Aboul Gheit's address at the opening of Seamless Middle East 2025

20 May 2025

Your Highness Lieutenant General Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan,

Deputy Prime Minister,

Minister of Interior of the United Arab Emirates,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a distinct honour to join you today at the inauguration of the Seamless Middle East 2025 Conference and Exhibition. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation to the United Arab Emirates for the outstanding hospitality and organisation of this event and its associated activities, and also for the choice of this year’s theme, “The Future of Digital Commerce,” which points to the organisers’ awareness of the critical and dynamic transformations shaping the global economy. This theme reflects a clear commitment to engaging with cutting-edge developments in the fields of financial technology and e-commerce, which are rapidly redefining economic landscapes worldwide.

I also extend gratitude and appreciation to His Highness Lieutenant General Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, for his enduring patronage of this vital conference. His steadfast support underscores a strategic vision that positions this forum as a nexus for stakeholders in the digital sphere, thereby advancing the region’s collective aspirations towards sustainable digital development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are living in an era marked by unprecedented acceleration in what is now termed the digital economy—a paradigm that encapsulates the seamless interplay between information and communication technologies and the national, sectoral, and global economic spheres. This evolving landscape fosters transparency, immediacy, and efficiency across economic, commercial, and financial decision-making processes.

The digital economy is predicated upon the foundations of the knowledge economy, and it brings with it profound advantages—chief among them the transformation of traditional economic practices into real-time, data-driven models. It is reshaping the contours of finance, commerce, business operations, and investment, while simultaneously enhancing the integration of national economies into the global marketplace and broadening access to previously inaccessible sectors.

We are all witnessing the intensifying competition and economic rivalries among global powers, particularly within the digital domain—where technology giants now top the world in market capitalisation. This digital sector, powered fundamentally by data and intellectual capital, has become the "new oil" of our time. Indeed, the digital divide now serves as a crucial metric by which the comprehensive economic advancement of nations is measured.

Despite the multitude of complex challenges facing the Arab region across various levels—

whether in Palestine, where the steadfast Palestinian people continue to endure the tragedy of historical and ongoing injustice amidst a deafening global silence,

or in several countries grappling with security, political, and humanitarian crises,

alongside the broader economic pressures afflicting the region as a whole—

I affirm that, in spite of these formidable challenges, the Arab world has witnessed a remarkable qualitative leap in recent years.

Several Arab nations have advanced significantly on the path of digital transformation, occupying leading global positions and demonstrating a strong will to keep pace with the sweeping technological and economic transformations reshaping our world. This progress highlights the immense, and at times underutilised, potential of the region—chief among which is its large, educated, and dynamic youth population.

We are proud to note that three Arab countries—Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain—were ranked among the top 20 globally in the 2024 E-Government Development Index.

Moreover, five Arab countries earned positions among the top 20 in the International Telecommunication Union’s ICT Development Index.

In addition, eight Arab nations—namely the UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, the Sultanate of Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia—achieved top global rankings in the 2024 Cybersecurity Index.

The United Arab Emirates, in particular, presents a compelling model to emulate.

Through visionary leadership and pioneering initiatives, the UAE has firmly established itself as a global hub in the digital economy and technological innovation.

Among its notable achievements is the establishment of the largest artificial intelligence complex outside the United States, along with substantial investments in digital infrastructure and the strategic smart chip industry.

These bold initiatives reflect an ambitious national vision that embraces international collaboration and institutional partnerships with leading global tech entities. Crucially, the UAE prioritises the ethical and responsible use of artificial intelligence, ensuring its alignment with sustainable development goals and its reinforcement of human values, thereby fostering public trust in these transformative technologies.

Yet, while this progress is laudable, significant challenges remain.

The digital infrastructure across the Arab world remains uneven, and disparities persist in digital literacy and citizens' awareness of how to utilise advanced technologies effectively. Bridging this gap is essential for inclusive digital development.

In this context, I would like to express my profound gratitude to His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, for his unwavering support of the Arab Vision for the Digital Economy, as endorsed by Arab leaders.

This support has been instrumental in the launch of several groundbreaking initiatives, including the Arab Digital Agenda, the Arab Cybersecurity Strategy, and the Artificial Intelligence Strategy—all inspired by the UAE’s leading experience and backed by strategic partnerships with nations such as France, Italy, Germany, and the United States, alongside fruitful cooperation with major international corporations specialising in AI and advanced technologies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I wish to commend the tireless efforts of the Arab Federation for Digital Economy and its pivotal role in advancing the region’s digital ambitions. The Federation’s new strategy for 2025–2030, grounded in the Arab vision and aligned with global trends, is a forward-looking framework built on international best practices and innovative regional initiatives.

I also greatly value the Federation’s collaborative initiatives with the People’s Republic of China, which stand as a pioneering model of international economic cooperation. We are hopeful that these joint ventures will translate into concrete projects, strategic investments, and enhanced sustainable development across the Arab world.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to all those who contributed to the meticulous organisation of this important exhibition. I wish you continued success and prosperity as we work together to advance Arab joint action in one of the most vital sectors of our era, and as we strive to realise a transformational shift that will benefit the entire Arab nation.

May the peace, mercy, and blessings of God be upon you.