

## PITA sign a Memorandum of Understanding with INT@J



The Palestinian Information Technology Association of companies "PITA", represented by its Chairman Mr. Ala'a Aladdin and Mr. Laith Kassis, jointly with their counterparts from the Jordanian Information Technology Association (int@j), Mr. Aiman Mazahreh and Mr. Abdelmajeed Shamlawi have announced both cooperation and the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding at the MENA ICT Forum 2010.

Mr. Aladdin and Mr. Mazahreh highlighted how the MoU will strengthen the partnership between technological and technical fields to support the Information Technology and Communications sectors through public and private companies within both Jordan and Palestine.

*Continued on page 2*

### What's inside:

Page.4

**PITA holds Graduation Ceremony of "GTAP"**

Page.6

**PITA Participates in Palestine Investment Conference in Bethlehem**

Page.12

**PICTI holds Technology Business Plan Competition Award Ceremony with 15,500\$ Cash Prizes Sponsored by Intel**

Page.12

**PICTI receives delegation from the US Economic Section and GEP**

## Letter from PITA/PICTI Chairman

Dear Friends and Colleagues,



Welcome to Expotech 2010!

This new release of the Connect magazine is issued in such a perfect timing where the elements of success are gathering to create an ideal environment for the development of a strong, sustainable, and competitive ICT sector in Palestine.

The year 2010 marks a milestone for the ICT sector in Palestine. Investing in this sector is becoming more attractive especially for the multinationals as the issue of niche investment in the ICT sector has become particularly important to Palestinian entrepreneurs and businessmen since they are becoming the young leaders in many facets in the sector.

We, at PITA & PICTI, believe that attracting local and international investors, as well as business delegations will best embody the mutual benefit and free market strategies this sector is trying to reach, we believe that Palestine should be part of the global IT market. Such strategies require a careful and inclusive analysis of possible opportunities and understanding of methodologies available to aid in investment decision-making. It also requires developing these strategies with the public sector and development agencies and getting buy-in for it from all stakeholders.

We, at PITA & PICTI, can assure you that investing in Information Technology is on the rise and opportunities are there on the short and long runs. What is a better way to display such opportunities other than Expotech 2010 which is the window for the investors and entrepreneurs alike to venture in new business and entrepreneurial opportunities.

I would like to personally wish you success at the event.  
Thank you!

Best Wishes,  
Ala Aladdin  
Chairman, PITA and PICTI



## PITA @ the second Arab Outsourcing Conference & Expo

The Palestinian Information Technology Association of companies "PITA" and four of its prominent members participated in the 2nd Annual Arab Outsourcing Conference & Expo, held in Dubai last April.

The delegation was led by Laith Kassis, CEO of PITA; Ehab Ja'bari; ICT Development Manager at CARANA, a project supported by USAID; Hosam Dwiekat, "Al Israa"; Hasan Kassem, "Dimensions"; Majed Bakeer, "Galaxy", and Tarek Esleem, "Al Tarek" from Gaza.

The aim of the conference was to exchange knowledge and experience exchange in outsourcing industry and ICT services, especially with the growing impact of ICT on emerging economies with prominent competitive advantages, on top of which is Palestine.

Many key sessions and B2B meetings were held on the side of the conference with the Palestinian delegation. One of the most productive meetings was with the "SAP" representatives, where Messrs Kassis and Ja'bari discussed potential cooperation channels between the two entities creating new success stories in the ICT sector.

It is worth mentioning; that the Gulf Region is reaching a new level in the outsourcing to emphasize its location on the outsourcing map, and becoming a new field player in the market to the side of the MENA region. These improvements have great impact on employment as more jobs will be created in the ICT market. Many case studies were discussed on that focused strategic outsourcing to highlight the certain models and approving the most feasible outsourcing tactics.

The participated Palestinian companies networked with key players in the outsourcing industry in the Gulf region and organized for business meetings in the UAE as part of their trip.

→ Continued from page 1

Widely considered one of the Region's foremost Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Information and Communications Technology Enabled Services (ICTES) industry events, the biennial MENA ICT Forum 2010 will be held in Amman-Jordan under the Patronage of His Majesty King Abdullah II, on October 10 and 11, 2010 at the Business Park. The Forum will present several keynote and panel speakers, and will be focused around a number of carefully planned and specialized sessions, which will address the MENA Region's most pertinent and pressing ICT concerns of today.

The Jordanian Minister of Information and Communications Technology, HE Mr. Marwan Juma, who was present during the signing said: "As Jordan strives forward within this industry, it continues to develop its core capabilities to become a world-class center for IT and Communications. The signing of this MoU translates into reaping a competitive advantage which both countries will enjoy through their joint cooperation."

The Palestinian Minister of Information and Communications Technology, HE Dr. Masshour Abu Dakka said: "Partnering with Jordan in this initiative will give us more avenues for growth, and this MoU signing will support our objectives to continue identifying and driving areas for development and growth within the industry."

Mr. Aladdin commented on the signing: "Such partnerships allow companies in Palestine to benefit from Jordan's experience and expertise and enhance Palestinian companies' own experience within this sector."

Mr. Mazahreh, Chairman of int@j in turn said: "This partnership resulted through a great deal of mutual effort and will open opportunities to promote our companies through one of the most important events of this year - the MENA ICT Forum 2010 - which is organized and supported by int@j, and gathers member associations like PITA. int@j and its member organizations will also take an active role in Information Technology Week "Expotech" 2010 which will be held in early November in Ramallah and Gaza, with the aim of marketing and encouraging cooperation between them."

Mr. Kassis added: "The Information Technology and Communications sector is a major income generator for national GDP. These companies play a major role in the development and growth of the sector through the exchange of their expertise and experience in this promising field by way of involvement in large projects and new development programs which are expected to contribute to the advancement of the economy through joint investments between the pioneers of this sector, and will create unique job opportunities for new graduates and existing professionals within the sector."

Mr. Shamlawi, int@j's CEO further added: "The signing of such a significant memorandum of understanding underpins the unique professionalism and expertise our associations encompass. Their diligent efforts to strengthen their presence on both a local and international level reinforce the leading roles of both int@j and PITA and their experiences have become success stories in attracting major investments. Furthermore, the MoU has also incorporated opening prospects and cooperation in other areas such as including participation in trade missions and delegations, and the announcement of training to leverage the proficiency of workers in this sector, as well as to build networking bridges among the members of the two associations in both countries."

It should be noted that the success of partnership will enhance and attract considerable investments which will in turn support and develop the Information Technology and Communications sectors in both countries. This will directly and positively affect Jordan and Palestine's technological and economic development.





## PITA in cooperation of Mercy Corps launches “Securing a Future Free of Poverty” Program

Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies, PITA, in partnership with Mercy Corps carried out apprenticeship program under Securing a Future Free of Poverty, that is supported by the European Union: Palestinian Youth Advocacy for Equity and Employment program. Over 100 graduates from technical and vocational education and training institutions have been placed in the ICT and other private sector companies for three to five month apprenticeships. The experience with the private companies shaped graduates skills and enhanced their ability to meet the requirements of the jobs available in the technological market today.

Mr. Ala Alaeddin, Chairman of PITA, emphasized the important role played by such programs, providing youth through apprenticeships valuable experience, skills, and income. These advanced employment opportunities support the social status of technical and vocational education graduates and help change the image of the technical and vocational education in the society, as well as make these graduates more competitive on the market.

On his behalf, Mr. Musbah al Ajez, Business Development Coordinator at PITA, added that PITA efforts contributed to decrease of the

unemployment among young Palestinians, as most the employers participating in the program demonstrated interest in keeping their apprentices as permanent employees and extending their employment contracts beyond the program period.

These activities are funded by the European Union within the framework of a two-year 530,000 Euro program by the European Commission aimed at supporting sustainable poverty reduction and youth empowerment by advancing employment and youth advocacy. The program provides leadership training for youth in Gaza, Hebron, and Bethlehem equipping them with skills to advocate for the implementation of the Palestinian youth employment strategies. The leadership training is combined with practical job skills, technical and vocational apprenticeships for selected youth as a means of reflecting the value of market-responsive technical and vocational education, which is currently undervalued by Palestinian parents, policymakers, and educators. Palestinian private sector is committed to providing employment opportunities for underprivileged Palestinian youth and to highlight success stories to combat negative social stigma associated with technical and vocational employment.

## PITA Organize Monitoring and Evaluation Workshop with CISCO

The Palestinian information technology association for companies (PITA) held two workshops in cooperation with Cisco under the title of “Monitoring and Evaluation” at PITA headquarters in Al-Bireh in June earlier this year. The workshops were attended by many representatives from the member companies of PITA like ASAL technologies and Exalt.

The workshops were opened by Mr. Laith Kassis, CEO of PITA and the Palestine Information and Communications Technology Incubator (PICTI) who welcomed the Cisco team along with the other company members, Mr. Kassis assured the partnership standing between Cisco and PITA and the \$ 10 million commitment PITA is seeking to contribute to the national economy through technology.

Dr. Catharine Elkins, the monitoring and evaluation expert at RTI international company who was participating through the Cisco team gave a brief on the major points necessary for monitoring and evaluating the condition of the Palestinian ICT market in Palestine, and on how to get a positive feedback summarizing what aspects we should focus on to reach the targeted growth in the sector. She also added that “the main aim of our projects, whether those we executed in cooperation with PITA or those we are about to begin with, is to lay the foundations of an independent Palestinian technological economy that has its much weight and standing in the world.

Mr. Kassis raised some key issues on the discussion table such as the outsourcing and the conditions of the incubated companies in the market, assuring the role of both areas in the creation of an independent successful Palestinian ICT market capable of creating many job opportunities and absorbing many entrepreneurs producing a whole new distinguished level of technology to put Palestine in the competition field with Arab and international countries; “outsourcing market is very significant and we are thriving to take every opportunity in it to enforce a Palestinian presence internationally”.

Such workshops strengthen the cooperation between Cisco and PITA as an association and also as a representative of the informa-



tion technology sector. As it always seeks to put investment opportunities available between Palestinian and international companies such as Cisco on the right track.

The workshops were concluded and succeeded in shedding the light on the main points that affects the support of the eco-system of the ICT sector in Palestine. It is another step to achieve the target of every entrepreneur and businessman in Palestine, that is to achieve a successful and a free technological Palestinian economy.

As a measurement of success, workshop participants brainstormed Key Performance Indicators for the outsourcing of Cisco to Palestinian companies, Key Performance Indicators for supporting Technology Entrepreneurship and seed funding.



## PITA holds Graduation Ceremony of “GTAP”

Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies “PITA” celebrated the graduation of Cisco Global Talent Acceleration Program “GTAP” participants, which was held earlier this year in Amman Academy – Jordan, over four months.

The ceremony took place at Al Bireh Park on April 14th. H.E. Minister of Telecommunications and Information Technology, Dr. Mashhour Abu Daqqa presided over the ceremony joined by H.E. Dr. Sabri Saidam, Advisor to President on ICT and Tech Education, Mr. Ammar Aker CEO of Paltel Group, Ala’ Ala’ Al-Din Chairman of PITA, Zika Abzuk Client Service Representative of Cisco, and representatives from the ICT sector and the graduates.

“GTAP” is considered one of the most advanced programs in the Network Consulting field and a major player in developing and employing capabilities and skills serving the ICT companies and local companies in general.

H.E. Minister of Telecommunication & Information Technology Dr. Mashhour Abu Daqqa congratulated the graduates praising their efforts and commitment during the training. Dr. Abu Daqqa emphasized also on the significant role the M.T.I.T plays in improving the ICT market. He also mentioned that a policy sheet on the Palestinian Mail will be published soon and another on e-government will also be published after having a clear local vision on it.

Dr. Abu Daqqa expressed his gratitude to Cisco for its continuous support to the ICT sector technically and financially and commended PITA for its efforts on developing the local ICT sector, companies, and human resources.

On the other hand, Dr Sabri Saidam sent three messages: one to the graduates as the effort to setup such a program started a year and a half ago in cooperation among Cisco, the private sector, and the companies in Palestine. He also added: “We discussed this specific training course in full details to build up the technical impact on the students and their self-efficiency.”

Dr. Saidam considered this training course as one of the most important training programs delivered in Palestine and the most difficult. He said: “We are looking forward to greater support to the Palestinian ICT



companies and the Palestinian economy.” Praising the support from CISCO, he added: “Cisco entered Palestine at a time where many companies didn’t choose to do so. In addition to that, CISCO launched different initiatives in favor of companies, universities, and the private sector in Palestine.

Dr. Saidam pointed of three Palestinian IT Companies joining Cisco programs to out-source for CISCO Corporation emphasizing that this step attracted other international companies such as Intel and Microsoft to invest in Palestine.

Mr. Ala’ Ala’ Al-Din, Chairman of PITA, said that PITA is interested in this program as its impacts reflect positively on the local ICT sector and pointed to the success stories of the Palestinian companies especially on the official business relation level with companies like Cisco and stressing on the Palestinian companies capabilities to compete in the regional and international markets if they have the chance.

Mr. Ala’ Al-Din added that there was certainly on the capabilities of the students to pass this high level training and how they proved themselves to win this challenge and make us all proud.

Mr. Ala’ Al-Din reaffirmed on the partnership between the public and private sectors saying: “government is no partner of the private sector; rather, it is an umbrella without which no development can be achieved.” He called for more investment in the technology sector pointing to the project of establishing a technology investment fund which CISCO will support extending his gratitude to CISCO for its continuous support and faith in the capabilities of Palestinian companies

Mr. Ammar Aker said that the graduates had moved up to higher levels by the end of the GTAP while praising the eight Paltel employee graduates of this program.

He also said that Paltel Group is always committed to developing the infrastructure of the ICT sector and emphasized the full readiness of Paltel Group to liberate the ICT sector as an important factor of healthy competition on the national economy towards building the Palestinian state. He added: “Many challenges are still ahead of us especially in liberating the Radio Frequency Spectrum.”

In turn, Mrs. Zika Abzuk pointed to the importance of the GTAP on the ICT sector as a whole and the difficulty of the program and its need of huge work and effort. She showed her impression on the level of participants who showed great deal of challenge and success.

On behalf of the graduates, Eng. Abd AlRahim Abu Saleh delivered a speech stating the commitment of the participants to face challenges and pass all the tests despite all the difficulties. “We have gained more skills and experience and acquired international certificate in Network Consulting field, which we will utilize in serving the companies and society. We will also transfer the knowledge to our colleagues in order to increase the level of knowledge and development in the ICT sector.”

Eng. Abu Saleh called upon the companies to continue supporting the GTAP graduates, preserve such expertise, and encourage the energy in the youth.

At the end of the ceremony, the graduates received their certificates.





## PITA in the first ever Palestinian business delegation to Malta



The Palestinian Information Technology Association of companies "PITA" participated in the first ever Palestinian business delegation to Malta last May. The program of the delegation was organized with "Malta Enterprise" and the Maltese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the Malta Representative Office in Ramallah.

The delegation was led by the CEO of PITA and Palestine Information and Communications Technology Incubator PICTI; Laith Kassis, Ala Ala' Alden; Intertech, Ihab Ja'bari; CARANA, Tareq Maayah; Exalt Technologies, Hasan Qassem; Dimensions, Ibrahim Qattan and Lucy Lozon; "Global Com", Mohamad Musleh; "Asal Technologies", and from Gaza; Tarek Esleem; Al Tarek.

Many areas of potential cooperation were explored through the B2B meetings between businessmen from both sides, including joint ventures, knowledge transfer, consultancy, outsourcing, and the possible opportunities for Maltese companies through Palestinian counterparts active in the Gulf area.

The number of IT companies in the country has grown remarkably in recent years. The average annual ICT added value has been around eight per cent with some years showing a growth of over 50 %, and comprises companies operating in hardware sales, software development, consultancy, internet services and office automation.

It's worth mentioning that one of the reasons that motivated Maltese people to do business with Palestine; it has many free trade agreements (FTA) with countries from the MENA region, the United States, Canada, and others.

The potential of the Palestinian market, and the vast business opportunities that this market presents, its economic sectors and the ongoing economic and development projects in the country, was discussed intensively during the platform.

This platform achieved great success in the ICT investment field for both countries and opened many doors for new opportunities.



## The Islamic Insurance and Finance Sector: Identifying Opportunities for Palestinian Businesses



PITA in cooperation with the Facility for New Market Development FNMD, funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) and World Bank (WB), and implemented by Development Alternatives,

Inc, has recently launched the Takaful Islamic insurance project in August this year.

The growth in demand for Islamic insurance (Takaful) over recent years, particularly within the GCC countries and other areas of the Middle East and Asia, has seen a proliferation of new companies offering Islamic insurance products in these markets. The majority of these companies are fully fledged Takaful operators, but conventional insurance companies have also entered the market with Takaful 'window' operations.

Recently Europeans markets join the trend and the city of Birmingham in the UK has defined itself of being a back office services center for the potential target market, along with Malaysia in Asia. HSBC estimates the market for such products in Europe will be worth \$14 billion by the end of this year, while some industry players predict growth of 30-40 percent annually over the next three to five years.

This project aims to develop a Palestinian cluster of companies to study the capability to offer back office services for international Islamic finance centers to develop solutions, process data, test products, auditing, legal solutions etc. that address Islamic Insurance business organization needs.

A consortium of Palestinian ICT business solutions companies, through its association PITA, planned to position itself to identify and win market share in this expanding sector, the cluster consisted of Dimensions, Isra' Software & Computer Company, DataSet Software Technologies, and Al Jaffal Group Company, they designed to carry out an international market study to identify ICT business support opportunities and develop an integrated business model that the PITA consortium can readily apply to win market share in this sector.



## PITA Participates in Palestine Investment Conference in Bethlehem



The Palestine Investment Conference was opened under the patronage of his Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, the president, which was held in the conference palace in the city of Bethlehem and went on for 2 days with the participation of thousands of Palestinian, Arab, and international investors.

PITA had participated in the conference in a very active presence during the session which was held under the direction of the Prime Minister Mr. Salam Fayyad; who stressed on how much effect does investing in Palestine has on building the state's economy which will lead us a step forward towards building the state of Palestine, and he also pointed out the participation of Gaza in the conference, as Mr. Tariq Esleem came to represent "Al-Tariq" company.

Mr. Laith Kassis CEO of PITA and PICTI had also stressed the importance of the role of PITA as a member in the fairs committee and side activities as he stressed the associations presence by the participation of 6 companies that are members of it, four from West Bank and two from Gaza strip as follows, West Bank: Wataniya Mobile, Global.Com, Next Level IT, eNasher, Gaza strip: iT partners and Modern-Tech.

In addition of 4 companies being incubated in "PICTI", Mr. Kassis pointed out that the role of the fair is to open new horizons for cooperation between local companies and local investors and international ones the thing that will create a big area for Palestinian entrepreneurs to make investment deals to support and develop the ICT sector in Palestine as it also gives a big push for the incubated growing companies by giving some space inside the fair so they can enter and establish a name whether on local or international level.



### Round Table with Senator George Mitchell

President Barack Obama announced the designation of a Presidential Delegation to Bethlehem to attend the Palestine Investment Conference. The Honorable George Mitchell, Special Envoy for Middle East Peace led the delegation, "Palestine Investment Conference generates \$655M in pledges, grants and initiatives for economic development of the Palestinian private sector. These funds target high-growth sectors, including information and commu-





nication technology, and aim to strengthen the Palestinian economy, support institution building, and lay the foundation for a future Palestinian state.” he added.

The round table was part of series sessions about Investing in Palestine, and enhancing the ICT sector.

### **Plenary Session with H.E. Dr. Mash'oor Abu Daqa and H.E. Marwan Jum'a**

Other plenary sessions were held later in the participation of H.E. Dr. Mash'oor Abu Daqa, Minister of Telecommunications and Information Technology of Palestine, H.E. Marwan Jum'a, Minister of Telecommunication and Information Technology of Jordan, Dr. Sabri Saidam, President's Advisor on Telecommunication and Information Technology Affairs, Mr. Ala Aladdin, Chairman of (PITA), Mr. Tareq Eslim, CEO of Al Tareq for Systems & Projects, Mr. Ammar Aker, CEO of Paltel Group, and Mr. Jamal Yasin, Operations Manager, Al Wataniya Mobile Company.

H.E. Dr. Abu Daqa said: “The success of Jordan is also success for Palestine. Many Palestinian companies have branches in Jordan and vice versa. Business relations between Palestine and Jordan are very strong. The situations in both countries are very similar in many aspects. The Palestinian sector can reach Jordan across the borders.

The Palestinian IT sector can reach Gaza Strip despite the divide. It also operates in area C in the West Bank and the Jordan valley. However, there are places where there is no coverage of service for mobile phones. The policy of the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology is to encourage the private sector to the best it could. I personally feel that we cannot reach the level of support that the private sector requires. We are unable to enact the urgently required laws and regulations of the private sector because the Palestinian Legislative Council is dysfunctional. However, we do seek to provide all possible support to the private sector including enforcing some regulations in some areas.

Many visitors to the Conference have realized that the situation despite all obstacles is not as it seems from outside. There are many international companies interested in operating in Palestine such as Google,

CISCO, and even Microsoft Company. I hope we will be able to help them operate in Palestine soon.

The policy of the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology stops at the borders of the private sector. The government will never take over the work of the private sector. It will facilitate its work and give it all possible support since this is the way things work in this world. There are areas; however, that require heavy government involvement such as regulating and passing laws that ensure freedom of work for the private sector and provide good services. There are issues that are out of control such as operating mobile phones, which is under Israeli control. The private sector, I believe and I am confident, has the potential to develop itself. Now we seek to encourage investment of capital despite all risks. The investments we see today encourage cooperation between the private sector and educational institutions.”

“We are always asked this question: Do you compete with Palestine? I think there is room for all of us to invest in the region. Investment in IT in Saudi Arabia, for instance, is valued at \$20b; hence, there is room for all of us to complete each other rather than compete with each other. Despite the borders between Jordan and Palestine, we have family ties, personal relations, as well as commercial relations. The governments of both countries (Jordan and Palestine) must focus on facilitating the function of the private sector.” Added H.E. Mr. Jum'a.

Palestinian entrepreneurs benefited from the available opportunities of investing in the ICT sector that were raised through the sessions and the B2B meetings and many ICT projects' proposals were published for fundraising.

### **“PITA” and the Palestinian German Business Council Sign a Memorandum of Understanding**

“PITA” signed a memorandum of understanding with the Palestinian German Business Council on June 2nd in Bethlehem, in a meeting that was held on aside of the Palestine Investment Conference. Mr. Ala' Alden Chairman of PITA, and Mr. Laith Kassis CEO of PITA attended the meeting along with Dr. Hisham Al-Dahshan, Chair-



man of the Palestinian-German Business Council, and Mr. Isam Kamil member of the board of directors in the Council, with the aim to support the ICT sector in both countries.

Mr. Ala' Alden added: “We are looking forward for more advancement in the ICT sector in Palestine through this partnership with one of the biggest developed countries economically and technologically”.

Mr. Kassis added: “This agreement comes as a result of previous meetings held aside of the “Cebit” fair held in Hanover – Germany at the end of March. The Palestinian market now is quite opened to the Arab and international markets, and this agreement comes to support our companies to be able to do businesses with its German opponents.

This agreement comes as a proof that Palestine is on the right track of developing the sector, as it facilitates future dealings between German and Palestinian companies through the Palestinian German Business Council; Dr. Dahshan added: “We are looking forward to accomplishing all the cooperation methods between us and PITA, whether through direct cooperation or by facilitating businesses with other German companies”.

It is worth noting that PITA has coordinated several meetings between the German company “SAP” and representatives from the Ministries of education, interior, telecommunication and information technology.

As pointed out by Mr. “Andrias Baldwin” the Manager of Partnerships and Sales for the MENA area, the importance of Palestine Investment Conference to “SAP” as it enabled him to accomplish advancement in the area of partnerships assured the presence of new investments will have great return on the economy and development of both countries.



## PITA holds a workshop about the effect of the Israeli actions on the telecommunication and information technology sector

The Palestinian Information Technology Association of companies "PITA" held a workshop at its offices in Al-Bireh, which discussed the frequencies, importing, commercial agencies and the Israeli threats to ban the IT companies from direct importation. The workshop was attended by the undersecretary of the Ministry of IT and Telecommunications, Mr. Sulaiman Al-zuhairi, Mrs. Manal Dasuqi Director General of commerce and Mr. Ahmed Omar the General Director of the General Directorate of Intellectual Property; representatives from the Ministry of National Economy, the Representative of the World Bank, Mr. John Nasser, and representatives from the Palestinian Trade Center PalTrade and many other representatives from the ICT sector.



The workshop was opened by Mr. Sulaiman Al-Zuhairi and Mr. Ala' Ala' Alden the chairman of "PITA", Mr. Zuhairi stressed on the necessity of finding a practical solution for the problem of importing technological equipments due to the various negative economic impacts this problem is inflicted on the IT companies "in the time that the national economy is being lifted up by the IT and telecommunications sector in Palestine, Israel is trying to hold us down and to make obstacles to keep our economy from growing."

It is time for the private sector in cooperation with the government to start putting a clear work-plan to end the current situation, by submitting up a position paper to the responsible authorities or to take this to the interior and international courts to overcome such obstacles and follow up on the advanced new technologies before the gap between Palestine and the rest of the world becomes estimated in light years!.

In the time the need for E-government and 3G technology increases, we find ourselves struggling to find a solution for the security issue, and at the time that Palestine is starting to reinforce its position in the outsourcing market with our sector market is starting to attract companies like Microsoft and Cisco and many others, we find ourselves in a need for an infrastructure to support what those companies need. It is not acceptable that at this time when the "WiMax" technology is available in all the other competitive outsourcing market, we are still facing problems with implementing 2nd generation mobile technology and be forced to use technologies from 10 years ago! Not mentioning the huge amount of procedures and complications "Jawwal" and "Wataniya mobile" are facing to get 3G frequencies by Israel, which has a negative impact on the quality of services these companies provide leading to affecting the number of subscribers 30% of all new technologies are made for 3G mobiles to the "Cebit" conference that "PITA" participated in in Germany earlier this year. This is a condition the whole educational system in West Bank and the Gaza strip is complaining and suffering from.

The range of impact of such obstacles on operations; as there are some imported equipment that stays for years to pass the security checks and scans enforced by Israel on the Palestinian importers, at the same time, we find that the Israeli importers, import and sell the same equipments to Palestinian market freely in an illegitimate ways which all leads to bad effect on the Palestinian economy and contributes directly to the increase of unemployment in our society.

The Palestinian customs are working hard to stop the leak of Israeli products into Palestinian markets by strategic monitoring and waited from the ministry to issue a law consider such commodities as imports and to start imposing a custom duties and fines to contain that problem.

The complicated meaningless Israeli procedures are only there to hold down the Palestinian economy and its growth. They are now listed in the crisis of security with Israel. The crisis also highlights the commercial crossings at this stage as most of the Palestinian goods have to travel all the way to the village of "Targomia" in Hebron to get into Jerusalem area or to the northern governances.

The workshop ended by stressing that the right of usage of technology is for everyone and from this point the private sector in cooperation with the public sector is going to form a pressure committee to add this issue to the negotiation table, and to point it out in the telecommunications conference, and in the radio conference that are determined to be held closely.

An invitation has been made to all ICT companies to join in the formation of such committee to pressure the Israelis to put an end to this problem in West Bank and Gaza, and to raise a position paper about the Israeli threats to the sector as a retaliation to the "Karama" campaign which targeted the boycott of settlement products lately.





## PITA and the French Development Agency (AFD) launch the “Enabling the Growth of the Information Technology Sector in Gaza - EnTEG<sup>2</sup>” project

Mr. Harvey Conan General Director of the French Development Agency (AFD) announced the launch of the project “enabling the growth of the information technology sector in Gaza” EnTEG<sup>2</sup>, during the Palestine’s Investment Conference held lately in Bethlehem. The project will be carried out by “PITA” the representative association for the sector of the information technology companies as a cornerstone in building and developing the Palestinian economy, in cooperation with the Palestinian Trade Center PalTrade. This project is funded by the French Development Agency (AFD) with a total amount of 500,000 Euros.

In the past 3 years the ICT sector in Gaza has suffered like many other economic sectors have suffered from the siege that is put on the movement of people and goods. Nevertheless; the sector was able to accomplish some development even if a slight one. It can be noticed in this time and under those circumstances and since it is a service sector, which makes it in no need to move crossings or checkpoints like many other economic sectors, such as programs, consulting’s and outsourcing which have the freedom of movement through the internet. Therefore and at the current situation, we can say that the ICT sector in Gaza is durable and flexible depending on the creativity and uniqueness as it consists of an educated workforce and based on solid renewable foundations. It also provides a lower cost and a better qualified workforce compared to neighboring countries under the current circumstances investing in the ICT sector is considered to be very promising and is the best solution for developing a Palestinian economy.

Not only is the work of this project to strengthen the ICT companies situation, but it extends to the companies that don’t deal with those techniques through the “spreading information technology and communications” program and also through the program of “market entry” which offers a support plan specialized for ICT companies. The door will be opened for receiving proposals from local and international markets where the companies will be chosen by an independent committee and handled in complete transparency. The support plans will be based upon sharing the costs, markets study providing supervisors or specialists in business and products development, and supporting the provision of participation in market fairs, trade missions, bilateral meetings. An advisory committee will oversee the project realization and will provide strategic counseling to broaden the scope of the project.

It is worth mentioning that this project will last for 18 months with the aim to support the growth and development of the ICT sector in the Gaza Strip, on both local and regional markets level through business development. The project will support the sector companies that are aspiring to improve their conditions and to open up new markets before them. This project comes as a continuation of the works of the French Development Agency (AFD) that started its activities since the end of 1998 with a contribution of 180 million Euros. The agency supported many different projects with them in both West Bank and the Gaza Strip and it had major impact on the Palestinian economy.





## “PITA” Hosts Paltel chief in its periodic Power Breakfast

Palestinian Information Technology Association of companies “PITA” held a meeting with the CEO of “PALTEL Group” Ammar Al-Aker in its headquarters in Al-Bireh earlier in May of this year. The meeting discussed the key issues and latest developments the sector is going through and the latest activities in the PALTEL group’s operations, its strategies and outlook.

The meeting which comes in a series of morning periodic meetings “Power Breakfast” held by PITA with PITA chairman Mr. Ala’ Ala’ Alden, and members of the board of directors along with representatives from the member companies and officials from the PALTEL group attending. Also participated in the meeting some of PITA members from Gaza via Video Conference.

The ICT sector is now clearly feeling the effects of the new strategy and the positive changes in the work of PALTEL group and its policies and directions.

The meeting aims at showing the companies active in the ICT sector all the new developments and changes that took place in the group and to coordinate the work in the manner best to the interest of the companies, market, citizens and the national economy.

Meeting with the Palestinian ICT companies comes in the partnering track between those companies and the PALTEL group the biggest IT Company in the Palestinian market, focusing on the work of ICT companies, to a large extent, intersects with the work of the group. This partnering relation keeps on growing serving the interests of all parties and achieving more advancement for the ICT sector which is considered to be one of the main elements for building a Palestinian state.

The future strategy for the PALTEL group is based on a professional studies and experience from the past years. It will give up some of the areas that the group had worked in through the past years concentrated deeply on the telecommunications area.

Mr. Al-Aker said on that matter “we have a telecommunication industry that is considered to be one of the best segments of the economy

and the most effective in terms of income employment, and other areas we had in the past and tried to enter various areas where it proved that it is better for us to have these areas to other companies in the market”.

He also added: “we decided to concentrate on our specialty that is telecommunication, we won’t enter in competition with programming companies”, assuring that any correctional decision the group takes will have a positive influence on the employees and on the national economy. PALTEL is looking forward for making a huge transition in the market of internet services: “the increase of internet spreading in Palestine is a strategic issue”.

Reassuring that the group is not going to get itself into a pricing war as such will have a negative impact on the group and its competitors.

Expressing his comfort for the level of advancement the group is making especially “Jawwal” Mr. Al-Aker said “for the 1st time we feel a huge interaction between the people and our advertising and marketing campaigns thanks to the competition in the market which led to an increase in the popularity of our promotional campaigns and services”.

The Palestinian Cellular Company “Jawwal” which celebrated recently two million subscribers, thus achieving completing a remarkable accomplishment. 400,000 of those have subscribed in the last 6 months only.

Jawwal has also succeeded in adding the “blackberry” but with services that have to be compatible with the existing services and available frequencies. One of the biggest problems the network had to face with presenting these services is the absent of a law to protect private ownerships in this sector. This is an obstacle PITA is trying to overcome by pressuring for the formation of competitive law in this regard.

Mr. Al-Aker called upon the Palestinian authorities to pressure the Israeli side to get more frequencies to allow the Paltel group to provide new packages from advanced services.



He said “delay in getting these frequencies will lead to latency in the development in the ICT sector”.

He also pointed out that the group is welcoming a 3rd mobile operator in the Palestinian authority areas but that still remains under the limitations imposed by the Israeli occupation which deprives desired development from taking place.

He also described the challenges faced in the Gaza strip such as difficulties in getting electricity generators or any telecommunication supporting devices inside Gaza due to the siege on Gaza strip, which reflects on the company’s ability to raise the number of its subscribers or to include Gaza in any of the campaigns. There were 1500 new subscribers only from Gaza in the past 3 years. Despite that PITA has filed a position paper to lift the siege on importing machines and devices whether on Gaza or the West Bank; still much more efforts are needed to accomplish this task.

There is also a coverage problem facing the company in areas C that still needs further studying.

Also there has been a discussion on the “Mobile Numbering Portability” where Mr. Al-Aker had pointed that such service is not of a priority at the moment. It has been applied in Saudi Arabia and did not witness any noticeable turnout. In addition the profit from this service is small compared to the cost. He also said that the PALTEL group supports the formation of an organizing body to regulate this sector in Palestine.





## Ibtaker for Technological Innovation participated in the ASTF Event: 7th Investing in Technology Forum on: “Developing the Regional Innovation Ecosystem”

Ibtaker, a startup company incubated @ PICTI, participated in the Arab Science and Technology Foundation (ASTF) - 7th Investing in Technology Forum on: “Developing the Regional Innovation Ecosystem” held during the period of 11-13 May 2010 in Dubai.

Ibtaker is specialized in designing and supplying technological educational tools to the educational sector. One of the first innovations of Ibtaker was the Microcontroller Unit (MCU) Kit which allows the students and teachers alike of implementing school curriculum, starting from the 7th grade, hands on and at the same time enjoying it.

Eng. Emad Ammouri, GM of Ibtaker, represented the company there where he presented the company and its products to many investors and business angels. Key investors from the region concluded that the success of IBTAKER in Palestine can be conveyed to other regional countries and the world. Other investor argued that it can be a global success story as it matches top priorities of education in the Arab world by providing the education in an interesting way with the aim of upgrading the skills of students and unleash their innovative abilities. Mr. Ammouri thanked PICTI for this opportunity and the quality service it provided to Ibtaker starting from registering the company to the various business development services including networking and marketing. He added: “We have been working along with PICTI for the past weeks endlessly to prepare for this important event and to present the face of Palestine that is innovative. We were very ready by all means and we had a good chance to meet with investors and business people from the Arab world in an experience that certainly enriched our marketing and the way we do business.”

Eng. Hasan Omar, PICTI Manager, extended his gratitude to ASTF for organizing this important event. He also added that PICTI is holding serious talks with investors who were impressed with Ibtaker's products and investing in the company especially ministries of education. He also added: “after the success we have achieved locally and the spread of Level I of the MCU, we managed to finalize the design of Level II in a record time and we are anticipating local and regional results this year.” Eng. Omar showed his impression with the innovations by school students using the MCU kits. Some of such innovations will be registered as patents and announced. Eng. Omar added that “PICTI managed to allow Ibtaker the exposure to events like this ASTF event and many more through its local, regional,



and international connections. There will be more events to come that will be announced accordingly”.

Mr. Laith Kassis, CEO of PICIT and PITA, said that PICTI is currently incubating number of companies each of which has its own success story. Such companies were able to transform from such an idea to actual business with the support the PNA and Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology gave to PICTI in this regard. Mr. Kassis also extended his gratitude to H. E. Dr. Salam Fayyad, PNA PM, for the generous grant to PICTI to establish these companies and encourage technological entrepreneurship in Palestine.

## PICTI participated in PIC 2010 with Four Incubated Startups

Palestine ICT Incubator (PICTI) participated in the Palestine Investment Conference 2010 in Bethlehem with four of its startups.

Eng. Hasan Omar, PICTI Manager, said that the participation of PICTI startups in this investment event is a valuable opportunity for these startups to meet local, Arab, and international investors on the side of the Conference and to explore with them areas of potential cooperation. It is also considered the actual launch of these startups to market their products and services especially with the good number of PIC participants who were impressed with the high level of the ideas PICTI entrepreneurs offered during the Conference in the ICT sector. As the participation of PICTI in the PIC is important, PICTI and its entrepreneurs contributed great efforts during the past weeks preparing for the PIC through a package of services provided by PICTI to its entrepreneurs and other startups incubated at PICTI especially that SME's were given a special priority during PIC 2010.

The four participating startups were: Ibtaker for Technological Innovation which is specialized in designing and providing educational technological tools for school and college students, Shobiddak: an on-line classified ad company, NIBIRU for Intelligent Control Systems which provides security and surveillance and electronic control systems through internet and mobile phone, Elia for e-Commerce and Development which is a virtual mall to market Palestinian products. On the side of the PIC, Jafra e-shop was launched under Elia Company which is specialized in marketing Palestinian handicrafts and traditional products.

Mr. Laith Kassis, CEO of PITA, said that the Palestinian ICT sectors occupies a respected position and is considered a vital pillar when talking about supporting the Palestinian economy in terms of job creation. Mr. Kassis added that through the entrepreneurs and the projects PICTI incubates and the companies it establishes, it is considered a window to ICT professions graduates to bring their ideas in establishing their own business that is self sustained contributing to the national economy.



Sponsored by Intel:

## PICTI holds Technology Business Plan Competition Award Ceremony with 15,500\$ Cash Prizes

Sponsored by Intel for the second year, PICTI organized an award ceremony at the Ankars Suites Hotel in Ramallah on the 29th of July 2010 announcing the winners of the Technology Business Plan Competition 2010.



The ceremony was under the patronage of H.E. Dr. Mashhour Abu Daqqa, Minister of Telecommunications and IT. The ceremony was attended by PICTI members of the Board of Directors and the Palestine Information Technology Association of companies (PITA) as well as the executive staff of PICTI and PITA honouring the competition participants.

Intel has sponsored the thirteen dedicated cash awards in the total amount of \$15,500 distributed over seventeen winning projects in the West Bank and Gaza. The competition was also launched in cooperation with the Centers of Excellence at four Palestinian universities including Birzeit, An-Najah, Polytechnic and Islamic University.

In an interview with Ms. Rula Habash, Intel Corporate Affairs Manager for Palestine and Jordan, Ms. Habash said in a previous statement that the goal of Intel's sponsorship of this competition is to strengthen technology entrepreneurship and innovation culture in Palestine, specifically within universities and student community in general as a mean of creating small startups with high growth potential. The Business Plan Contest is an important part of Intel Higher Education Program that brings cutting-edge technology expertise to universities, encourages students to pursue technical degrees, and helps move technology out of university labs into local communities.

At his welcoming note, Dr. Mashhour Abu

Daqqa indicated that the government support to PICTI is for the purpose of supporting technology entrepreneurship and innovation for Palestinians. Dr. Abu Daqqa said that "it's up to the youth and entrepreneurs to build the future of Palestine" trusting the enthusiasm and capabilities of the Palestinian youth.

Mr. Ala' Alaeddin, the Chairman of PICTI, pointed out that this competition comes as part of the strategy PICTI has set to develop entrepreneurship in Palestine. Hence, encouraging youth to take the lead and jumping through the hoops in Palestine. Mr. Ala' Alaeddin added "Our focused mission is to support technology entrepreneurship in the ICT sector whereby the Technology Business Plan Competition project is an educational tool to specifically raise technology entrepreneurship awareness, increase competitiveness amongst university students and community in general, in addition to taking the first steps in commercializing innovative ideas to be running as start-up companies in the near future".

Mr. Laith Kassis, PITA and PICTI CEO thanked Intel for its role in supporting the competition. Mr. Kassis advised that one of the results of the 2009 Technology Business Plan Contest is that 3 of the winning projects are now start-up companies. One of these companies is incubated at PICTI under the name of Nibiru Co. which is specialized in security solutions and remote control systems through internet and mobile technologies and services". He hopes to link the winning projects of the 2010 Contest with seed financing sources to be incubated through different initiatives at PICTI as start-up companies. Mr.



Kassis advised that the participants in the Intel sponsored contest in Palestine will also qualify to enter the regional contest that is organized by the Arab Science and Technology Foundation.

During the event, Eng. Hasan Omar, PICTI Manager gave an overview of PICTI and its success stories and a brief about the start-up companies PICTI is currently incubating. He also featured presentation about the Intel sponsored competition. Mr. Omar pointed that 82 projects were received from which eleven student business plans were awarded cash prizes from An-Najah University, Birzeit University, Polytechnic Palestine, and the Islamic University in Gaza and six business plans were awarded to entrepreneurs from the community.

Mr. Omar highlighted the importance of the Gaza community participation in the contest to bring its innovations forward to the competition despite the difficult situation that they are facing where half of the applicants were from the Gaza. It is worth mentioning also that PICTI has organized an award ceremony in Gaza in parallel to the event in Ramallah in order to announce the winners and award them their cash prizes.



## PICTI holds a series of workshops on Free and Open Source Software (OSS) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip



Palestine ICT Incubator (PICTI) held a series of workshops on "Free and Open Source Software (OSS)" in its offices in Ramallah and Gaza. More than 120 ICT professionals from different fields attended the workshops including programmers and developers in addition to students from different Palestinian universities. These workshops come as a continuation to the various workshops and seminars PICTI regularly organizes targeting ICT professionals to keep them up to date with the latest on free and open source software and raising awareness on this trend in Palestine and its feasibility in business.

Eng. Hasan Omar started the workshops by welcoming the participants, live in Ramallah and via video conference in Gaza, and stressing on the importance of holding such workshops to upgrade the skills of ICT professionals. Eng. Omar also announced more specialized workshops will take place within the coming weeks inviting the participants to take part. He added: "these workshops come as part of the continuous efforts PICTI contributes to raising the awareness of free and open source software in Palestine." PICTI launched during Expotech 2009 last November a Group specialized in Free & Open Source and it is working continuously in enforcing the culture of initiative and voluntarily works within this specialized Group." Eng. Hasan also invited the participants to join this Group and contribute to its activities.

The workshops that took place so far were as follows:

- Drupal – Ramallah – 28 June 2010
- Towards Open Source Software Adoption – Gaza – 13 July 2010
- Drupal – Ramallah – 26 July 2010
- OSS & Joomla – Ramallah – 04 August 2010
- OSS in Meeting Human Capital Needs: Obstacles and Solutions – Gaza – 23 September 2010

A group of OSS, Joomla, and Drupal local and international experts conducted the workshops and delivered presentations on the OSS and its widespread internationally and followed that by detailed application on Open Source Software. The workshops had also Q&A sessions the experts answered questions from the participants on different subjects.

## "Elia e-Commerce & Development" (incubated @ PICTI) launching its first e-Shop (JAFRA)

JAFRA is an incubated project @ PICTI. It's the first e-shop in the Palestinian Virtual Mall "Elia e-Commerce & Development". Jafra is specialized in the sales and marketing of Palestinian handicrafts and heritage products.



JAFRA, under Elia, participated successfully in the Ramallah Bazaar that took place from 28/7-2/8/2010. Jafra displayed different traditional and handicrafts products at the Bazaar

including seashell, olive wood, embroidery, ceramics, and glass produced locally by Palestinian experts and qualified women. The products Jafra exhibited received great satisfaction from Bazaar local and international visitors who expressed their impression with the top quality and uniqueness such Palestinian products displayed.

Jafra participated also in other national and international activities that added to its publicity and marketing efforts in the local and regional markets including Palestine Investment Conference PIC that was held in Bethlehem last June.

Ms. Samah Sultan, Elia's Administrative Manager, thanked PICTI for its support in participating in such important events. She added "PICTI worked endlessly with Jafra and Elia on the preparations for such events. It is an opportunity for us to examine the local market and our participations was a success by all means".

Eng. Hasan Omar, PICTI Manager said that PICTI physically incubates Elia e-mail and its first e-shop Jafra and provides them with many services including outreach to potential clients and such participations comes inline with such endeavors. Eng. Omar added that PICTI also supported Elia/Jafra and facilitated its participation in ArabNet Conference 2010 in Beirut, and recently the Medventures in which the company was shortlisted among 100 companies from the Mediterranean. Recently, PICTI also assisted Elia / Jafra to get the right exposure to internationals from the US, Europe, and Latin America.

Elia also became an official registrar for Palestine National Internet Naming Authority "PNINA" and it got down to work immediately in this regard in the Palestinian market.

In addition to the two founding members, Elia recruited so far another two employees to manage its sales and operations.



## 25 technology projects from Palestine participated in the 6th Arab Technology Business Plan Contest (TBPC) organized by the Arab Science & Technology Foundation in cooperation with Intel Corporation. 15 projects move to the final round

Palestine Information & Communications Technology Incubator (PICTI) said that the total number of projects participating from Palestine in the 6th Arab Technology Business Plan Contest for this year was 25 projects 15 of which managed to move into the final round of this important event organized by the UAE based Arab Science & Technology Foundation (ASTF) in cooperation with Intel Corporation. ASTF regional contest aims at investing in the technology sector by assisting Arab entrepreneur to transform their ideas into successful businesses. It also enables the winners to present their projects to investors and business people interested in financing high growth startups through the Investment Forum which ASTF holds annually. Palestine was present in the 2010 Forum held in Dubai through Eng. Emad Ammouri of Ibtaker for Technological Innovation, a company incubated at PICTI. Eng. Ammouri presented his project of designing and developing technological educational tools and micro controller labs.

Eng. Hasan Omar, PICTI Manager, said that all the teams moving into the 2nd round were invited by the ASTF to participate in the training program that it will hold in Manama, Bahrain this month as a preparation for the final round of evaluation. This is considered an important opportunity for the entrepreneurs to network and exchange their knowledge with other Arab participants in addition to the experts and business development advisors. ASTF generously exempted all teams from the training fees as an incentive for them to focus and excel.

Eng. Hasan added: "the projects which will win in the final round will participate in the international contest which Intel will hold with the University of California



- Berkeley. Due to the importance of this event, preparation work has been undergoing for the last months and the TBPC which was held by PICTI in 2010, with the support of Intel, has contributed greatly to the success Palestine is achieving in the Arab events on both quality and quantity levels of the team participants. PICTI announced the winners of its TBPC in a special ceremony it held at Ankars Suites in Ramallah last July under the patronage of Dr. Mashhour Abu Daqqa, Minister of Telecommunications and IT, who thanked Intel for its continuous support to the Palestinian ICT sector. A total of \$15,500 in cash prizes were distributed to the winners during the award ceremony.

Most of the winning teams moving into the 2nd round has participated in the training activities and workshops held by PICTI in its offices in Ramallah and Gaza and also in Palestinian universities this year on entrepreneurship and business plan development.

## PICTI receives delegation from the US Economic Section and GEP

The Palestine ICT Incubator (PICTI) received at its offices in Al-Bireh delegation from the Economic Section of the US Consulate General in Jerusalem and the Global Entrepreneurship Program (GEP) Tuesday. The delegation was headed by Ms. Lorraine Hariton, Special Representative for Commercial and Business Affairs at the US State Department.

Mr. Ala' Ala' Alden, Chairman of PICTI, welcomed the delegation while Laith Kassis, CEO of PICTI, gave an overview of PICTI, its mission, and its accomplishments since its inception seven years ago. Mr. Kassis also briefed the delegation on PICTI's services and programs towards promoting technology entrepreneurship and innovation in Palestine and how it is currently incubating many projects offering them different suite of services with the goal of becoming startup companies on their own to contribute directly to the Palestinian economy.

Ms. Hariton introduced the GEP as the vehicle to coordinate U.S. government efforts to promote entrepreneurship around the world and how it can become a useful tool in advancing entrepreneurship in Palestine.

On the other hand, Eng. Hasan Omar, PICTI Manager gave the delegation a tour in the Incubator where the delegation met and interacted with the incubated start-ups and entrepreneurs and exchanged useful ideas with them.

The delegation and PICTI then discussed areas of mutual interest and cooperation

At the end of the meeting, Mr. Ala' Alden thanked the delegation for the opportunity and hoped that such meetings will continue the advancement of entrepreneurship eco-system in Palestine.





## PITA Overview

The Palestinian Information Technology Association (PITA) was founded in early 1999 in Ramallah, Palestine as a membership-based organization for domestically-registered companies in the ICT sector. The association represents 75 companies from various sub-sectors including hardware distributors, software development firms, office automation vendors, Internet service providers, telecommunications, ICT consulting, ICT training and related businesses.

### Our Purpose

To represent the collective interests of the private IT sector in Palestine

### Our Vision

To lead the positioning of the ICT sector as the economic pillar of Palestine

### Mission Statement

To promote and defend the private ICT sector by advocating business-enabling policies, mechanisms and environment through public/private partnership.

Promoting the Palestinian ICT sector locally and internationally by facilitating access to markets that benefit PITA members.

Engaging the technical and non-technical ICT human resources and related institutions in-order to expand the pool of qualified ICT sector personnel and uphold its professional standards

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## PICTI Overview

**Mission Statement:** PICTI's mission is to design, develop and implement initiatives that will lead to the creation of innovative entrepreneurial enterprises focused on ICT. Key competitive advantages of PICTI include its governance structure that provides access to economic clusters, its dedicated staff with incubation know-how, its clients, and an initiative underway to structure a seed fund for the benefit of pre-revenue start-up companies incubated at PICTI. PICTI aims to develop the Palestinian Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector as a means of generating new jobs, attracting foreign investment and improving the economic situation in the Palestinian territories.

**Strategic Objective:** Political uncertainty and difficult economic conditions continue to severely impact the ability of Palestine's ICT sector to efficiently, effectively, or competitively gain access to markets for its goods and services. The specific actions required to overcome these impediments will be a key focus of PICTI in the design, development, and implementation of the ICT sector support infrastructure to be established. PICTI will craft promotions and marketing strategies that will separately and uniquely focus on the development of, and access to, business opportunities in regional and international markets for Palestinian ICT firms. But most importantly, PICTI will identify and support the technical, intellectual and managerial talent of young entrepreneurs who can become the backbone of a dynamic export market for ICT products and services in Palestine.

**Global Market Focus:** PICTI utilizes a diverse network of industry professionals that will help identify and assess future ICT development trends where high-value-added regional and/or international niche markets will emerge. Within these niche technology applications, it will be necessary to identify those that will be applicable to a wide cross section of industry sectors and that will maintain strong, sustainable growth acceleration into the future. The Incubator will work closely with its client firms to channel and focus their entrepreneurial zeal and technical talent into developing those expertise required for successful entrée into these valuable niche markets.

**PICTI Partners:** A partnership agreement between the founding partners, PITA, Palestine Banking Corporation (PBC), and PalTrade, resulted in the establishment of PICTI. USAID funded PICTI operations for three years, with this support expiring on September 29, 2006. Paltel Group replaced the PBC as of November 2006.

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