

Dr. Hessa's remarks
INTOSAI Working Group on IT Audit
April 20, 2009

Good Morning

Your Excellency **Mr. Salah bin Ghanim Al Ali**, Chairman of the State Audit Bureau, **Honorable Ministers**, **Your Excellencies** and distinguished guests
We welcome our distinguished guests to Doha and wish them a pleasant stay.

I would like to thank the State Audit Bureau for inviting me to address INTOSAI working group on IT Audit. And a special thank you goes to Mr. Al Ali for his firm belief on the instrumental role of IT in ensuring good governance.

In this economic downturn and the melting of many international financial institutions, it becomes imperative that we put in place robust systems to increase transparency, promote good governance, guarantee accountability, fight corruption and strengthen public confidence in government institutions and their work.

ictQATAR is the government agency responsible for enabling the community at large to use ICT to improve quality of life and contribute to the social and economic development in Qatar. We aspire to transform Qatar into a knowledge society through our programs in telecom regulation, e-government, e-education, e-health, e-inclusion, ICT market development, and ICT promotion.

In Qatar we have certainly made progress. We have steadily ascended in the world rankings in terms of network readiness. In the most recent Global Information Technology Report Qatar ranked as the 29th most networked nation in the world.

We have achieved this by developing a strategic master plan that guides us as we aggressively move forward. We have opened our telecoms market to competition in a fair and transparent way. We are integrating ICT into our schools, allowing parents, teachers and students to be better connected. And we have put our government online, making it more responsive to its citizens. We are also finding ways to streamline the healthcare system. All while building a culture of cyber security.

We also found that in Qatar to achieve our national ICT goals, it is critical for our plans and programs to have strong policy guidance. IT audit plays a very important role in the implementation of policy guidance.

At the highest level, we are developing the national ICT policy framework that provides overall guidance to the planning and execution process. The framework identifies the key social and economic sectors and activities that are targeted by ICT strategy, the desired outcomes enabled by ICT, accountabilities among stakeholders for achieving the outcomes, and acceptable practices and procedures in the execution of plans.

At the level of horizontal domains or practices that cut across all government, business and social organizations, we have developed ICT policies which provide legislative and regulatory controls. These policies are critical to ensure that the country's ICT development is coordinated and that social and economic progress will not be hampered by legacy practices or weak links among government, industry and society.

We have developed the electronic commerce and transactions law, which is now in the final stages of legislation. We have also developed a comprehensive National Information Assurance Framework, which covers policies for information classification, information protection, cybercrime, critical information infrastructure protection and a wide range of ICT practices including access control, internet security, and business continuity. There will be a presentation from ictQATAR at this workgroup meeting

where we will share more details of the National Information Assurance Framework.

At the level of vertical domains or sectors, such as the education sector or health sector, ICT policies provide guidance to stakeholders on the expected standards by which they will collectively contribute to the success of the ICT strategy in their domains.

Here are some examples. In the telecom sector, ICT policy includes the telecom law which guides the roadmap to liberalization, licensing framework for telecom services, spectrum regulation, and quality of service obligations. In the government sector, ICT policy includes standards for e-government service availability, usability, transparency and reliability.

The implementation of policy guidance in national ICT development is a journey in itself. The development of policy is only the beginning of the journey – the efforts required to consult, inform, and advise stakeholders on ICT policy cannot be underestimated.

Most importantly, IT audit is needed to close the loop in policy guidance. There is a case for a strong partnership between ICT strategists like ictQATAR and IT audit professionals such as yourselves.

I hope this workgroup meeting will generate opportunities for collaboration and I wish you fruitful discussions.

Thank you.