FTTH Broadband Technology for Sustainable
Social & Economic Development

Dr Suleiman Al-Hedaithy, Chairman – FTTH Council MENA
High Level Segment Speech

Good morning ladies and gentlemen….. It is certainly a pleasure for me to speak in this segment on behalf of the FTTH Council Middle East & North Africa. I would like to thank ITU for inviting us to the WTCD-14 conference.

ITC technological advances and the development of ultrafast Broadband networks have transformed our society. Smart devices, digital media, and e-services have changed the way we live, the way we do things, and the way we interact with each other. Broadband networks are evolving rapidly, with extended bandwidth capacities and higher access speeds to meet the ever growing demand for broadband services.

For the past seven years, bandwidth has witnessed continuous growth (20% CAGR) where early broadband speed was only 15 Mbps and now it has reached 50 Mbps and 100 Mbps at peak. However, the demand for more bandwidth does not seem to settle and is likely to continue in order to accommodate rich-content services such as video streaming, online gaming, and tele-working.

Why is this important? Because, as we know, higher broadband penetration drives economic growth and helps nations achieve social goals, such as improved education and health care outcomes.

If we were to examine the different broadband technologies available today, only Fiber-to-Home can meet the demand for broadband services.

Around the World, telecom providers are transforming their networks to deliver next-generation services. In their future networks, fiber optic wires, not copper, will run all the way to consumers' homes and businesses.

Consumers who subscribe to FTTH consistently rate it as the fastest and most reliable broadband technology. They also appreciate that fiber networks can deliver many unique broadband services for medicine, education, home-based businesses, home automation and entertainment.

Over the last few years, businesses have made a massive shift to "Cloud Services". For economic efficiency, their critical systems now operate at huge, remote data centers rather than on-site computers. The speed, reliability, and secure fiber connections make cloud services viable.

Already, fiber connections are available to more than 200 million homes globally- a tenth of all the households in the World. And Worldwide, an estimated 107 million households subscribe to fiber-based services including voice, video, data, and more.

In the MENA region, more than 1.5 million households are using FTTH services, with the highest take up rate of 43% in 2013. UAE was ranked no. 1 in FTTH penetration rate globally, for the past two consecutive years.

The numbers continue to grow rapidly…..

China alone expects to have fiber broadband to nearly 200 million households by 2015 and to 300 million by 2020. Other nations are also embarking on aggressive FTTH rollouts.

FTTH creates business opportunities & competitiveness. Operators can expect increased ARPU, lower churn rate, and OPEX savings.

Businesses will find new ways of working, reduced travel & office rental costs, better time management, more innovation, and better competitiveness.

Regions/Municipalities can retain and attract more businesses & investments, offer cost-efficient services to the community, and increase local competitiveness.

Fibre to the **Home**
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FTTH is a critical driver for the knowledge economy. Deployment of FTTH creates jobs within the community. New services create GDP growth, not only from ICT industry, but also from other industries like entertainment, education, medicine, etc.).

General willingness to adopt new technologies will create demand for faster connectivity leading to great investment opportunities and significant socio-economic benefits. Digitization outcomes have a high impact on economic development e.g. smart cities, digital presences, smart systems and digital goods.

Although FTTH mass infrastructure rollouts require substantial monetary resources, the long-term benefits are reasonably justified.

Wireless and copper-based broadband technologies play an important role in providing high speed connectivity. Newer wireless technologies such as LTE require fiber connections at cell level and often offloads internet traffic to fixed broadband networks. Thus, Fiber is being pushed as close as possible to end-customers.

On the other hand, copper-based broadband technologies such as G.dmt and G.Fast (under ITU approval) require fiber connections within 250 meters from the end-customer. As such, GPON, G.Fast, G.dmt are partners for the FTTH/B architecture where these technologies leverage each other to provide ultrafast connectivity.

Several drivers will impulse MENA's FTTH/FTTB market:

Mobile backhaul
- Fiber will be necessary to deal with the development of new mobile networks
- Leapfrog from 2G to LTE is possible, such as it could happen in other regions

New housing programs
- The growth of the Real Estate market is one of the highest, notably in GCC countries
- FTTH networks are more and more often considered as a commodity

National plans
- MENA governments are becoming more and more aware of the benefits of NGN
- Their involvement is a way to compensate and stimulate the current lack of large scale private initiatives

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Low quality of existing networks
• The copper networks are generally not efficient enough to support the provision of value-added services such as TV and video

Cloud services
• SMEs and SOHOs are heavy users of new and innovative services among which cloud storage solutions
• The trust in networks is a key parameter and FTTH/B infrastructure is a good answer

Higher competition
• Some players are beginning to adopt a regional strategy in terms of Broadband and superfast Broadband
• As an example, several regional operators are present in different MENA countries

Smart Cities
The future is definitely FTTH which will bring people to their connected and smart homes. Homes with smart appliances, homes with next-generation entertainment, homes with smart meter and energy, homes with monitoring and security systems.

In conclusion: A Sustainable Future and better quality of life are enabled by FTTH. FTTH enables users to benefit from applications, content and services based on ultra-high speed broadband. The highest impact, however, will be in rural areas where:

➢ Developing feasibility for connecting rural areas is always a challenge.
➢ Public Private Partnership must be in place where several initiatives can be developed to connect the rural areas.
➢ Possible initiatives by Utilities and Housing Developers can play a significant role in providing FTTH to urban and rural area

Thank you

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