

PITAtimes Newsletter

AgriTech; A Bright Nature of Decision

Message from The Chairman:

Dear all; Members of The Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies- (PITA) and all the affiliated companies working in the ICT Sector.

One of PITA's main strategies this year is digitalization and integration of technology in all sectors. In 2019 we spotted the light on the FinTech and BlockChain Field, such concern was reflected in choosing it as a theme for Expotech in its 16th year.

This year we want to highlight the importance of the AgriTech Field. Palestine is a farming community; farming exists in our blood; and we are certain that any economic development will go through this path. This concept is the new trend, it addresses the challenges that the Palestinian farming community faces at all stages of the food supply chain. These AgriTech solutions will address data-enabled technology, Internet of things (IoT), stage within the food supply chain; how food and other agricultural products are grown; such as in-soil and in-tree sensors, harvested, packaged and etc.

We call upon all of PITA's members and stakeholders and the Palestinian agricultural companies to encourage the investments in this sector and to go deeper through building an AgriTech- Knowledge on the local and international levels. We need to build a platform to better understand the potential of integrating Information Technology with the Agricultural Sector in order to speed up the finding of technological solutions and systems in the agricultural sector.

We also need to identify the pathways and needed interventions to unlock the role the ICT tools can play in enhancing & improving the Agricultural sector as well as supporting the Palestinian economic growth, its productivity and efficiency.

To abridge; what PITA aims to achieve is to strengthen the role of the AgriTech sector by opening and penetrating the regional and the international markets; to ensure that the Palestinian AgriTech sector will echo globally. This can only happen through reaching out to the widest pool of different stakeholders in this field including farmers, entrepreneurs, IT and Agricultural companies, young leaders and students for the purpose of connecting them with the neighboring countries, which will eventually bring in accessibility and opportunities in the AgriTech field since it is our ray of hope.

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Opening Article By Dr. Amjed Ghanim – General Secretary of the PA Council of Ministers.

"The Vision of the Technology and Services Cluster"



The current Palestinian government, led by H.E. Prime Minister Dr. Mohammed Shtayyah, is continuously seeking to develop models that achieve the highest developmental results in a range of economic fields including agricultural, industrial, technological, trade, IT, etc. The concept of 'Clusters' is used as a grouping tool which relies on the capitalizing of the relative merits and competitive advantages that every Palestinian geographical area offers. For instance, the agricultural Cluster is seen in locations with availability of fertile land, water and farmers' skills, as in Qalqilya, Tulkarem, Jenin and Tubas. Furthermore, the industrial Cluster is determined in both Hebron and Nablus, the tourism Cluster in Bethlehem and Jericho, the diversified Cluster in Gaza and the Cluster of Palestine's capital: Jerusalem.

As for the central area of the West Bank -Ramallah and Al-Bireh, the government has recently created the "Technology and Services Cluster" that is compatible with the Palestinian youth capabilities and the businesses. The core of this cluster revolves around the IT sector, banking institutions, government entities, and other service providers specialized in providing management, financial, and technical solutions. In Palestine, approximately 400 companies work in IT services and telecommunication and employ about 8000 citizens, all representing 6% of the GDP (3% for each of IT and telecommunication).

The new method is tailored to support Palestinian products, increase local production, create new job opportunities, and strengthen Palestinian youth resilience. In cooperation with local and international stakeholders, this plan will be implemented through direct investments in the Palestinian human capital and through marketing and promoting their products and services



What is the Technology and Services Cluster? Who are the key stakeholders? How will the desired outputs be achieved? What are the results we seek to accomplish?

Among this year's (2020) top priorities of the current government is the youth sector. The Technology and Services Cluster is a governmental effort targeting our nation's innovative human resources and capabilities for producing and marketing services (technology, engineering, administration and finance) that can be sold and delivered to international markets. This assists in overcoming the continuing Israeli obstacles impeding the entry of raw material and the export of finished products into and from Palestine. The end products of the service industries, whether it be technical solutions, documents, consultancies, plans or virtual programs and applications can all be delivered via the internet.

Therefore, the government has established this cluster through a steering committee that consists of the Ministry of IT and Telecommunication, the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Empowerment, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the General Personnel Council, the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, and the Palestinian Monetary Authority. This committee operates to construct strategies for building and directing a Palestinian Eco-system that will assist in developing the sector in all its technical, legal, human and financial aspects.

The Technology and Services Cluster is a multidimensional governmental effort that is targeted at developing the IT and the services sector with a vision of achieving global competitiveness and allowing international presence and reputation in this sector.

The general goal of this cluster is helping to enhance and empower Palestinian economy through maximizing production in services, providing sustainable jobs, boosting service exports, and strengthening our capabilities to penetrate international markets.

This committee, in collaboration with all members and stakeholders, aims to achieve numerous objectives such as increasing competitive advantages for companies working in the sector and opening new markets through connecting to international companies (especially in Europe and Northern America). One objective includes increasing and diversifying exports to help increase the IT share of the GDP from 10% to 12% within three years and reducing unemployment levels among university graduates.

In order for Palestine to become a distinctive exporting base and a destination for international clients, we must work towards having 15,000 to 20,000 programmers, designers, developers and directors, as well as companies that are strong both administratively and financially. Note that the current number does not exceed 3000 persons in these domains. Therefore, achieving our objectives requires strong collaboration among all local and international players such as The Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies- PITA, the companies working in the ICT sector, Universities, Palestinian Banks, Development and Employment Institutions and other relevant institutions.

One of the most important interventions assigned to the partners of this cluster is preparing and ensuring the implementation of a strategy to develop the Palestinian technology and services sector, and providing specialized training in various applied technological tools that increase the opportunities for exporting services in programming, fashion design, environmental solutions, renewable energy services, etc. Work will be done with governmental entities and higher education institutions to modernize and create the necessary technological knowledge and systems, such as high-speed internet and relevant university programs, to remain informed on the latest global developments in this rapidly advancing world.

Our work will also include working with governmental entities to change the structure of the legislation framework such as the intellectual property, funding, companies, trade, taxes, judiciary, etc. This will lead to the preparation of policies, working guides and manuals, electronic systems to manage the ministries' operations, training the ministries' cadres and documentation of their outputs. Success stories and case study reports showing results and benefits from the work done will be published as part of this cluster.

The government's endeavors serving this cluster are remarkable. Some initiatives are already in progress such as the training program (running for the next three years) targeting 5000 graduates in the fields of software technologies and software industry management. Another initiative of the government is establishing a Governmental Development Bank aiming to empower Palestinian Youth to create new start-ups and market them globally. Last but not least, we are now working towards electronic and smart governmental services for the Palestinians, including the current government E-Payment System Project, which is a key component of this cluster to facilitate the provision of services to citizens and companies.

These joint efforts led by the government as directed by H.E our President Dr. Mahmoud Abbas- Abu Mazen for boosting and promoting Palestinian products and economy need the most possible cooperation among all stakeholders in this sector at all stages of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This team effort is seen as a golden opportunity for establishing, recognizing and maintaining a Palestinian IT identity in the world, enabling it to eventually act as a driving wheel for the Palestinian economy at large in the medium to long term.

Hasan Al-Ashqar;

**Director General of Planning and Policies;
Ministry of Agriculture.**



The New Green Revolution

The Agricultural Sector had been the main pillar and driver for both economic and social sectors in the Palestinian context through its contribution to enhance the linkages between production and consumption on the national level, as well as its rule in job opportunity, export and national economy. Agriculture has also a basic role in the Palestinian history and cultural life which directs the Palestinians towards strengthening the bonds with their land. Note that the agricultural sector is considered as the resource for almost all economic sectors in Palestine; Its contribution to the GDP is about 7%.

However; this sector is still fragile and performing below its potential due to several reasons. The main cause for agricultural sector's fragility is the occupation and its practices which impede the development of this sector. Such practices include the following; the control over resources and mainly land and water, the control over the borders in West Bank and the blockade on Gaza, which obstructs the free of movement between commodities.

In 2017, with the development of the Agricultural Sector Strategy (NASS) for the years 2017 – 2022 entitled “Resilience and Sustainable Development”, the Ministry of Agriculture started in adopting the concept of smart agriculture especially with the global effects of climate change which affected Palestine.

Smart agriculture is all about utilization of advanced technologies in a sustainable way to improve farmers' practices in agricultural production. The use of smart agriculture will facilitate the production process for farmer, rationalize the use of natural resources (especially water and soil), reduce the cost of production and ensure safe and high quality food production as well as facilitate marketing.

Precise Agriculture is a new approach of farms cultivation management and controlling practices through information and communication technology, monitoring and controlling tools and self-operating machines. The precise agriculture depends on the analysis of data and information collected about soil-plant-environment to steer the production towards efficient and effective low cost, safe and sustainable production.

The New Green Revolution

Compared to the Arab countries, the Palestinian farmers are considered as pioneers in utilizing the technology in Agriculture especially in controlled environment, efficient irrigation and introducing new cultivars. Low-flow drip irrigation, protected agriculture, brackish irrigation water, the use of tensiometers and irrigation controllers are some examples of the technologies practiced by Palestinian farmers since the 90's of the last century, which helped in developing the production and productivity and profitability of Agriculture in both plant and livestock production in one hand and in introducing new high value crops that enhanced national economy through export.

One can debate about the importance of developing smart agriculture and the risk of being a new form of control by either Israeli occupation or big companies over the national food production system. In the same time, smart agriculture needs expertise, investments and technologies that most of the Palestinian farmers doesn't have access to. For this it should be clear that smart agriculture shouldn't be the community goal; rather than a tool to utilize the available resources in a sustainable way to confront the Israeli measures and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of Palestinian agricultural production towards sustainability, profitability and self-sufficiency.

The Ministry of Agriculture had started the process to develop its evidence-based decisions making process, as well as to improve data and information acquisition and analysis to be able to support the agricultural sector, farmers and the Palestinian economy to achieve the required impact in a transparent and effective manner that responds to the needs of the Palestinian farmers. The Ministry had initiated a process to establish an agricultural registry system, which should be the baseline information system for the whole agricultural sector. The system was designed to accommodate all information data about the agricultural holding and holders that will be collected through the Agricultural Census the PCBS will organize in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture in the last quarter of 2020.

The Registry system will be utilized and updated by the Ministry of Agriculture annually and will provide the needed analysis and information about the behavior of the Agricultural sector in Palestine. The system will also be developed to integrate advisory modules and data acquisition applications using innovative local information communication technologies. Finally, the way to green evolution for the Palestinians will requires to develop smart agricultural approaches targeting the development of both social and economic capacities and to confront the Israeli occupation and its control over resources.

UAE Mission – 2020; Building a Better B2B Brand Voice

PALESTINE...TECH WITHOUT BORDERS

The Palestinian Information Technology of Associations – PITA in partnership with the Palestinian Business Council – Dubai, The Northern Emirates have launched the first annual conference in Information Technology in Dubai. A business delegation from PITA has visited Dubai for B2B meetings for the purpose of establishing networks and creating a platform to promote for the Palestinian ICT Sector in UAE and the neighboring countries. The event took place in the 12th of February at Al-Jumeirah Creekside Hotel. The event was under the auspices of Reach Holding Group with the presence of H.E. Mr. Issam Masalha; The Palestinian Ambassador in the UAE.

The event started with B2B and networking meetings in the first three hours of the event. Its' whole purpose was to promote Palestine as a destination for ICT sector tools and solutions, and enhance and build trust and new partnerships with all interested parties and stakeholders worldwide. Palestine bound with innovative minds and change makers in this field, so with their skills, ideas, experiences they can step further and be in the forefront in this world of technology. Mr. Saeed Zeidan has urged on this point saying "This mission is the first step to access new regional markets as part of PITA's efforts towards branding the ICT sector and promote the Palestinian IT solutions and exports under the slogan Palestine Tech Without Borders' ".

He discussed how the Palestinian companies have an extensive experience in conducting projects outside Palestine; whether in the UAE or in other countries. In addition to presenting PITA's achievements and the services it provides for the ICT companies through its diverse programs that include services that aim for encouraging and facilitating knowledge and information exchange process and increasing the chances of conducting agreements between its members.resources.

UAE Mission – 2020; Building a Better B2B Brand Voice

PALESTINE...TECH WITHOUT BOARDERS

Mr. Issam Masalha; the Palestinian Ambassador in the UAE; has expressed his pride of the Palestinian youth who powerfully and professionally entered this world despite the Israeli occupation and its regulations that led them to leave their homeland. He discussed how the Palestinians have so much potential; their talents, skills, and capabilities considered to be an investing opportunity that companies working in the UAE can seize.

He emphasized to provide the sufficient support for the Palestinian economy through establishing the perfect environment to help the Palestinian companies in expanding their businesses and investing in the Palestinian ICT sector.

Mr. Malek Melhem; Chairman of The Palestinian Business Council, has affirmed that the Palestinian market has a competitive advantage that enable it to compete at different levels; mainly in the ICT sector. Therefore; the purpose of promoting for Palestine is to support its companies and adding new markets and target segments which will eventually lead to developing the Palestinian economy and opening new prospects and job opportunities for the Palestinian youth, and this will in turn enhance the Palestinian resilience. He also stated that this event will be organized annually with different and innovative themes so it can be a rising pillar in developing the ICT sector in the UAE, and the Council will conduct B2B meetings in several economic prospects.

During the event; all the participants presented the services and the solutions their companies provide. Furthermore; networking relationships were established between those companies with stakeholders from the UAE. At the end of the event; a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation was signed between the Palestinian information technology of Associations – PITA and the Palestinian Business Council in Dubai – The Northern Emirates. In addition to signing several partnership agreements between the local companies in the UAE and the Palestinian companies.

PITA's Latest Activities

26th/2/2020, Ramallah; A part of the tour visit to Jericho Agro-Industrial Park (JAIP). The tour included students from IT and Agricultural faculties from Hebron and Al-Najah universities, startups and entrepreneurs with AgriTech business ideas as well as interested ICT companies and representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture. The tour aimed to facilitate the matchmaking process between the both sides and promote for a platform of cooperation, and to build an AgriTech- Knowledge by reaching out to the widest pool of different stakeholders in this field including farmers, entrepreneurs, IT and Agricultural companies, young leaders and students which will eventually bring in accessibility and opportunities in the AgriTech field. Furthermore; the students got the chance to meet different factories' owners and get to know what is JAIP and the services it provides. This goes under the project " Innovation and ICT Sector Development as a Tool for Peace and Prosperity in Palestine"

26th/2/2020, Gaza and Ramallah; The winners of the "Ja-Pal's DigiBiz Solution Competition 2019" have traveled to Japan to further develop their winning ideas. The participants met the Palestinian Ambassador in Japan; Mr.Waleed Siam, in which he expressed his gratitude for the support the Government of Japan has always provided for the Palestinian people and especially the youth. In addition to meeting the Director of UNDP Representation and the Director-General/ Assistant Minister of Middle Eastern and African Affairs Bureau at MoFA, Mr Katsuhiko Takahashi. They all affirmed that the key for the Palestinian development is through the ICT sector and through the Palestinian skills and ideas. The participants learned the latest trends in the AgriTech fields, such as film farming, artificial light farming, smart farms and agricultural robots.

17th/2/2020; Ramallah; PITA has met with the Governor of the Palestine Monetary Authority; Dr.Azzam Al-Shawwa for the purposes of discussing new prospects of cooperation for developing the FinTech sector. The meeting included several Palestinian E-Payments companies for reaching out to solutions that can strengthen this sector which was the theme of Expotech 2019. In a nutshell; the meeting highlighted the importance of developing the FinTech sector and the E- Commence and the E- government. In addition to the role the PMA plays in supporting the Palestinian ICT companies. The parties agreed on conducting a workshop to create a vision and set a work plan the PMA intends to follow in the transformation of the Palestinian FinTech sector and pointing out to the government's consistent support upon this issue

PITA's Latest Activities

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11/2/2020, Gaza; PITA has met with a delegation from UNRWA; the meeting included the Chief Executive Officer of the Information Technology Department Kan Citinterk, and the Director of Business Engagement from the Information Technology Department; Kristin Villayo and representatives from the Information Technology Services Center in Gaza. The meeting emphasized the role that PITA is playing in developing the Palestinian ICT sector; also it discussed the potential of achieving joint projects in the near future. The delegation also visited several PITA's affiliated companies to have an idea of how these companies work and set a plan and a strategy for networking for the next step.

6/2/2020, Ramallah; A B2B meeting took place between a well-known Dutch Company with several Palestinian ICT-related Companies on the subject "GDPR and Data Privacy/Protection Issues in the European Market". The main purpose of the meeting is to better understand the Palestinian economic situation and to meet and make partnerships with relevant Palestinian organizations and firms.







PITA's New Members 2020

(Gaza and Ramallah)

Selsela For Information Technology



Innovative For Information Technology



Certiportal For Researches, Consultations and Technology



Upcoming Events

1. MSPWorld 2020, 15 - 17 March 2020, New Orleans, LA. MSPWorld offers a vendor-agnostic focus on Managed Service providers and their respective ecosystems, based on real-world experiences and successes in the managed services industry.

2. GESS, Istanbul, 2 - 4 April 2020 / Dubai, 25 - 27 February 2020. GESS is a platform to launch products and ideas in the Middle East education market and reach out to the widest target audience. It is a 3 days of inspirational talks dynamic, hands-on workshops from global industry leaders and influential local experts to enable educational suppliers to access and make connections with decision makers in the education sector.

Why Participating is important ?

- Knowledge - Sharing
- Keep Pace with The Changing World
- Strengthen The Professional Ties
- Challenge and Grow
- Identify needs and challenges in the ICT sector
- Advance Economic Growth
- Create Opportunities

Be A Member !
<http://home.pita.ps/wp/join-pita/>

Tel: (Ramallah) +970-2-2958447/5

Tel: (Gaza)+970-8-2881110

Fax: (Ramallah) +970-2-2958446

Fax: (Gaza) +970-8-2840216

E-mail: info@pita.ps

P.O.BOX: 2460

www.pita.ps