

**In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the
Most Compassionate**

**Excellencies,
Dear Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good morning,

It gives me great pleasure to cordially welcome you all to this important gathering, and on behalf of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, I would like to extend my thanks to the sponsoring bodies, notably the European Union for their continuous efforts in enhancing our educational programs, particularly the electronic infrastructure of the Mediterranean countries.

Here in Jordan, His Majesty King Abdullah II gives this issue due consideration as is evident in his messages to successive governments. His Majesty's instructions have been materialized in the Ministry of Higher Education in both content and form. The Ministry has, for example, worked out successfully an integrated university network in both public and private universities.

The Ministry aspires to implement an educational information management system (EMIS) whereby its portal would interconnect all the Ministry's

institutions into one single database, not to mention the cultural sections at Jordanian embassies. Moreover, e-learning has recently flourished, which improved considerably the quality of teaching. So far, the Higher Accreditation Council has approved the e-learning scheme.

The Ministry has furnished a healthy research atmosphere through grants, such as the Scientific Research Support Fund. It has already supported 24 research projects in various fields, and has acknowledged 67 more as prospective ones. It is often the case that projects which contribute to the development of national economy take precedence over all other projects. Outstanding researchers, budget permitting, are normally rewarded. 5% of each university's annual budget is assigned to cover all sorts of research activities.

The Ministry is also dedicated to opening channels with local communities and hence its support to the 2008 summer project named "One Faculty per a Factory"; a sum of JD 98000 has been already scheduled. The main objective of this project is to extend the academics' expertise to national industry.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Our national strategy has steadily focused on achieving high educational standards to meet our

society present and future needs. It has been equally working on a competitive basis both nationally and internationally in terms of achieving excellence in various domains, such as expanding higher education, 28 universities as of now, developing postgraduate studies, updating programs, leadership training and quality assurance.

It is worth mentioning that the number of students enrolled in both public and private universities rose to 226000, both under- and postgraduates, for 2007-2008 academic year, and that the government support for public universities during 2008 has mounted to JD 70 million.

Jordan was a pioneer as regard research networks in the region. The Ministry of Information and Communications has jointly worked with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research on running a national program called National Broadband Network (NBN). The NBN program is meant to connect around 3500 schools, 10 public universities, 20 community colleges and over 100 community public access sites. The NBN is built using dark fiber to connect the mentioned sites, among which the Jordanian universities network (JUNet) was established in 2003 as the first phase of this program.

The JUNet has played a major role in promoting the use of technology in all academic activities. One such activity was the Integrated Library Management Services which operated one center of excellence that provided access to all library resources in the hope of ultimately accomplishing the digital library.

JUNet is also very active at the regional level. It establishes collaborative links with its counterparts EUMEDONNECT and EUMEDGRID in the region. It thus has played a significant role in regional cooperation. At present, we are working with private universities and national research centers, as well as research institutions to join all efforts. The Ministry of Information and Communication initiated the Pan Arab Research Network in 2005 while taking a major role in building the pan Arab Network Access Points NAP to promote internet services in the Arab countries.

Our ministry, together with JUNet, is taking the lead in activities related to establishing a regional research network in the Mediterranean.

As such and to conclude my speech, I would like to stress Jordan's position in its commitment to regional cooperation in order to promote joint

research projects and partnerships for mutual benefits of all people of the region.

In the end I wish you all the best and I am quite confident that delegates to this meeting would come up with fruitful discussions and workable recommendations.

Prof. Omar Shdeifat
Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research

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