the thriving digital economy could be worth 30 trillion dollars. Huawei believes that sustainable digital economic growth will be based on three powers, the transmission power that can support over 200 billion global connections, the computing power that can meet 500 times increased AI computing demands, and the storage power that can store an impressive 1 Yottabyte (a quadrillion



**Steven Yi - President, Huawei Middle East and Central Asia, delivering the opening keynote at SAMENA Leaders' Summit 2023**

Gigabytes) of data yearly. He stressed that building these three powers involves continuous investment in connectivity infrastructure, green deployment and local digital talents.

"Today's connected world demands network connectivity investment. These networks are essential in connecting people with people, people with things, things with things, and transmitting data rapidly and accurately. Advanced connectivity infrastructure can bridge

the digital divide and unlock digital economy benefits," Steven added.

He highlighted that 5G is a prime example of a connectivity technology that can deliver significant social, industrial, economic, and sustainability benefits. There are already 17 commercial 5G networks within the Middle East region, and coverage reaches 45 million population. He stressed that while GCC countries led the global 5G deployment wave,

it is essential to continue evolving connectivity infrastructure, adopting the latest technologies in the 5.5G era, enabling 10Giga bits per second speed everywhere, supporting all scenario IoT, and integrating sensing communication. Continuous evolution to the 5.5G era is the way to ensure that the infrastructure will meet demands for a more immersive experience and unleash the potential powers for sustainable digital economic growth.

He highlighted that 5G/5.5G as the crucial ICT connectivity technology can create tangible values toward a digital economy represented in many key outcomes such as reaching the top rate in internet access for more social benefits, contributing to GDP, driving better economic growth and adding new potentials to sustainability approach and energy saving through 5G networks.

"A sustainable digital economy will require more than connectivity. Green ICT solutions must also be prioritized. We must consider the environmental impact as we embrace technology and extend digital networks. We can protect the environment and preserve the digital economy by incorporating eco-friendly and energy-efficient ICT infrastructure. Furthermore, ICT will also boost industry-wide green practices," Steven added. It is estimated that adapting ICT-enabled digital solutions will help reduce 20% of global carbon emissions by 2030.

He further elaborated that a sustainable digital economy demands a large pool of local talents that is proficient in the latest technologies and able to adapt to new developments quickly. Governments and businesses must continue to invest in training and education programs to ensure that workers have the skills they need to succeed in the digital economy, he explained.

Huawei has a long and proud history of collaboration with governments, academia and industry to enrich the

region's ICT talent ecosystem. CSR initiatives such as Seeds for the Future, the annual Huawei ICT Competition, Huawei ICT Academy, joint innovation centers, labs and other CSR initiatives empower thousands of Arab youth annually to supercharge their ICT careers.

In the Middle East, Huawei has set up 186 Huawei ICT Academies, and more than 4,000 students have participated in the flagship program Seeds for the Future, while over 57,000 people have obtained Huawei certification. We also have trained over 150,000 ICT talents for the Middle East and are committed to achieving more in collaboration with our partners.

"Over the last decades, we have put a lot of effort into creating social values for each country by creating hundreds and thousands of job opportunities for the local people, actively working with local partners, and cultivating over 100,000 local ICT talents through our different training certification programs. We will continue working with our partners to bring pioneering new technologies to the region that will enrich people's lives with immersive digital services and enable smart solutions to accelerate the industry's digital transformation and related social value," said Steven.

Huawei's training and certification programs serve as a major source of high-quality talent for industry digitalization. By the end of 2022, the global ICT leader had established Huawei ICT Academies with more than 2,200 universities across the globe.

Through this program, the company trains an average of more than 200,000 students each year. Furthermore, the Huawei ICT Competition provides an international platform through which university students from around the world can compete and share ideas with each other.

The sixth Huawei ICT Competition, held

in 2022, attracted 150,000 university students from 85 countries and regions. This month, finalists' teams from seven countries in the region will be in China to compete on a global level with their peers from other countries in Huawei Global ICT Competition. "We look forward to inspiring more interest and engagement in our ICT talent cultivation programs and initiatives in the region to support the local governments in their strategies and visions on digital transformation and ICT talent ecosystem," he added.

"In 2023, we will continue to maintain strategic focus and strengthen R&D investment. We will focus on creating greater value for our customers, partners, and society. Huawei remains open to collaboration and is always looking to join hands with outstanding researchers, developers, innovators and partners from around the world to address the biggest challenges of our times," stated Steven.

Steven described SAMENA Leaders' Summit as an enlightening and insightful conference as it focuses on crucial pillars of economic development, including sustainable connectivity, ecosystems, and the digital economy. Reiterating the importance of connectivity, he closed his keynote with a popular Chinese saying, 'If you want to get rich, build roads first'. "Building a strong connectivity infrastructure is critical to the growth of the digital economy. Just as roads and bridges are essential to the physical economy, a robust connectivity infrastructure is the foundation upon which the digital economy is built," Steven concluded.

Huawei's recent annual report demonstrated that the company continues to strengthen investment in R&D, with an annual expenditure of USD23.22 billion in 2022, representing 25.1% of the company's annual revenue and bringing its total R&D expenditure over the past 10 years to more than USD 140.55 billion. ■

# Huawei highlights the importance of Green ICT for sustainable digital economic growth at SAMENA LS

Huawei Technologies has emphasized the crucial role of green ICT development in ensuring sustainable digital economic growth during a keynote delivered by Mr. Alex Wang, Senior Vice President of Huawei Carrier BG Marketing, at the SAMENA Leaders' Summit.

In his address, Wang highlighted the evolution of intelligence and the need for co-development between ICT and energy technology. "Much like human evolution, our technology has evolved to become increasingly intelligent. Today, computing capability has grown by leaps and bounds and consequently, the corresponding energy consumption is also increasing. We firmly believe that green and low-carbon development, as well as digital and intelligent transformation are the two main forces driving the fourth industrial revolution forward."

Green ICT deployment is considered a prerequisite for sustainable digital economic growth. Wang emphasized that digital technology advancements provide new opportunities to achieve sustainability while meeting user experience requirements. He identified the density of connections, computing power, and decarbonization intensity as the main dimensions for measuring the green digital economy.

According to estimations by ITU, the connectivity density will increase as global data traffic increases 14 times from 2020 to 2030. The computing power is also poised to grow more than 10 times during the same period. However, the massive data and computing power growth will naturally result in higher network energy consumption. This can pose a challenge, especially in light of the Paris Agreement



*Alex Wang - Senior Vice President, Carrier BG Marketing, Huawei*

that requires the ICT industry to reduce carbon emissions by 45% within this decade.

To face the challenge and reduce carbon emissions, Mr. Wang highlighted three critical aspects: energy efficiency, the utilization rate of renewable energy, and user experience.

First, Huawei has developed a three-layer green solution to enhance network energy efficiency and has introduced "Zero Bit, Zero Watt" to minimize energy consumption, particularly during idle network hours. In low traffic load scenarios, Huawei's multi-dimensional shutdown technology achieves "deep dormant" for Active Antenna Units (AAUs), significantly reducing AAU power consumption from 300W to below 10W.

Second, Huawei's approach to renewable energy focuses not only on the scale of deployment but also on the efficiency of deploying and utilizing green energy. The

company has transitioned from network-level to site-level planning and deployment of green power, improving accuracy. Intelligent scheduling, operating at daily to minute levels, optimizes the efficiency of renewable energy generation, conversion, and utilization, resulting in enhanced economic and environmental benefits.

Last but not least, in terms of user experience, Huawei ensures network Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for energy-saving while prioritizing user satisfaction. Optimal energy-saving strategies are implemented for different network scenarios, maximizing energy efficiency while guaranteeing basic network KPIs in low-traffic situations. For high-traffic scenarios such as Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) services and VIP users, Huawei focuses on providing an exceptional user experience.

In addition to technological advancements, Huawei actively collaborates with global operators and standard organizations to promote the standardization of green indicators. Mr. Wang urged operators in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia regions to join forces in promoting innovative regional green indicators. This includes the application of multi-dimensional energy efficiency indicators, the establishment of regional network energy efficiency benchmarks, and guidance for constructing networks that prioritize both user experience and energy efficiency.

By emphasizing the importance of green ICT and sustainable connectivity, Huawei Technologies aims to contribute to developing a digital economy that is environmentally friendly, efficient, and meets the evolving needs of users. ■

## Integrate ME brings its launch event to a successful conclusion, with praise from 70+ founding exhibitors

Integrate Middle East has successfully concluded its three-day exhibition. The three-day event presented the ideal forum for the global Pro AV and Media Technology communities to gather and exchange the most recent developments and best practices in the industry. Co-located with CABSAT 2023 in its 29th edition, the launch took place at the Dubai World Trade Centre, where a dedicated show floor highlighted the power of integrated Pro AV technology solutions. Among the live and interactive demonstrations was a 3D digital experience on a 100 sq m LED digital wall, and an experiential interaction opportunity with a 90 sq m screen, both constructed by Absen.

Jaswinder Guleria, Industry Development Director MEA of Absen, said: "It was a delightful experience to showcase our big 8k resolution screen with high-quality colour image as a unique feature at the Integrate Middle East. Full HD and 4k have been quite popular in the recent times, so we wanted to showcase our 8k resolution screen as something extraordinary for people to see and which is soothing to the eyes. Currently, the staging and rental industry is witnessing a demand for such solutions, as most shows are broadcasted live. Our key concept was to showcase that our products can enable people to view shows exactly as it can be seen in person."

Khalid Sweidan, Vice President Sales at ROE Visual (Middle East and Africa) said, "It was a pleasure to showcase our cutting-edge LED display technology at the first edition of Integrate Middle East. By exhibiting our flexible and versatile suite of products, we aimed to position ourselves as the go-to LED solutions provider in the region and assist our clients in delivering advanced solutions to the market. Integrate Middle East served as an ideal platform for us to strengthen our client relations and engage in expanding our network."



Many of the 70-plus founder exhibitors expressed their intent to return for the 2024 edition of Integrate Middle East, with increased stand space to further demonstrate how their products and solutions can add value to a wide variety of industries and to once again benefit from the knowledge sharing opportunities offered at the Integrate ME Summit. This year's Summit heard speakers from Shure, Global Signage Alliance, HL Group, Newtek, HQWS, the University of Southern California, and other organisations, provide presentations, speaker sessions, and panel discussions for attendees.

Commenting on this, Elie Honain, CEO at Quest stated: "I was extremely honoured to be one of the speakers in a panel at Integrate ME 2023. The event has provided an excellent platform for networking with leaders and professionals in the AV industry from across the world as well as for exploring innovative avenues within the industry. It further holds significance as it provided participating companies with a great opportunity to connect with various renowned global brands and form alliances that will aid in their business growth and expansion in the region."

I would like to congratulate the organisers of the event, whose relentless efforts and meticulous planning from the beginning to end have made Integrate ME a resounding success. It was carried out with great professionalism, and we anticipate an even better edition next year."

Attendees were able to stay up-to-date with the most recent developments in technology and hear best practices from top industry experts by attending these thought-provoking debates on current industry trends, such as the future of the Pro AV sector; the growing use of virtual and AI technology and IoT; the rising giant of eSports; touchless transportation journey; remote delivery of events; phygital stores with XR, and new revenue streams unlocked by Pro AV. With its remarkable showcase of cutting-edge Pro AV technology from industry leaders across various verticals, Integrate Middle East's inaugural event was a resounding success, bringing together a diverse range of industries and providing attendees with a unique opportunity to explore the latest and most innovative Pro AV technology solutions. **IT**

# stc Group achieved the highest quarterly revenues in its history

*as revenues for Q1, 2023 compared to the comparable quarter of last year increased by 7.45% , and it distributes SAR 0.40 per share dividends for the 1st quarter of 2023*

stc Group has announced the company's preliminary financial results for the period ending at 31 March 2023:

- Revenues for the 1st quarter reached SAR 18,179m with an increase of 7.45% compared to the corresponding quarter last year.
- Gross Profit for the 1st quarter reached to SAR 9,355m with an increase of 2.24% compared to the corresponding quarter last year.
- Operating Profit for the 1st quarter reached to SAR 3,731m with a decrease of (2.43%) compared to the corresponding quarter last year.
- Earnings before Interest, Taxes, Zakat, Depreciation and Amortization (EBITDA) for the 1st quarter reached to SAR 6,343m with an increase of 0.68% compared to the corresponding quarter last year.
- Net Profit for the 1st quarter reached to SAR 3,109m with an increase of 2.44% compared to the corresponding quarter last year.

In accordance with the dividends distribution policy for three years period starting from the 4th quarter of 2021, which was ratified during the Ordinary General Assembly Meeting on 30-11-2021. In addition to the amendment on the dividends distribution policy, which was ratified by the Extraordinary General Assembly Meeting on 30-8-2022, by distributing an amount of SAR 0.40 per share per quarter, stc will distribute a total of SAR 1,992.87 million in cash dividends to the shareholders for the 1st quarter of 2023, representing SAR 0.40 per share as the



*Eng. Olyan Mohammed Alwetaid - CEO, stc Group*

total number of Treasury shares related to the Employees Stock Incentives Plan stood at 17,821,798 shares at the end of the first quarter 2023 and those shares are not entitled for any dividends distribution. The eligibility of dividends shall be for the shareholders at the close of trading on Thursday 18-05-2023 and as per the registered shareholders in stc's shareholders at the end of the eligibility day. Dividend distribution date will be on Wednesday 07-06-2023.

Commenting on these results, Eng. Olyan Mohammed Alwetaid, stc Group CEO,

stated that during the first quarter of this year, and in line with the company's "DARE 2.0" strategy, the Group announced the launch of its Corporate Investment Fund (CIF). The fund aims to invest in early stages startups in various domains including fintech, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, and other promising areas. The launch of the fund comes as a reinforcement of the Group's leadership in the digital and innovation fields, and in support of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 to diversify the economy by expanding investment in new sectors and supporting entrepreneurs and

startups relevant to the Group's strategy, locally, regionally, and globally.

Recently, stc Group announced its entry into the European market through its subsidiary, "TAWAL", a leading provider in ICT infrastructure. TAWAL, has signed an agreement to acquire United Group's telecommunications tower assets. The agreement, valued at EUR 1.22 bn (around SAR 5 billion), supports stc Group's ambitious strategy to expand its international footprint. This acquisition represents another significant step for the stc Group in executing its strategy of expansion and growth, following its entry into several promising fields and investments in information technology, Internet of Things, cloud computing, information security, fintech, and digital entertainment, as well as its geographic expansion in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Malaysia through its subsidiaries.

As part of the company's "DARE 2.0" strategy, which aims to grow the activities and investments of the Group, solutions

by stc (one of the Group's subsidiaries) has completed the acquisition of 100% of Contact Centers Company (ccc), the business process outsourcing market leader in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with an enterprise value of SAR 450 million. Through this acquisition, solutions by stc aims to enhance its growth and leadership in the ICT sector in the Kingdom. This is the second acquisition for solutions by stc, following its acquisition of Giza Systems last year.

Mr. Alwetaid also pointed out that stc Group, through the global technology conference "LEAP23", signed more than 40 agreements with major global and local companies, which will support future technologies and contribute to accelerating the digital transformation of the public and private sectors in line with the Group's strategy and the Kingdom's Vision 2030.

Since the Kingdom's Vision 2030 is a sustainable vision, stc has announced its commitment to contribute to planting one million trees by 2030. Through this commitment, the Group seeks to support

the Kingdom's targets in the Saudi Green Initiative and the Middle East Green Initiative, and to support natural plant growth and enhance local wildlife. stc contributes to setting plans and goals that promote reducing emissions and waste, raising awareness, identifying risks, and opportunities arising from climate change effects. It aims to reduce the impacts associated with the use of its products and services, and enable both the public and private sectors and its customers to reduce their carbon footprint through its services.

In conclusion, we remain committed to support the growth of the digital economy in the Kingdom and contribute to the development of the telecommunications and information technology sector, with the support of our visionary leadership. stc Group we will continue its commitment to being a vital contributor to the national economy and a leading enabler of digital transformation in various sectors, enhancing the Kingdom's position as a regional hub, in line with the targets of the Saudi Vision 2030. ■

## center3 and Alcatel Submarine Networks to connect Saudi Arabia with Europe by building the EMC West subsea and terrestrial data cables

center3 on behalf of the consortium partners of EMC Subsea Cable Company Ltd (EMC Company) and Alcatel Submarine Networks (ASN), the leader in the manufacturing and installation of submarine optical systems, announced the signing of the Supplier's Contract for the construction of two subsea and terrestrial data cables (EMC West) that will connect Saudi Arabia with Europe. The second phase of the EMC System (EMC Global) that will connect Saudi Arabia with Asia is in the process of being finalized and will be announced soon.

The EMC project enables KSA, Greece, and Cyprus to leverage their geographic position. It delivers a much-needed



new data corridor, positioning the three countries at the epicentre of a digital connectivity infrastructure, which will become a cornerstone of the digital transformation era.

The EMC cable is designed, from its inception, to realise KSA's Vision 2030 and Greece 2.0 by transforming the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia into a "Digital Hub" that connects Asia with Europe and Africa and positioning Greece and Cyprus as

"European Union's East Data Gateway".

ASN will begin to construct EMC West, linking Haql (Saudi Arabia) with Genova (Italy) and Marseille (France), via Cyprus and Greece. The two cables – consisting of multiple Fiber Pairs - will have branches in Cyprus, Crete, and Athens. The EMC system is expected to be in operation on Q1 2026 (RFS date).

The EMC consortium partners expressed their gratitude and appreciation to all the stakeholders involved and congratulated their teams and the related Ministries for facilitating the implementation of this ground-breaking and high-profile project. ■

# Unveiling of 'Zain Omantel International' (ZOI) to revolutionize the telecommunications landscape



**Bader Al-Kharafi** - Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Zain



**Sohail Qadir**  
CEO, ZOI



**Talal Al Mamari**  
CEO, Omantel

Zain has announced the launch of 'Zain Omantel International' (ZOI), an unprecedented joint venture that will establish itself as the Middle East's premier international wholesale services provider. This groundbreaking partnership aims to revolutionize the wholesale telecommunications sector by offering a unique proposition that combines the strengths of both parties to deliver unparalleled service and support to customers worldwide.

ZOI signifies a substantial advancement in the telecommunications industry and is poised to become a global powerhouse due to Zain's extensive regional presence and success in the retail and digital arenas, combined with Omantel's exceptional wholesale capabilities and comprehensive international subsea and terrestrial networks.

The joint venture will cater to the end-to-end telecommunications needs of

operators in the Middle East, as well as international carriers, data centers, hyperscalers, content, and cloud providers seeking services within the region and beyond.

As a result, ZOI will manage all international wholesale requirements of Zain and Omantel operations in eight countries, serving over 55 million customers. Furthermore, ZOI will optimize the existing wholesale businesses of both companies by reducing operating costs and increasing competitiveness through access to state-of-the-art low-latency and high-capacity services over its extended footprint.

Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO commented, "This strategic value-enhancing partnership reflects the next stage of industry collaboration and advancement, and represents another significant

milestone of our '4Sight' profitable growth strategy. It also demonstrates our commitment to transforming the business and creating synergies while extending our reach and capabilities to provide the highest quality services to our customers. ZOI is ideally positioned to evolve into a significant international player on the wholesale telecommunications scene that will benefit both Zain and Omantel on financial, commercial and operational levels."

Talal Al Mamari, Omantel CEO, added, "The joint venture with Zain is a testament to our unwavering commitment to transforming the international arm of Omantel group into a leading global provider, building on our existing position as a top regional wholesale player. ZOI is poised to become the primary gateway from our region to the rest of the world, leveraging the combined



strengths of Omantel and Zain. With these differentiating factors, ZOI is the preferred partner with a truly unique presence in the international telecommunications landscape.”

ZOI, in collaboration with the Omantel and Zain Group operating companies, will ensure that Zain and Omantel customers continue to experience supreme quality in international services such as internet connectivity, voice, roaming, messaging and more.

Some noteworthy projects that ZOI will undertake, along with its consortium partners include the development of Blue-Raman; Africa-1; Jeddah to Marseille (J2M) subsea systems and an extensive terrestrial network connecting most of the regional countries to the landing stations and data centers. Such high-profile projects, to name a few, will create an ecosystem that is unrivalled in the region.

Sohail Qadir has been appointed as the CEO of ZOI. With a proven track record of success, Mr. Qadir has spearheaded the development and expansion of Omantel's international wholesale business. During his 13-year tenure as the Vice President of Wholesale at Omantel,



***ZOI is ideally positioned to evolve into a significant international player on the wholesale telecommunications scene that will benefit both Zain and Omantel on financial, commercial and operational levels***

***Bader Al-Kharafi - Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Zain***



he successfully positioned the company on the global map and increased revenues tenfold. Under Mr. Qadir's leadership, Omantel Wholesale had a remarkable transformational journey

that resulted in investments in more than 20 subsea cables, hosting of global hyperscalers, direct interconnections with all major international service providers and extensive roaming coverage all over the world.

Sohail Qadir, ZOI CEO said, "The region has matured in terms of the scope and consumption of reliable wholesale services, and this strategic partnership in this integral part of the telecommunications business is well-timed to capitalize on global trends. I look forward to leading ZOI in delivering differentiated services to regional and international customers alike, and providing increased value and enhanced customer-experience to all associated stakeholders across our extensive operational footprint."

ZOI is set to be a game changer in the telecommunications wholesale industry, offering a wide portfolio of services and solutions to meet the increasing demands of wholesale customers. This strategic partnership between Zain and Omantel embodies the realization of wholesale synergy, aimed at consolidating each party's international operations and growing the investment at the group-level.■



# IBC2023 set to drive future innovation, best practice and collaboration across Global Media Technology Industry

IBC2023 is now open for registration as the show looks to drive future innovation and empower people, energising the media and entertainment industry through collaboration, learning, networking and business development. IBC2023 will bring together the entire global M&E content and technology community at the RAI Amsterdam from September 15th to 18th, propelling transformation across the sector and sparking conversation about industry trends, advances, best practices, and diversity and inclusion.

Michael Crimp, Chief Executive of IBC, says: "The momentum is building towards another vibrant IBC2023. IBC is the place where the media and entertainment sector convene to design and define the agenda for our industry. IBC enables content everywhere by bringing together buyers and sellers to deliver insights, make connections and unlock opportunities."

Companies exhibiting at IBC have already booked over 40,000 square metres of exhibition space – up from the final figure of 37,000 sqm for last year's show. All 13 halls are open in 2023, with Halls 3 and 4 re-opened, and Halls 5 and 12 extended to their maximum capacity.

Over 70 new exhibitors have booked space at the show so far, including global giant LG Electronics for the first time and a large number of other East and Southeast Asian firms – with bookings from China alone more than doubling, exceeding pre-pandemic 2019 figures. The result is a Chinese pavilion that will be twice the size as last year and a new South Korean pavilion.

Steve Connolly, Director at IBC, notes: "We are seeing the global scope of IBC growing



*Steve Connolly - Director, IBC*

as exhibitors from Asia Pacific are coming to the show in full force this year. It really speaks to the true international nature of our event. The upshot is we are expecting a major boost in visitors from the APAC region."

The show will offer a complete content programme across its four days, featuring keynote and other high-profile speakers, panels, masterclasses, demonstrations and further presentations focused on three content pillars: shifting business models, transformative technology, and people and purpose.

The expanded Hall 5 will host the dedicated Content Everywhere area where industry innovators will showcase emerging technologies for multiplatform delivery, over-the-top (OTT) streaming, and content monetisation – including a full schedule of presentations and panel sessions at the two show floor theatres located within the hall.

The Showcase Theatre in Hall 12 and the Innovation Stage in Hall 3 will feature premier technology providers and thought leaders addressing the latest industry

developments, including leading-edge technology that is spurring industry changes. The Innovation Stage will also host demonstrations from the Accelerator Media Innovation Programme, in which many of the leading and most inventive players in M&E and technology will demonstrate how they are collaborating to fast-track projects that take on real-world challenges the industry faces today. Hall 3 will also be home to the Accelerator Zone.

IBC 2023 will also feature its two-day paid-for IBC Conference, which runs September 15th and 16th and features thought leaders from across the sector addressing the issues driving the M&E agenda – all while enabling valuable connections and more direct industry conversations. This year's IBC Conference will offer the usual standard Delegate Pass, which includes entrance to all the event's presentations, and a new Premium Pass that provides access to additional content plus exclusive networking in the Premium Lounge.

The free Visitor Pass will provide access to all show floor sessions, along with the returning Changemakers programme, taking place September 17th and 18th, which looks at industry developments from a human point of view. The Changemakers sessions spotlight trailblazing organisations, initiatives and individuals changing perceptions and expectations within M&E while generating conversations that address topics such as equality and sustainability, as well as ways of boosting creativity and drawing new industry talent from a broader range of communities.

IBC is owned by six industry organisations IABM, IEEE, IET, Royal Television Society, SCTE and SMPTE. The IBC Partnership Pavilion will provide visitors an opportunity to find out more about the IBC owners. **T**



**“Our results reflect  
company's strong  
performance  
and continued  
growth in the  
telecommunications  
industry”**

**Ahmad Abdulaziz  
Al Neama**  
*CEO, Group Regional,  
Ooredoo speaks with  
Teletimes in  
exclusive interview*

Gulraiz Khalid

*Gulraiz Khalid: Please tell us about some of your latest announcements and partnerships.*

**Ahmad Abdulaziz Al Neama:** As we continue to cement and expand existing partnerships, as well as explore new ones, we have made progress on several fronts.

We had a few exciting announcements with Huawei, Nokia, ZTE and others – all focused on upgrading our customer's worlds through technology and digital services.

With Huawei, Ooredoo Group has announced a key partnership to adopt its technologies and wireless solutions, including 5G, in some of its MENA operating companies. This new partnership will enable us to implement Huawei's industry-leading technologies and wireless solutions in Kuwait, Oman, Iraq, and Tunisia, in an effort to upgrade networks and deliver transformational digital experiences for end users.



**Ooredoo is vigorously pursuing Environmental, Social and Governance targets to help build a sustainable legacy for all**



We have also signed a partnership with Huawei to provide its Mobile Fintech platform to Ooredoo's operating companies in several of our markets.

As you know, digital financial solutions are a key element of our strategic digital transformation journey, enabling us to simplify everyday financial transactions and drive financial inclusion. This new partnership with Huawei will solidly underpin our efforts in this field.

Our partnership with global tech giant Nokia will see Ooredoo's networks enhanced in Algeria and Tunisia. Nokia will upgrade our existing radio access networks (RAN) as well as deploy new sites across Algeria and Tunisia, enabling Ooredoo to upgrade network performance for its customers in those markets and prepare for the potential future launch of 5G services.

This renewed partnership will take our network to a new level of transformation, increasing its performance and delivering an upgraded digital experience for our customers in Algeria and Tunisia. We have also partnered with ZTE on two major projects, the first of which will see us undergo a major network modernisation project in Algeria, where ZTE will roll out and implement the RAN and IP to upgrade the network and prepare it for the potential launch of 5G in the future.

The second project will see ZTE supplying new battery technologies such as Lithium-ion across our footprint, which will enable us to gain energy efficiencies.

We have many others exciting news and we've had many constructive meetings with existing and potential new partners. We'll be sharing updates on outcomes of these meetings once everything is finalised.

**GK: What have been the highlights for Ooredoo Group in 2022 and what is the 2023 outlook so far?**

**AAN:** In 2022, Ooredoo achieved a number of key milestones across our footprint.

At the Group level, Ooredoo Group's financial results for the fiscal year 2022 showed an impressive revenue of QR 22.7 billion. This marked the highest profit achieved by the company in the past ten years. Moreover, Ooredoo's brand value has increased by 6% compared to the previous year, resulting in a total brand value of USD 3.412 billion. It is noteworthy that this is the sixth consecutive year that Ooredoo has made it to the ranking list. These results reflect the company's strong performance and continued growth in the telecommunications industry.

The Ooredoo Group has maintained its impressive Brand Strength Index at 79, as well as its brand rating of AA+, for the fourth consecutive year.

Furthermore, the Ooredoo Group has officially merged with CK Hutchison, forming a new entity called Indosat Ooredoo Hutchison. In addition, the company has partnered with Ericsson and Nokia to launch a dedicated LTE network for the oil and gas industry, which is expected to enhance connectivity and improve efficiency in this sector.

Ooredoo has also entered into a joint agreement with BICS, an international communications company, to create an innovative

voice business model that will incorporate cutting-edge solutions in artificial intelligence, machine learning, and fraud protection.

**GK: How would you comment on the ongoing consolidation happening in the market and evolution from a legacy operator standpoint to a full-scale digital enabler?**

**AAN:** One of Ooredoo's key priorities has been the shift towards a value-focused portfolio, reducing our asset base and driving value crystallization where possible – with a focus on assets that will enable us to deliver superior shareholder value.

What we did is assess every operation's capacity to achieve or maintain leadership positions in our respective markets. This





*The Ooredoo Group has maintained its impressive Brand Strength Index at 79, as well as its brand rating of AA+, for the fourth consecutive year*



exercise resulted in Ooredoo Group and CK Hutchison merging operations to create Indosat Ooredoo Hutchison, which is now a stronger number two telco operator.

In Myanmar, our strategic assessment led to the decision to exit the market there due to its volatile nature with not much opportunity to consolidate or grow the business organically. And in September 2022, we have indeed announced the sale of Ooredoo Myanmar to Nine Communications, at an enterprise value of USD 576 million.

We are taking a similarly value-focused approach to our tower portfolio. Ooredoo's network of more than 20,000 towers, representing the largest block in the MENA region, is currently sub-optimally deployed.

In parallel, we see an opportunity to crystallize value from our data centres, as data growth is accelerating across the MENA region. In fact, we have significant sector advantages including existing and greenfield assets, and close relationships with the enterprise leaders.

As for our evolution from a legacy operator to a full-scale digital enabler, we are

working to become digital enablers across our international footprint, leveraging technology to help people reach their potential and making a real difference in the communities we serve.

Ooredoo is expanding its services beyond the traditional operator scope by increasingly venturing into digital services and solutions. We are indeed leveraging our expertise and market leadership in telecommunications to offer a wide range of digital services, such as cloud services, big data analytics, and internet of things (IoT) solutions, to businesses and consumers.

For example, Ooredoo offers mobile money services - Ooredoo Money, via the Ooredoo Money app - which allow customers to make digital payments, transfer money, and top-up mobile credit directly from their mobile devices.

We have a strong position in Fintech in Qatar that represents a 35% market share of overall mobile money transaction value in the MENA region, according to a 2022 GSMA study. We will evolve our Fintech marketplace to other markets in 2023. Another example is the launch of 'Ooredoo Nation', our own eSports brand, in 2021. Following this successful launch, Ooredoo Qatar cemented its position as a market leader in eSports, signing a partnership with Dell Technologies to develop the eSports community in Qatar, while hosting high-profile tournaments offering significant prize funds and qualification to regional and international events.

Ooredoo Maldives followed. Responding to digital demand, the company launched the

international gaming platform, 'Ooredoo Nation – Gamers' Land' in June 2022, leveraging the company's 5G network as well as local and international partnerships.

Ooredoo's expansion into digital services and solutions is part of our strategy to diversify our revenue streams and become a leading digital service provider across our markets. By offering a wide range of innovative services, Ooredoo is positioning itself as a key player in the digital economy and catering to the evolving needs of their customers.

**GK:** Please talk a little bit in detail about the Ooredoo Group strategy as a major regional ICT player? What are you set out to achieve?

**AAN:** Ooredoo has set out its strategy to evolve into a Smart Telco.

**Our evolved strategy focuses on five key strategic pillars:**

**Excellence in Customer Experience:** In increasingly competitive markets, our aim is to create superior customer experiences and inspiring moments for our customers. To drive continuous improvement, we have deployed state-of-the-art feedback channels for our customers, enabling us to listen to the 'voice of the customer' and act upon the received feedback across the organization.

**People:** Succeeding in customer experience requires an engaged and empowered workforce. In this context, we are advancing our ways of working by increasingly adopting agile methods, fostering cross-

functional collaboration, and driving personal ownership of outcomes and respective empowerment.

Going forward, our People strategy will focus upon:

**'Future-forward':** We are deploying strategic workforce planning in line with our Smart Telco business model, developing a strong pool of highly skilled talents and a solid talent bench.

**Working smarter:** We are leveraging digitalization and collaboration ecosystems across our operations in combination with the flexible work models that we have already deployed

**Evolve the Core:** The business models in the telecom industry are evolving, opening opportunities to either develop new revenue streams or deliver services at a lower cost through better efficiency and effectiveness. We address this reality by evolving our capabilities around our telecoms business model and setting up new use cases for generating revenues on already deployed capital. Ooredoo has deployed programmes in areas such as analytics, digitizing our operations or partnering with digital service partners. Those partnerships already today contribute an excess of 15% to our free cash flow. The financial contribution of these partnerships is still growing.

**Strengthen the Core:** We are focused on creating an efficient and effective operation that makes best use of deployed capital, uses an appropriate cost structure and serves customers with a strong and competitive service offering. From 2023 onwards we will continue with our company-wide transformation program albeit with the added priority of operating efficiencies.

**Value-Focused Portfolio:** We review the use and deployment of capital in our portfolio for the ability to create superior shareholder value. We review our assets with the ambition to be in strong #1/#2 market positions. This review is guided by the attractiveness of the respective



*We are indeed leveraging our expertise and market leadership in telecommunications to offer a wide range of digital services, such as cloud services, big data analytics, and internet of things (IoT) solutions, to businesses and consumers.*



geographical market and its competitive intensity. Where structurally our operations are assessed to be unable to achieve a #1/#2 position organically, we are pursuing opportunities for in-market consolidations or divestments. We have actioned this by either choosing to exit the market, as with Ooredoo Myanmar, or by taking advantage of consolidation opportunities, as in Indonesia.

**GK: As sustainability moves to the top of every agenda, what is Ooredoo Group doing in terms of sustainability and energy efficiency?**

**AAN:** Ooredoo is vigorously pursuing Environmental, Social and Governance targets to help build a sustainable legacy for all. We are committed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDG) and to the highest standards of environmental protection, as we are committed to leveraging our expertise in mobile technology to bring about positive, social and economic change.

As an industry leader, we are working to the best of our ability to reduce our ecological footprint. Ooredoo's digital products aim to assist customers in reducing their impact on the environment while still being able to receive the services that matter most to them.

**In terms of energy efficiency:**

**Ooredoo Qatar:** Switched GSM sites powered by diesel generators to

Kahramaa supply (Grid Electricity) in 2022. It is expected to reduce energy consumption and consequent carbon emissions in 2023 significantly.

**Ooredoo Kuwait:** Studied the switch from diesel generator tower sites to an environmentally friendly grid system connection.

**Ooredoo Tunisia:** Installed anti-solar reflective films in their headquarter and technical building, that can reduce up to 80% of the sun's heat from entering the buildings through the windows and reduce air conditioning needs. Maintained ISO 50001 certification of the Energy Management System (EnMS). Organised the first edition of Ooredoo Energy Forum in partnership with the main stakeholders of the national energy sector, to set up an action plan to mitigate risks related to energy security and costs and climate change impact.

**Ooredoo Maldives:** Connected sites to golden line, National Grid Power (NGP) and converted about 700 sites to a lithium system. They plan as well to install another 700 Lithium System Units and connect the remaining sites that are off grid to NGP.

**Ooredoo Myanmar:** Finished the electrification of 71 sites with grid, and enhanced 313 batteries backup at off-grid sites. ■



## to highlight innovative AI solutions for the Telco Industry at Telecoms World Middle East

IFS has announced that its participated in Telecoms World Middle East 2023, which was held on 30-31 May 2023 at Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai. The company showcased their AI driven IFS Cloud suite of solutions, which delivers a composable, single enterprise platform enabling Communication Service Providers (CSPs) to optimize service, project, and asset management.

Speaking on its participation in the event, Markus Persson, Telecommunications Global Industry Director at IFS says, "The native 5G stand-alone landscape is accelerating and moving towards cloud creating an increase in assets and the rise of IoT. These changes further amplify the unique value that IFS Cloud delivers to the telecom industry.

"The build-out of 5G and the new B2B industry use cases are exciting opportunities, and IFS is the ideal partner to support CSPs in the Middle East region since we not only support the network build-out itself, but we also have deep expertise in the other industry verticals that telecom operators and infrastructure providers are addressing with new B2B industry use cases".

Markus Persson is presenting at the event and will speak on "AI-powered field service evolution: Optimize your assets, workers, and projects to scale operational efficiency and excel in the



**Markus Persson**- Director, Telecommunications Global Industry, IFS

Moment of Service." As part of his session, he will be showcasing how IFS enables some of MENA's leading brands, including Saudi Telecom Company to increase process and field engineer efficiency, improve margins, and deliver a better customer experience.

The session will explore how IFS empowers CSPs and communication infrastructure providers to manage their assets and resources from a single innovative platform, enabling optimization at an unparalleled scale and quicker decision-making always based on up-to-date real-time data.

With IFS Cloud, CSPs can access all

IFS solutions and capabilities from a single product suite built on a common platform with common persistence storage. From AI-powered workforce planning and scheduling optimization and integrated mobile support for field workers to industry-leading field service management and enterprise asset management, all IFS solutions are inherently integrated to ensure accurate data sharing across the entire business, enabling more agile and efficient operations.

"Our telecom customers choose our software to support their digital transformation initiatives by replacing legacy systems with scalable, future-proof technology that offers embedded innovations such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, IoT, and augmented reality," adds Markus.

IFS is continually recognized by technology analysts such as Gartner and IDC for its deep industry expertise. It is also the only telecom-focused vendor that is a Gartner and IDC leader in both Field Service Management and Enterprise Asset Management.

Industry experts from IFS was present at booth no. E54 and it showcased to visitors the latest IFS Cloud solutions that enabled CSPs to maximize profitable service-based revenue streams and increase their agility and efficiency.

## stc Group raised its 4G & 5G network capacity by more than 350% during the Arab Summit Conference



stc Group has continued to play its leading national role in supporting digital empowerment of the major national events in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. With the Arab Summit large scale, stc has focused on providing global standardised communication technologies and offering advanced technical solutions to support the Media Center of the Arab Summit held in Jeddah. The group also employed 60 security standards as a precautionary measure to protect the data infrastructure, intensifying monitoring of malicious activities and reviewing entries to ensure the continuity of the summit's work.

The Group also increased data traffic capacity by over 350% on the 4G and 5G networks. It enabled the conference and partners from the government and private sectors and international media delegations with more than 26 data circles

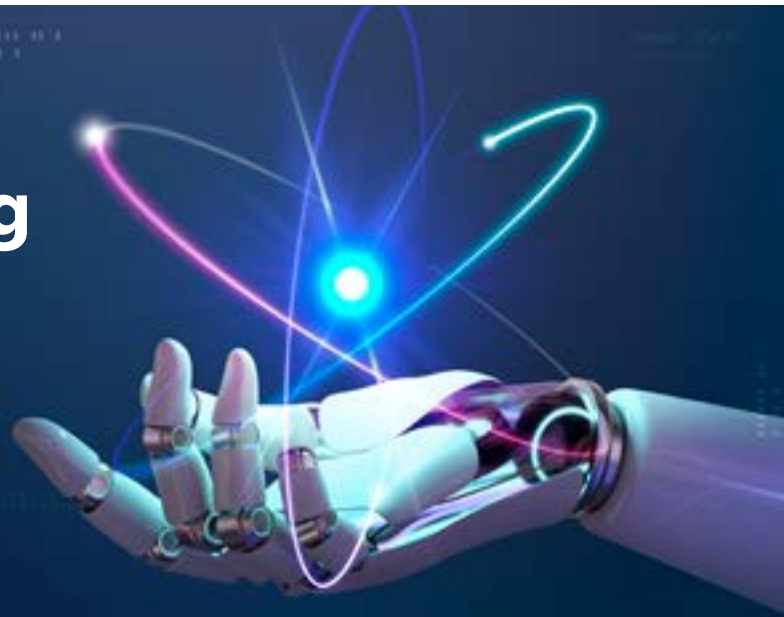
with capacities exceeding 200 megabytes/second to ensure quality and reflect the civilised image of Saudi Arabia in general and the digitalisation prospect particularly. Moreover, the group established an operations room at its headquarters in Riyadh to follow up on the network's performance and check its quality throughout the conference hours. It was noted that the demand for data services increased by more than 250% and more than 110% for voice services.

stc Group enabled the media in the Arab Summit with advanced technologies through 5G mobile live streaming units, which provide live streaming in a meagre transmission time. It also offered drones for 5G live streaming, and live streaming services for satellite TV, in addition to highly reliable and secured latest wireless devices (press and talk). Moreover, stc

created a website to register media professionals and equip the Media Center with all required tools such as computers, screens, smartphones, screens to display several channels with various sources, printers, and self-service devices, along with high-speed internet to support 300 users and fully equip the centre's extensions and network. Furthermore, stc supported the Media Center with WiFi and systems with cyber security standards as part of the precautionary measures to protect the communications infrastructure.

stc's participation expressed its role as a leading digital transformer in supporting major national events, as it was previously the digital enabler of the G20 Summit and other major national events, which reflect the extent of development that the Kingdom is experiencing in all fields, in line with the goals of Saudi Vision 2030. **T**

# Generative AI tools like ChatGPT turning into potential game changers for Telecom industry, GlobalData



The immense popularity gained by ChatGPT since its launch in November 2022 has brought generative AI tools under the spotlight, prompting many companies cutting across industries to aggressively explore their capabilities and use cases. Telcos are no exception to this trend and are quickly warming up to their benefits, says GlobalData, a leading data and analytics company.

Pradeepthi Kantipudi, Telecom Analyst at GlobalData, comments: "There are several generative AI tools emerging in the market, capable of generating conversational text, and customized content like images, music, or codes based on a given prompt, with ChatGPT especially drawing attention for its instant and near accurate output. For telcos, ChatGPT could bring disruption in several business functions, including customer service, network management, fraud detection, sales, and marketing."

Samrat Volam, Technology Lead Analyst at GlobalData, adds: "For instance, integrating ChatGPT with telecoms' traditional customer service channels can help deliver instant, automated support

round-the-clock, provide information on the product and service portfolio, handle wide-ranging customer inquiries and issues quickly and efficiently, reduce wait times, and boost customer satisfaction. To better serve a geographically diverse customer base, telecom companies can also employ ChatGPT to provide translation for customers who speak different languages. In this way, AI-powered tools can help telcos in enhancing customer experience and cutting costs."

By presenting customers with tailored product recommendations and exclusive offers based on previous purchases and interests, ChatGPT can also aid in boosting sales and revenue of telecom companies. Additionally, ChatGPT can be used to identify and monitor fraudsters, even build a database of information that can be used to prevent fraud attempts.

Pradeepthi continues: "With several telcos testing and exploring new use cases for ChatGPT, investment in the telecommunications sector is set to increase in the short to medium term. This is put into perspective by GlobalData's market opportunity forecasts for AI, which

estimate enterprise AI spending in the communications sector at US\$1.6 billion in 2022 and project it to increase up to US\$2.9 billion by 2026."

Another interesting trend emerging is that the telcos have already started working on their own ChatGPT-like versions. KT, a South Korean telecommunications company, is working on its own version of the OpenAI model. SK Telecom is also planning to launch its own AI chatbot and launched a beta version called "A." (pronounced "A dot") in South Korea in May 2022. Also, China Telecom announced plans to build an AI foundation model to develop an industrial ChatGPT version for the telecommunications industry.

Samrat concludes: "The benefits of ChatGPT as a useful tool for customer care and technical support in the telecommunications industry are evident. As the technology matures and companies explore novel applications, the telecom companies stand to benefit by offering an enhanced customer experience and thereby reducing churn and improving their sales and profits." ■





## Cybersecurity thought leaders across Middle East and Central Asia gather at high-level media roundtable hosted in parallel with GSMA

Huawei Middle East and Central Asia joined a high-level media roundtable on day two of the GSMA M360 EURASIA 2023 conference in Baku, Azerbaijan, to discuss the latest telecom cybersecurity trends, innovations, and contribute methods to tackle the associated threats among industry actors together. The open discussion aimed at aligning strategic priorities for the region, deepening engagement and steering collaborative efforts in the industry to advance collective action for cyber stability in the telecom industry.

Under the theme of “Build more secure and resilient telecom networks to efficiently support the future digital economy,” participants in the panel

discussed various topics, including collaborations among network operators and their partners, suppliers and customers in defending against telecom cybersecurity, how regulators could promote local telecom industry’s cybersecurity development, and the role that cybersecurity plays in safeguarding critical information infrastructure and the digital economy, among other topics.

Dr. Tural Mammadov, Director of Director of the Azerbaijan Computer Emergency Response Center (CERT), was joined in the panel by Dr. Mohammad Khaled, Director, Business Development and Strategic projects, e& enterprise, Dr. Haitham Hilal Al

Hajri, Sr. Executive – Cyber Security Projects, Oman National CERT, Dr. Elvin Balajanov, Chairman of the Board, Azerbaijan Cybersecurity Organization Association and Dr. Aloysius Cheang, Chief Security Officer, Huawei Middle East & Central Asia.

The telecom industry has become an integral part of modern society and is recognized as a critical infrastructure industry (CII). It plays a vital role in connecting people, businesses and governments, facilitating communication, information sharing and commerce on a global scale.

However, as telecom networks become more complex and interconnected,

they become more vulnerable to cyber threats. Cybersecurity of telecoms is a critical component of national security, and therefore, it is essential to bring together telecom stakeholders to promote the development and optimization of telecom cybersecurity. This includes working closely with telecom service providers, equipment manufacturers, government agencies, and other stakeholders to identify and mitigate cybersecurity risks, develop and implement best practices, and raise awareness about the importance of cybersecurity in telecom.

Dr. Tural Mammadov thanked the organizers, participants and sponsors for arranging the event in Baku while reiterating the country's commitment to the highest cybersecurity standards. "We join the international community in highlighting the risks posed by cybercrime. Likewise, we want to work with our global partners towards joint actions in defending telecom networks, which is critical in leveraging all the digital economy opportunities."

Dr. Mohammad Khaled said, "As an operator, securing our networks against cyber threats and creating safe digital cyberspace remains one of our most important tasks, especially as we enter a new era of connectivity and cognitive technologies. We realize that cyber threats are global in nature – and solutions must be as well. We are therefore proud to be here, joining other partners and stakeholders in finding joint outcomes to a common threat."

Dr. Haitham Hilal Al Hajri said, "Today, the progression towards an interconnected cyber world has become a reality. Unfortunately, this has increased the threats from malicious actors and protecting our digital assets is a concern for all countries. Cybersecurity is a shared responsibility and national security agencies, telecom providers and ICT industry players should work together to achieve a more robust cybersecurity posture, so telecom

providers can continue to deliver cutting-edge digital services unimpeded by cyber threats."

Dr. Elvin Balajanov said, "We are proud to host our partners and friends here in Azerbaijan as we address the cyber risks that threaten the health of our networks and, by extension, our socioeconomic growth. Safeguarding our critical information infrastructure is a key government priority in Azerbaijan as these critical systems possess functionality that, if disrupted, can pose significant harm to the interests of the state, society, and citizens. Therefore, it is crucial that telecommunications providers implement appropriate safeguards, protocols, and technologies to mitigate risks and protect our critical information infrastructure."

Dr. Aloysius Cheang said, "We need to consider how to meet the increasingly strict compliance requirements of regulators on the one hand and how to provide secure and trustworthy products and services that fulfill our commitments to customers on the other. We must also embrace a defense-in-depth approach to provide better security, ensure business continuity, resiliency, improve efficiency and customer experience while always protecting user privacy."

Global standards, internationally agreed processes and industry best practices are critical in addressing cyber threats effectively. As such, building and implementing an end-to-end global cybersecurity and privacy protection assurance system is one of Huawei's key strategies. In compliance with applicable laws and regulations in the countries where it operates and international standards, Huawei has created an effective, sustainable, and reliable cybersecurity and privacy protection assurance system by referring to the requirements of regulators and customers and industry best practices.

NESAS/SCAS is an ideal example of global collaborative efforts in

addressing cybersecurity. It offers a standardized cybersecurity assessment mechanism jointly defined by GSMA and 3GPP, the telecom industry's leading standards-setting organizations) and GSMA 5G Cybersecurity Knowledge Base to provide useful guidance on 5G security risks and mitigation measures. Huawei has been proactively involved in the telecom cyber security standardization activities led by GSMA ITU-T, 3GPP, and IETF etc., and has joined security organizations such as OIC-CERT, FIRST and partnered with mainstream security companies to ensure the cyber security of its customers and promote the healthy development of industries.

Huawei believes cybersecurity and privacy are common challenges that all stakeholders – including governments, industry and standards organizations, enterprises, technology suppliers, and consumers – have a shared responsibility to confront. Huawei actively works with governments, customers, and industry partners to address cybersecurity and privacy challenges, thereby reinforcing the need to treat cybersecurity as a team sport and maintaining an open and collaborative environment that encourages innovation and transparency. Through these efforts, Huawei advocates for cybersecurity to be viewed as the key to protecting our digital assets and leveraging it to support business.

Huawei is committed to fostering a better life for all in the future digital world by offering secure and trustworthy products, solutions, and services where personal data is lawfully used and always protected. The company has in-depth experience collaborating with its customers on advanced tech and industry 4.0 solutions for major industry verticals. Its products and solutions are developed and delivered by observing security-by-design and privacy-by-design principles that will allow its customers to safeguard their digital future. ■



# e&'s AGM

## approves a dividend per share for H2 2022 of AE 0.4, representing a total dividend of AED 0.8 per share for FY2022

e& has announced that its shareholders have approved the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute cash dividends for the second half of 2022 at a value of AED 0.4 per share during the Group's Annual General Meeting (AGM). The total annual dividend per share stands at AED 0.8, demonstrating the Group's commitment to delivering value to its shareholders.

The AGM, provided an opportunity for shareholders to review the Group's performance, ask questions, and provide feedback.

During the meeting, the board

commended e& for its impressive performance achieved in 2022, which demonstrates the success of the Group's transformative evolution as a global technology and investment group.

H.E. Jassem Mohamed Bu Ataba Alzaabi, Chairman of e&, thanked the board members for their support. He reiterated e&'s commitment to serving customers and creating long-term shareholder value while continuing to work towards positively impacting the communities they serve.

"As we enter the next chapter of our journey, we are confident that we will

continue to witness even greater success as we continue to create an environment with limitless possibilities built on solid foundations, smart connectivity, and fruitful collaborative opportunities, said Alzaabi."

### Historical strong performance

H.E. Jassem Mohamed Bu Ataba Alzaabi highlighted how over the past 12 months, e&'s core businesses have sustained solid performance while new business verticals and M&A activities have significantly contributed to their success.

He said: "The exceptional financial results achieved by e&, with consolidated

revenues of AED 52.4 billion and a record net profit of AED 10.0 billion in 2022, is a strong testament to the success of our business transformation strategy. Our strong performance reflects our excellent financial position, successful business strategy, ambitious goals, and shareholders' confidence in our future. We will remain committed to delivering continuous growth and improving long-term value for our customers and shareholders.

"The Group's transformation aims at positioning e& at the forefront of the rapidly changing technology landscape. It symbolises our desire to stay ahead of the ever-changing market, provide innovative solutions to our customers, and show our determination to adapt and thrive."

#### Unlocking new opportunities

During the meeting, Hatem Dowidar, Group Chief Executive Officer of e&, shared how the Group's focus on maximising value creation across its operations and making prudent investments through M&A drove

strong performance, significant milestones, and achievements in 2022.

He said: "e& reported consolidated revenues of AED 52.4 billion, a growth of 4.7% year-over-year at constant exchange rates, underpinned by the Group's

successful business transformation, expanding to new business verticals and diversifying the revenue streams. Consolidated EBITDA increased by 3.7% year-over-year at constant exchange rates, to AED 26.2 billion, leading to an EBITDA margin of 50 per cent, highlighting the strong profitability of e&'s operations.

"We are committed to remaining at the forefront of digital transformation and empowering customers to innovate and overcome their business challenges. We are leveraging cutting-edge technologies such as 5G, AI, IoT, blockchain, and cloud to achieve this goal. We have partnered with leading global technology giants to bring the best possible solutions and innovations to our customers. Furthermore, the Group has strategically pursued mergers and acquisitions for sustained growth and diversification, with a focus on non-telco verticals."

As part of its strategy, e&'s business verticals embody a progressive model that enables us to capitalise on opportunities in the rapidly changing digital landscape. By focusing on innovation, e& aims to deliver high-value digital solutions that meet the evolving needs of its customers in different markets.■



*Hatem Dowidar - Group Chief Executive Officer, e&*



*Jassem Mohamed Bu Ataba Alzaabi - Chairman, e&*

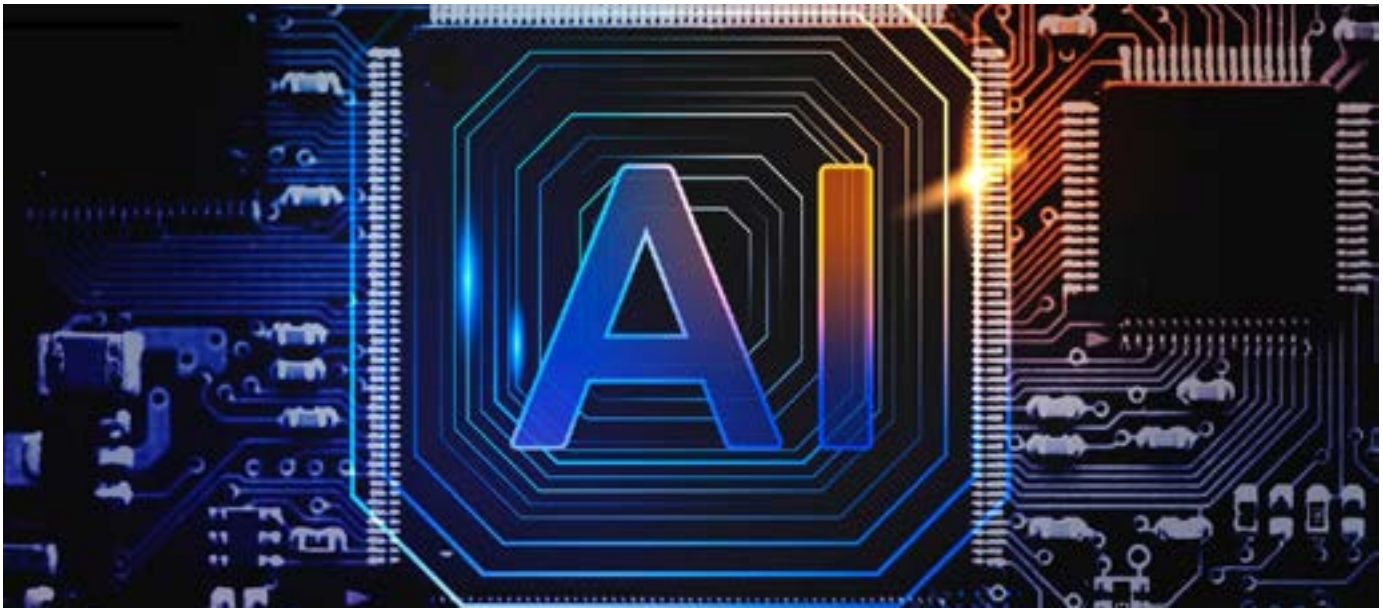


## Hot Topics

# Adopting AI-enabled network automation

*What are the challenges and what are the opportunities in Asia?*

## 01



Artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled network automation is a technology that is transforming the way organizations in Asia manage their network infrastructure. By leveraging AI and machine learning algorithms, this technology can help organizations automate routine tasks, identify and resolve network issues more quickly, and optimize network performance. However, there are challenges that must be addressed to successfully adopt AI-enabled network automation in Asia, and organizations need to be aware of the opportunities presented by this technology.

### Challenges:

**Lack of Skills and Expertise:** One of the biggest challenges facing organizations in Asia is a lack of skills and expertise in AI-enabled network automation. This

technology requires specialized knowledge and expertise in areas such as machine learning, data analytics, and network security. Many organizations in Asia may struggle to find qualified personnel or invest in training programs to upskill their existing workforce.

To address this challenge, organizations can invest in training and development programs for their employees or partner with external vendors who have the required expertise. Organizations can also leverage online resources such as tutorials, webinars, and online courses to develop their employees' skills.

**Legacy Infrastructure:** Another challenge is the prevalence of legacy infrastructure in Asia, which may not be compatible with modern AI-enabled network automation

technologies. Upgrading or replacing legacy infrastructure can be expensive and time-consuming, and may require significant investments in new hardware and software.

To address this challenge, organizations can adopt a phased approach to upgrading their infrastructure, prioritizing critical systems first. They can also consider adopting hybrid solutions that combine legacy and modern infrastructure, allowing them to take advantage of the benefits of AI-enabled network automation while minimizing disruption.

**Data Quality and Integration:** AI-enabled network automation relies heavily on data to identify patterns and make decisions. However, many organizations in Asia may struggle with data quality and integration



issues, such as incomplete or inconsistent data, or data silos. Without clean, integrated data, AI-enabled network automation may not be able to operate effectively.

To address this challenge, organizations can invest in data quality and integration initiatives, such as data cleansing, data normalization, and data integration. They can also consider adopting data management platforms that can help automate these processes and ensure data quality.

**Security and Privacy Concerns:** AI-enabled network automation can also pose security and privacy risks. For example, sensitive data may be inadvertently exposed or vulnerable to cyber attacks. Ensuring the security and privacy of data is crucial for successful adoption of AI-enabled network automation.

To address this challenge, organizations can adopt best practices for network security and privacy, such as encrypting sensitive data, implementing access controls, and monitoring for suspicious activity. They can also partner with external vendors who specialize in network security and privacy to ensure their systems are secure.

**Opportunities:**

**Increased Efficiency and Productivity:**

AI-enabled network automation can help organizations in Asia improve efficiency and productivity by automating routine tasks and identifying and resolving network issues more quickly. This can free up IT staff to focus on more strategic initiatives and reduce the risk of human error.

By adopting AI-enabled network automation, organizations can reduce the time and effort required to manage their network infrastructure, allowing them to allocate resources more effectively and focus on high-value initiatives.

**Improved Customer Experience:** By optimizing network performance and reducing downtime, AI-enabled network automation can also improve the customer experience. This is particularly important in industries such as telecommunications and banking, where customers expect fast, reliable services.

By adopting AI-enabled network automation, organizations can ensure their systems are running optimally, minimizing the risk of downtime and improving the customer experience. This can help them retain customers and improve their reputation.

**Cost Savings:** AI-enabled network automation can also help organizations in

Asia reduce costs by minimizing the need for manual intervention and reducing the risk of network downtime. By optimizing network performance and reducing the time required to resolve issues, organizations can save money and improve their bottom line.

**Scalability:** AI-enabled network automation can be scaled up or down depending on the needs of the organization. This makes it ideal for organizations in Asia that are experiencing rapid growth or need to adapt quickly to changing market conditions.

By adopting AI-enabled network automation, organizations can ensure they have the capacity to meet the demands of their customers and adapt to changing market conditions without having to invest in additional infrastructure or personnel.

**In conclusion:** AI-enabled network automation presents both challenges and opportunities for organizations in Asia. While there are obstacles to overcome, such as a lack of skills and expertise, legacy infrastructure, and data quality and integration issues, the benefits of adopting this technology are significant. By improving efficiency and productivity, enhancing the customer experience, reducing costs, and providing scalability, AI-enabled network automation can help organizations in Asia stay competitive in today's fast-paced digital environment. ■

# How can telcos revolutionise their services in Asia and monetise beyond connectivity?

## 02



As telecommunication companies (telcos) face an increasingly competitive market, it's essential for them to find new ways to innovate and monetize beyond traditional connectivity services. In Asia, this is particularly important, given the region's rapid technological advancements and growing consumer demands.

**Here are some ways that telcos can revolutionize their services and monetize beyond connectivity in Asia:**

**Offer value-added services:** One way for telcos to monetize beyond connectivity is by offering value-added services that go beyond the basic internet and voice connectivity services. For example, telcos can provide cloud storage, virtual private networks (VPNs), cybersecurity services, and content delivery networks (CDNs) to businesses and consumers. By offering these services, telcos can increase their revenue streams and create more loyal customers who are willing to pay for these additional services.

**Explore new business models:** Telcos

can also explore new business models to monetize beyond connectivity. For example, they can partner with other companies to provide joint services or invest in startups that offer innovative solutions. By diversifying their revenue streams, telcos can reduce their reliance on traditional connectivity services and improve their financial stability.

**Leverage big data and analytics:** With the explosion of digital data in recent years, telcos can use big data and analytics to understand customer behavior and preferences. This data can be used to develop targeted marketing campaigns and personalized services that can increase customer loyalty and revenue. Additionally, telcos can use big data to identify new opportunities for revenue generation, such as cross-selling and up-selling services.

**Embrace the Internet of Things (IoT):** The Internet of Things (IoT) has the potential to revolutionize the way telcos deliver services. By leveraging IoT technologies, telcos can offer new services such as smart homes, connected cars, and industrial

automation. Additionally, telcos can use IoT data to develop new insights into customer behavior, which can be used to improve their services and create new revenue streams.

**Develop partnerships with content providers:** Telcos can also monetize beyond connectivity by partnering with content providers to offer bundled services. For example, telcos can offer streaming services such as Netflix or Spotify as part of a bundled package with their connectivity services. This type of partnership can increase customer satisfaction and loyalty while also creating new revenue streams.

In conclusion, as telcos face increasing competition in the Asia region, it's essential for them to innovate and find new ways to monetize beyond traditional connectivity services. By offering value-added services, exploring new business models, leveraging big data and analytics, embracing the IoT, and developing partnerships with content providers, telcos can create new revenue streams and improve their financial stability. ■

# Understanding the vulnerabilities of 5G networks in a time of increased cyber attacks

03



As the world becomes increasingly reliant on 5G networks for faster connectivity and data transfer, there are growing concerns about the vulnerabilities of these networks to cyber attacks. While 5G networks offer many benefits, such as improved speed and bandwidth, they also present new security challenges that must be addressed.

Understanding the vulnerabilities of 5G networks in a time of increased cyber attacks is essential to ensure the security and integrity of these networks. Here are some of the vulnerabilities of 5G networks and how they can be addressed:

## Virtualization and Cloud Native

**Architectures:** 5G networks are built on a virtualized and cloud-native architecture that separates the control and data planes, which makes them more vulnerable to cyber attacks. Virtualization can expose a larger attack surface to malicious actors and make it harder to detect and mitigate threats.

To address these vulnerabilities, it's important to implement security measures that can protect both the control and data planes. This can include implementing secure boot and secure storage for virtual machines, containerization for network functions, and network segmentation to isolate critical systems.

**Supply Chain Risks:** 5G networks rely on a complex supply chain of vendors, suppliers, and partners, which can increase the risk of cyber attacks. Malicious actors can exploit vulnerabilities in the supply chain to gain access to critical components or data, which can compromise the integrity of the entire network.

To mitigate these risks, it's important to establish strict supply chain management practices that include screening and monitoring vendors, conducting regular security assessments, and implementing strict access controls.

**IoT and Connected Devices:** 5G networks will enable a vast array of IoT devices and connected devices, which can also increase the risk of cyber attacks. These devices can be used as entry points for attackers to gain access to the network or launch distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks.

To address these vulnerabilities, it's important to implement strict access controls and authentication mechanisms for IoT and connected devices. Additionally, implementing monitoring and analysis tools can help identify and mitigate potential threats.

**Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning:** 5G networks will rely heavily on artificial

intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) technologies to manage and optimize network operations. However, these technologies can also be vulnerable to cyber attacks.

To address these vulnerabilities, it's important to implement security measures such as encryption, access controls, and secure communication protocols. Additionally, implementing robust testing and validation processes can help ensure the integrity of AI and ML algorithms.

**Human Error:** Finally, human error remains a significant vulnerability in 5G networks. From misconfigurations to phishing attacks, human error can lead to security breaches that compromise the entire network.

To address this vulnerability, it's important to implement robust training and awareness programs that educate employees on best practices for security and help them recognize and avoid potential threats.

In conclusion, while 5G networks offer many benefits, they also present new security challenges that must be addressed. By understanding the vulnerabilities of these networks and implementing robust security measures, we can ensure the security and integrity of 5G networks in a time of increased cyber attacks. ■



# ITU targets USD 100 billion by 2026 to accelerate global digitalization

## *UN digital agency appeals for increased commitments on anniversary of its founding*

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has issued a worldwide appeal calling to increase the value of pledges for digitalizing the world from the current USD 30 billion to USD 100 billion by 2026. The appeal by the United Nations specialized agency for information and communication technologies includes a focus on raising the level of resources for universal and meaningful connectivity and digital transformation in the world's least developed countries (LDCs).

The announcement of the target was made on World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, observed annually to mark the signing of the first International Telegraph Convention and ITU's founding in 1865.

"Tech is at the top of the global agenda, but the benefits of digital technology are still out of reach for too many people," said ITU Secretary-General Doreen Bogdan-Martin. "If we are serious about digitalizing the world in a way that is meaningful and sustainable, we must take action to accelerate digital transformation for everyone."

In 2023, ITU's anniversary is focused on empowering the least developed countries through information and communication technologies using the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition and its online pledging platform.

The ITU appeal to the public and private sectors encompasses a campaign launched in February 2022 by Partner2Connect to mobilize direct funding or other contributions for connectivity projects



*Doreen Bogdan-Martin*  
Secretary General, ITU

in countries registering the lowest on development. Of the USD 30 billion already pledged overall, Partner2Connect has identified commitments worth USD 12 billion to bring the LDCs online as quickly as possible.

The United Nations defines LDCs as countries that have low levels of income and face severe structural impediments to sustainable development. The call for resources, which comes as the UN strives to rescue its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, stresses the need for the globe's digital transformation to be environmentally friendly.

"The digital revolution is a defining force of our era," said United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres. "As the Internet becomes ever more central to value creation and innovation, least developed countries risk falling further behind. We must dramatically improve accessibility and inclusivity and eliminate the digital divide."

According to ITU data, 2.7 billion people worldwide were offline in 2022. The digital connectivity divide separating the least developed countries from the rest of the world is widening on key factors such as access, digital skills and affordability.

Though the globe's 46 least developed countries are home to almost one-third of the world's offline population, the Internet is considered to be affordable in only two of those countries.

At the event marking ITU's anniversary in Geneva, ITU Secretary-General Bogdan-Martin announced SDG Digital Day, scheduled for 17 September in New York in advance of the UN SDG Summit to review the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The SDG Digital Day, powered by ITU on behalf of the UN system, will showcase high-impact, sustainable, digitally based solutions that have a game-changing potential to accelerate progress on the SDGs. ■

# ZTE committed to building sustainable green FTTH networks



ZTE Corporation has participated in the annual FTTH Conference in Madrid, Spain held from April 18 to 20. Hans Neff, Senior Director of the ZTE CTO Group, has shared the latest technologies, perspectives, and experiences of the green FTTH network with industry experts at the conference, under the theme of "Building Green FTTH Networks for Sustainable Development".

In his speech, Hans Neff emphasized that building sustainable green FTTH networks is a key direction for network development that benefits the whole society. He said that the "green" requirements should be integrated into the full lifecycle of FTTH networks. ZTE advocates the green development concept and has taken the lead in exploring a series of environmental protection measures. These measures cover various fields such as product architecture, device packaging materials,

key components, and O&M, to promote the sustainable development of the industry.

ZTE follows the green design concept of smooth evolution, high integration, miniaturization, and easy deployment in its product architecture. For example, ZTE's Any-PON multi-mode solution, the first of its kind in the industry, can meet the requirements of diverse scenarios through flexible configuration, and effectively reduce the number and types of cards. ZTE's compact OLTs also effectively save space and energy in equipment rooms.

ZTE's fixed network CPEs use 100% recyclable plastic enclosures, and packaging boxes use 100% green plant-based ink that is non-toxic and harmless for device packaging materials. For key components, ZTE enhances their functions while greatly lowering power consumption.

ZTE adopts intelligent management methods for O&M. For instance, smart fiber detection provides visualization and manageability, preventive maintenance, and accurate fault location functions, which help reduce the consumption of O&M resources.

Energy consumption is a major part of the operating costs for network operators. To achieve sustainable development and enhance their competitiveness, operators need to build energy-efficient networks. ZTE is committed to the green development concept and cooperates with industry partners to create green solutions for enterprise operation, supply chain, digital infrastructure, and industry empowerment. ZTE also builds sustainable green FTTH networks and helps all industries to adopt the green development path quickly. ■

## Ericsson and the Government of Canada to invest more than CAD 470 million in R&D centres



A five-year R&D partnership valued at more than CAD 470 million between Ericsson and the Government of Canada is set to put the country at the forefront of global development in next-generation communications technologies. The investment, at Ericsson's Ottawa, Ontario and Montreal, Quebec facilities, is expected to create and upskill hundreds of jobs - strengthening the sites as global leaders in 5G Advanced, 6G, AI, Cloud RAN, and Core Network technologies.

The investment will also support the expansion of research facilities and staff support for quantum computing at Ericsson's recently established Quantum Research hub in Montreal.

The Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, says: "Today's announcement is further evidence that Canadian workers have the talent the world needs to develop faster and more secure internet connection and other wireless services. As we continue to support innovation, we are creating good jobs, strengthening the middle class, and ensuring Canada remains a global leader in technology."

Börje Ekholm, President and CEO, Ericsson, says: "We are already seeing the benefits of next-generation technologies such as 5G and AI, yet we are still in the early days of their potential to transform our work, leisure, and social lives. Ericsson's R&D investment partnership with the Canadian government, supported by world-class talent in Ottawa and Montreal, will boost innovation and ultimately help to improve the lives of millions of people. We are determined to lead our industry through continued R&D investment."

The Hon. François-Philippe Champagne, Canada's Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, says: "Canadians deserve strong, secure, and reliable wireless networks and services. By investing in Ericsson Canada, our government continues to support and strengthen the 5G networks of today and 6G networks of the future. The partnership also further solidifies Canada as a global leader in next-generation networks and creates more well-paying jobs."

Jeanette Irekqvist, President of Ericsson Canada, says: "Ericsson is proudly commemorating 70 years of innovation and

operations in Canada this year. Today, we demonstrate our continued commitment to Canada with this high-tech R&D investment announcement. The benefits of this project will strengthen Canada's technology expertise that is second-to-none, will bolster Ericsson's world-class R&D centres, and is a testament to the concentration of talent here in the Ottawa-area and in Montreal."

Mark Sutcliffe, Mayor, City of Ottawa, says: "I am excited about Ericsson's new investment in its Ottawa R&D centre, perfectly suited for a city deeply rooted in innovative technologies and the experts that create them. Supporting Research and Development centres like this helps to make our economy stronger. When we invest in research and innovation, we invest in the success of our residents and the modernization of our city."

The new investment will also enable Ericsson Canada to onboard up to 60 additional interns per year - 300 across the five-year timeline - to boost ongoing academic partnerships. Most of these students will be based in the Montreal and Ottawa R&D centres. **IT**

# e& and Vodafone form strategic relationship across Europe and MEA

e& and Vodafone Group Plc (“Vodafone”) has announced that they have agreed to a strategic relationship that will bring the two operators closer together in certain aspects of their businesses.

This is the next phase in a strategic relationship that began in May 2022, when e& made its original investment in Vodafone. The strategic relationship also enables collaboration across a broad range of growth areas, as e& and Vodafone may be able to benefit from each other’s respective operational scale and complementary geographic footprint. The key areas of commercial collaboration that e& and Vodafone will initially pursue include:

- In Enterprise, e& and Vodafone will explore jointly offering cross-border digital services and solutions to multi-national customers and public sector organisations. Services will include fixed and mobile connectivity, Mobile Private Networks, IoT, cybersecurity, and cloud-based services.
- In Procurement, e& and Vodafone will seek to share best practices and may adopt joint procurement.
- In Carrier, Wholesale & Roaming, the two operators will work together to become the partner of choice in providing access to high-quality digital infrastructure.
- In Technology, both teams will seek to work together on a technology roadmap, including the evolution and adoption of OpenRAN.

Under the terms of the Relationship Agreement, the Group Chief Executive Officer of e&, will join the Vodafone Board as a non-executive Director for as long as e& maintains its current shareholding of 14.6%. e& will also have the ability to nominate a second non-executive Director (the “Independent Nominee”), independent of e&, if its

shareholding exceeds 20% (subject to certain adjustments while regulatory approvals are outstanding). These appointments are subject to receipt by e& of the required regulatory approvals.

Hatem Dowidar, Group Chief Executive Officer of e&, said: “Our investment in Vodafone is anchored by Vodafone Group’s established position and worldwide reputation as a prominent industry player that provides cutting-edge connectivity and digital services. This aligns with e&’s vision of becoming a global telecom and technology player. We extend a warm welcome to Margherita Della Valle as Vodafone’s newly appointed Group Chief Executive Officer, and we have full confidence in her leadership abilities to steer the company toward growth. We are convinced that our strategic relationship will unlock opportunities for both companies to explore the swiftly expanding global telecom market and next-generation technologies.”

Margherita Della Valle, Vodafone Group Chief Executive, said: “We know e& well, and I’m delighted we will strengthen our existing relationship through this strategic relationship. This will allow us to capture efficiency-enhancing opportunities in our respective markets and brings additional telecoms experience to our Board.”

## Relationship agreement key terms

### The Nominees

- Both the e& Nominee and the Independent Nominee may be replaced from time to time by e&, subject to certain procedures agreed in the Relationship Agreement. They shall also be subject to annual (re-)election by Vodafone’s shareholders.
- The e& Nominee shall be appointed to the Nominations and Governance committee. The Nominees will be entitled to be appointed

to other committees of the Board on the same basis as other non-executive directors but will not be entitled to be appointed to the Audit and Risk Committee or the Remuneration Committee for so long as their appointment on such committees would not be in compliance of the UK Corporate Governance Code and/or the Nasdaq Listing Rules applicable to Vodafone.

- The appointment of the Nominees will be terminated if e& falls below the relevant shareholding thresholds applicable to each Nominee, the Relationship Agreement is terminated or, subject to the terms of the Relationship Agreement, if they fail to comply with applicable law or are removed from office by the shareholders.

### Standstill, lock-up, and corporate actions. Subject to certain customary exceptions, e& undertakes to:

- o Not acquire any interests in Vodafone’s shares which would result in it and its affiliates having an interest exceeding 24.99%;
- o Not dispose of Vodafone shares for two years (save for a maximum of 3% of Vodafone’s shares during each twelve-month period); and Refrain from taking certain other public actions, including requisitioning a shareholder meeting or proposing any resolution to be put forward at a shareholder meeting.

### Public statements, confidentiality, and information sharing

- e& and Vodafone have agreed to certain mutual non-disparagement provisions in relation to public statements about the other party and their respective affiliates, or current or former directors, officers or employees.
- e& will be subject to customary confidentiality obligations. **■**

# New-age telcos have emerged with the arrival of 5G

**Manish Mangal** - Global Head of 5G & Network Services Business, Tech Mahindra

Communication Service Provider (CSP) transformation programs for 5G will have to be designed for a world with continuous change. This means that transformation programs will have to change from a big bang, multi-year plan to one that lets CSPs keep improving their operating and business models in response to the constant change in both their enterprise and retail business units.

The enhanced offerings that the enhanced CSP business model demands for both private and public 5G will require CSPs to transform not just their architectures, or systems for networks, data centres, and back, central, and front offices, but also their cultures and partnership models to enable new monetization and operational models. Without CSPs switching to a platform business model, these changes can't happen.

Platform-based business models are more effective at bundling new digital



products and services with legacy telco services into broader digital solutions that are more effective in meeting the diverse requirements and needs of customers than existing alternatives. Platforms also enable a consistent customer experience across multiple product lines or customer journeys, a requisite for the way these new digital solutions will be discovered, evaluated, accessed, and consumed. By giving access to richer digital data at each step of the value chain, platforms provide deeper insights into business processes

and customers. This makes it possible to make more personalized products and use context-based marketing, as well as close the loop on the next wave of innovation.

Adopting a platform business model requires CSPs to reconsider their approach to digital transformation. CSPs' multi-year, multi-million-dollar digital transformation efforts have focused on establishing digital capabilities within their legacy stacks to improve operational efficiency through business process simplification and automation. While operational efficiency-derived cost reduction remains an essential consequence for CSPs, the scope of transformation shifts in a platform business model, with revenue growth from new business models and ecosystems taking precedence.

## Devising the RIGHT Strategy

Gartner predicts that "by 2023, 35% of roles within CSP organizations will be either

new or redesigned." CSPs will have to first take care of the cultural factors if they are to have any chance of success with the technology and strategic imperatives required to achieve digital dexterity. CSPs will also have to be conscious of external factors. Changes in geopolitics, regulations, and the economy, as well as global pandemics and the rise of new digital competitors, can have a big effect on transformation programs or even make them obsolete.

CSP transformation programs will now have to be designed for a world where continuous change is the norm. A successful CSP 5G implementation shouldn't look at 5G as a technology that just improves the old connectivity technologies. Instead, it should look at 5G as a platform that enables business outcomes for different industries, where better connectivity is only one part of the solution.

This will necessitate transformation programs changing from a big bang, multi-year program to one that allows CSPs to continuously innovate their operating and business models in response to continuous change across both the enterprise and retail business units of the CSP. The core of CSP's 5G transformation strategy will be to use new technologies or methods like open-source software, artificial intelligence, Agile and DevOps, cloud computing, and virtualization. They will also need to rethink their culture and organization structures, especially when it comes to reskilling the workforce.

For internet-based companies, the move toward platform business models has been a major driver of growth. CSPs are working on establishing themselves as the centres of digital and physical services. In the mobile space, in particular, the introduction of 5G capabilities provides CSPs with new business models and services based on the ability to sell bandwidth slices. 5G is designed to support services for the Internet of Things and connected devices with low latency and low bandwidth modes. This makes it possible for a new set of services that are

aimed at business customers.

Rethinking the IT architecture for business support is essential to meet the challenges and requirements of evolving customer experience and new business models. A high degree of automation is required while maintaining the flexibility needed to adapt to change. Breaking up existing

be commoditized, 5G as a platform can be a catalyst for new value creation. With differentiating value emerging from the use of data, transactions, and AI, these capabilities must be proactively built into 5G as a platform, independent of any specific use case. This change in how data and AI are used to create value is upsetting for many network-based CSPs and requires



***CSP CIOs and CTOs should start building the technology infrastructures that orchestrate internal and external resources to be aligned to CSPs' business outcomes, as well as the business outcomes of CSPs' enterprise customers***



monolithic applications that have been designed around big functional areas like billing or CRM into smaller, more flexible, and easier-to-manage components is essential.

**The differentiating EDGE**

CSPs around the world have already recognized that networking and connectivity are no longer elements of competitive differentiation. They are looking at using new and innovative technologies with a focus on enabling transactions, data, and AI, not only for operational excellence but to create new value beyond networking and connectivity. CSPs should turn their attention to the ecosystem, with a focus on the coming together of 5G, IoT, MEC, data, and AI. Focusing their attention and exploring use cases that can be enabled with these five elements, all of them together or a subset of them, will trigger the ideation of value-creating use cases beyond networking and connectivity.

While the connectivity part of 5G will soon

a data-driven approach to creating value.

CSP CIOs and CTOs should start building the technology infrastructures (inclusive of networking and IT) that orchestrate internal and external resources to be aligned to CSPs' business outcomes, as well as the business outcomes of CSPs' enterprise customers. In this approach, CSP CIOs (and other tech strategists), in close collaboration with business development, will build a comprehensive platform that creates value not only from connectivity and networking but one that incorporates a broad spectrum of 5G-related capabilities. These capabilities include edge computing, network slicing, data, AI, and better resource management. This approach will enable CSPs to "dynamically" use and apply 5G and related capabilities as required by the business needs of various industries. The value creation focus of these platforms should be at the intersection of 5G, edge computing, IoT, data, and AI, together or as a subset, with a special focus on creating value with data and AI and their unique applications in each industry. ■

# The longest subsea cable in the world landed in Jeddah and Yanbu

*To link the Kingdom with the continents of the world by partnership between center3, owned by stc, and Meta*

As part of the 2Africa subsea cable consortium, center3, owned by stc Group and Meta Company, have announced the landing of the world's longest submarine cable project at two of the four planned landing sites in Saudi Arabia: Jeddah and Yanbu. This is in line with the stc Group's strategy of expansion and growth, and to contribute to making the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia a global digital hub linking the three continents of the world, Asia, Africa and Europe.

The 2Africa subsea cable, with over 45,000km of length, will be the longest ever deployed worldwide. The record-breaking cable system will connect 33 countries by the completion of the project in 2024, delivering reliable connectivity and internet services across three continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe. The 2Africa subsea cable is expected to make four landings in Saudi Arabia; Jeddah and Yanbu, which were just completed; followed by Duba later this year, and Al Khobar in 2024.

The 2Africa subsea cable will promote a surge in information exchange and digital business development, helping growth foster the next growth stage in many of the economies it connects. The 2Africa subsea



**Fares Akkad** - Regional Director  
Middle East and North Africa, Meta

cable will translate into economic growth for the surrounding population and act as a catalyst for change in the broadband market, benefiting individuals and businesses.

The 2Africa subsea cable is extended into the Arabian Gulf region through "2Africa Pearls" cable extensions, adding landings in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Iraq, Oman, the UAE, Pakistan, and India, along with the East Coast of Saudi Arabia.


According to Fahad A. Alhajeri, CEO of center3:



**Fahad A. Alhajeri** - CEO  
center3

"2Africa's first landing in Saudi Arabia is a major milestone for center3, representing a significant step forward in our objective to make Saudi Arabia the regional hub connecting the three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe. center3 will continue to invest in connectivity infrastructure providing world-class connectivity to our customers and contributing towards achieving the Kingdom's 2030 Vision."

Fares Akkad, Regional Director, Middle East and North Africa, Meta, said: "Our significant investment in 2Africa builds on several others we have made in Saudi Arabia. The COVID-19 crisis demonstrated how millions rely on internet access to do basic day-to-day tasks and connect with loved ones. Investing in subsea cables provides a better experience for people using our products and not benefits many other industries, including healthcare, education, and social services."

The 2Africa consortium comprises center3, a recently formed subsidiary of stc, Meta, China Mobile International, MTN Global Connect, Orange, Telecom Egypt, Vodafone and WIOCC. 



# e& reports consolidated revenue of AED 13.0 billion in Q1 2023

e& has announced its consolidated financial results for Q1 2023.

e&'s consolidated revenues reached AED 13.0 billion. At constant exchange rates, revenue increased by 6.6 per cent. Consolidated net profit recorded AED 2.2 billion while consolidated EBITDA reached AED 6.2 billion, resulting in an EBITDA margin of 48 per cent.

In the UAE etisalat by e& recorded 13.9 million subscribers an increase of 6 per cent compared to the same period of last year, The Group's aggregate subscribers reached 164 million, a YoY increase of 3 per cent.

The Group's focus on expanding its digital offering and launching innovative new solutions and partnerships with leading technology companies around the world as part of its drive to become a global technology player has driven business growth.

Through a series of prudent mergers and acquisitions, e& is strengthening its position focused on delivering innovative solutions and driving digital transformation.

The financial performance in Q1 2023 further strengthened e &'s global position as the most valuable telecoms brand portfolio in the Middle East and Africa, according to 2023 Brand Finance, while the Group's largest telecoms brand, etisalat by e&, continued to deliver outstanding innovative services as one of the three top telecoms brands in the world, and retained its position as the strongest telecom brand across all categories in the MEA region.

Hatem Dowidar, Group CEO, e&, said: "The Group's performance in the first quarter indicates growth in the number of subscribers, revenues, and profits in local currencies, but was impacted by the strong fluctuations in the currency exchange



rate within the Egyptian and Pakistani markets. This growth can be attributed to the Group's flexibility and efforts to provide innovative business solutions and the latest technologies to the communities we serve. Furthermore, the Group has succeeded in building unique digital experiences supported by strategic investments, to enhance our business portfolio.

"etisalat by e& Egypt and PTCL in Pakistan successfully achieved their strategic goals by enhancing their customers' digital experience while achieving growth based on local currency revenues, the strong fluctuations in the exchange rates of the Egyptian pound and the Pakistani rupee, coupled with the unprecedentedly high inflation rates in the two markets, have negatively impacted revenues and profits

reported in AED. As a result, these effects were evident in the Group's consolidated results.

"With a vision to create a more progressive business model, we have continued to explore new avenues, expand our offerings and forge new partnerships. Our recent investment in Careem's Super App is another strategic step in our transformation into a global technology group by bringing more digital services into our customers' daily lives.

"We will continue to explore future technologies and develop new verticals that will accelerate digital transformation, positively impacting businesses and people's lives while maximising value creation for our shareholders." ■



# Airbus Eurostar Neo Arabsat BADR-8 telecoms satellite shipped to launch site



Airbus' latest next generation geostationary Eurostar Neo satellite Arabsat BADR-8 has been shipped to Cape Canaveral, ready for launch. The satellite will provide connectivity over Europe, Middle East, Africa, and central Asia and also features a world first Airbus' innovative space demonstrator TELEO to provide space to ground optical communications at gigabit speeds.

Airbus' relationship with Arabsat stretches back 20 years, and BADR-8 is the eighth satellite built for the leading satellite services provider in the Arab world.

The Airbus TELEO demonstrator will be used to validate technical scenarios and innovations for GEO to ground communications of the order of one terabit per second.

This TELEO demonstrator will also enable very high capacity optical feeder link communications, by nature highly robust against jamming, as part of the development by Airbus of a new generation of optical communications technology in space.

Arabsat's BADR-8 satellite features increased payload capacity and more



efficient power and thermal control systems and will replace and increase Arabsat's capacity and augment its core business at the BADR hotspot 26°E in geostationary orbit.

The state-of-the-art Airbus Eurostar Neo Arabsat BADR-8 satellite features electric orbit raising technology and is the third Airbus Eurostar Neo satellite to be launched.

BADR-8 has been designed to remain in service in orbit for more than 15 years. The satellite has a launch mass of around 4.5 tons and it will deliver 17.8 kW of payload power. The satellite was transported to

Florida on an Antonov An124.

Airbus' Eurostar Neo platform has been developed in the frame of the European Space Agency's (ESA) Partnership Projects, together with the French space agency CNES, and strongly supported by the UK Space Agency and other agencies across Europe.

Airbus' geostationary telecommunications satellites have clocked up more than 1,300 years of successful operation in orbit and are in service, or being built, for all of the world's leading geostationary satellite operators. ■

# Kingston Technology: How upgrading your hardware can boost your performance without the need for a new system

In today's digital-first world, computers and laptops have never been more indispensable in our personal and professional life. As technological advancements unfold at unprecedented pace, there is now a widespread expectancy among consumers for traditional issues such as lag time, slow booting, and substandard performance to be addressed in their entirety. However, computers and laptops may experience significant slowdowns and performance problems, even today. Given today's economic climate and related factors including inflation, increasing prices, and the cost of living crisis impacting the wider global community, Kingston Technology is raising awareness surrounding its 'Upgrade It, Don't Replace It' approach, shedding light on the importance of PC upgrade to boost productivity.

"Although demands for the latest innovations have never been higher, purchasing new PC or laptop devices is a luxury some may wish to avoid at present due to turbulent economic conditions," explained Antoine Harb, Team Leader, Middle East, Kingston Technology. "Rather than replacing hardware when performance wanes, consumers can upgrade their current systems and optimize them, thereby prolonging their use with a 'brand new' feel. This is a viable, cost-effective avenue for solving emerging or persisting issues. End-users will continue enjoying the workflows they are accustomed to without replacing systems, which ultimately represents a prudent short-to-midterm investment." Whether it be enterprises, SMEs, gamers, or everyday consumers, Kingston Technology highlights that memory and storage upgrades are prudent ways to maximize the performance of existing systems. While many believe memory and storage have the same effect, they have varying roles within computers and the company stresses it is important to first know the difference.

Memory, also known as DRAM (Dynamic



**Antoine Harb** -Team Leader, Kingston Technology, Middle East

Random Access Memory), is where information is constantly being processed and computers utilize RAM for immediate purposes, such as working on applications, editing documents, or opening emails, although DRAM is only accessed on a short-term basis and information is lost if not saved. Storage, meanwhile, is either the hard-disk drive (HDD) or the solid-state drive (SSD) where data is recorded and stored indefinitely. Computers use storage to hold operating systems, applications, and data that can be accessed on a long-term basis. "Higher capacities of memory and storage come with several valuable benefits for consumers. Besides cost-efficiency, these upgrades overcome vulnerabilities, enhance device security, boost performance, empower users to choose the right level of capacity for their needs, and ensure they keep up with the latest software developments," continued Harb. "Various solutions are available for consumers to immediately begin availing these outcomes and this is particularly relevant for enterprises, which generally have a three-year refresh cycle and purchased laptops at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic to support remote working in early 2020. Again, upgrading is a viable option as opposed to purchasing new systems."

Among the most effective devices for a successful upgrade is Kingston Technology's

NVMe range, which are proven to bolster productivity with significantly faster speeds and less reduced lag time, as well as faster transfer rates compared to SATA SSDs. NVMe is a newer generation of storage access and transport protocol for flash and next-generation SSD that delivers the highest throughput and fastest response times yet – for all types of enterprise workloads and SME, gaming, and data center requirements. High-performance storage for desktop and laptop PCs is available via the Kingston KC3000 PCIe 4.0 NVMe M.2 SSD, which delivers the next-level performance using the latest 4x4 NVMe controller and 3D TLC NAND. Consumers can upgrade the storage and reliability of their system to keep up with demanding workloads and experience better performance with software applications such as 3D rendering and 4K+ content creation. Kingston FURY™ Beast DDR5 memory is another DRAM innovation that brings the latest cutting-edge technology for next-gen gaming platforms. Taking speed, capacity and reliability even further, DDR5 arrives with an arsenal of enhanced features, like ECC (ODECC) for improved stability at extreme speeds, dual 32-bit subchannels for increased efficiency and an on-module power management integrated circuit (PMIC) to provide juice where it's needed most.

"These solutions are prime examples of why upgrading hardware is more beneficial and suitable for consumers in the short to mid-term," added Harb. "Upgrading memory with NVMe solutions is a pre-requisite for efficient use of applications, increasing performance, avoiding sudden system crashes, and more. Alternatively, upgrading storage via SSD can enhance performance with superior power efficiency, faster speed, greater responsiveness, and more space for essential files. We therefore urge consumers from every segment to explore the upgrade options available to them before replacing their hardware without prior consultation." ■

# GLOBAL ICT, TELECOM & SATCOM EVENTS 2023

**31-02** May-June 2023



Marrakesh

**04-06** July 2023



Manama, Bahrain

**14-16** November 2023



Cape Town, SA

**06** June 2023



Singapore

**25** July 2023



Johannesburg, SA

**15-16** November 2023



Bangkok, Thailand

**07-09** June 2023



Singapore

**15-18** September 2023



Amsterdam, Netherlands

**21-22** November 2023



Amsterdam, Netherlands

**12-13** June 2023



Cairo, Egypt

**10-12** October 2023



Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

**06-08** December 2023



Baku, Azerbaijan

**27-28** June 2023



Singapore

**16-20** October 2023



Dubai, UAE

**26-29** February 2024



Barcelona, Spain

**28-30** June 2023



Shanghai, China

**24-26** October 2023



Paris, France

**23-25** April 2024



Dubai, UAE

**HUGHES.**  
An EchoStar Company



**POWERING THE NETWORKS THAT  
CONNECT PEOPLE EVERYWHERE**

**LEARN MORE AT [HUGHES.COM](https://www.hughes.com)**

©2023 Hughes Network Systems, LLC. All Rights Reserved.