Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Morning!

It is my honor and pleasure to welcome you to the Sultanate of Oman; I hope you will make time from your busy schedule to explore the beautiful city of Muscat and other places of interest around.

On behalf of HE Dr. Hamed Al Rawahy I would like to welcome all the participants to this distinguished gathering, I hope you will all benefit from the discussion in the coming days. HE was not able join us today due to unexpected urgent commitment.

I will therefore, present to you what he was intending to deliver to you as opening remarks.

Distinguished guest, ladies and gentlemen - I am pleased to welcome the participants from Asia Pacific region to participate in the APTLD Members Meeting to discuss and deliberate the Top Level Domain and registry issues specifically, ICT and Internet governance in general. Oman assures investors and other external stakeholders of a level playing field with a transparent and neutral regulatory framework in the growing ICT sector. Oman as part of its vision has identified ICT as a key enabler to achieve its goal of transforming in to a knowledge society. In doing so, Oman engages with like-minded and ICT growth oriented organizations and associations to further the cause of ICT in Oman.

We all recognize that a ‘connected world’ would eventually enhance the competitiveness of trade and industry besides opening up new avenues for social ‘togetherness’. The telecom policy in Oman is aligned with the overall government policy to promote the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) being the driver for creating and sustaining employment opportunities in the country and the diversification of the economy to knowledge based service sectors like the telecom and information technology. TRA continues to focus on three key areas of regulation of the sector namely price, quality and coverage (including choice).

Oman’s mobile penetration is in excess of 140% and there are nearly 5.7 million mobile subscribers in the country growing steadily. Mobile broadband subscriber penetration stands at 62.5% indicating a profound adoption of mobile services in the country for both the businesses and the individuals. The broadband market for fixed and mobile broadband have witnessed substantial growth in the past two years in terms of the number of subscribers; especially with the introduction of 4G/LTE speeds
in the mobile broadband market. The recently announced national broadband strategy of the government of Oman paves the way to further boost the fibre investment in the country (primarily access) along with much needed backhaul networks thus providing opportunities for investment and competition in the services and applications sector of the telecom market.

Technological developments including convergence of telecom and information services and disappearance of delivery platforms pose considerable challenges to the regulatory regime. TRA is also seized of the opportunities available in the ICT sector on account of cloud computing and M2M communications and is reviewing the current regulations to direct the growth of the sector within the provisions of the Law. Educating the consumers and conducting awareness programs is a continuing initiative of the TRA so that the consumers are informed of the potential benefits and risks associated with each of the emerging services in the market place.

Generally the country is climbing its place in indices measuring connectivity, in terms of ICT provision of services and eGovernance. The recently published GITR report (Global Information Technology Report 2014) ranks Oman at number 40 in the world in technological readiness. One of the key findings of the GITR report is that countries cannot only rely on ICT infrastructure development to become competitive. Rather, the benefits of ICT can only be fully derived when a country implements a holistic strategy aimed at creating conditions for skills, innovation and entrepreneurship to flourish alongside modern infrastructure. TRA views domain name management and similar resources as part of the key enabling infrastructure in the furtherance of ICT skills in the country and the region. As a result, TRA is closely monitoring the development as such, in particular the recent announcement of the NTIA and the Netmundial outcome.

The key is to enhance the competitive advantage of Oman’s businesses and the TRA in cooperation with the ITA (Information Technology Authority) and the government is formulating policies and programs to realize the national objectives in respect of eOman. As a national initiative the government is resolved to make Oman a knowledge society by 2020 and the country is moving towards that goal in an effective manner. Citizens, businesses and government establishments located anywhere would have access to high speed internet and other basic telecom services in the next five years. This is being planned as part of national broadband strategy that is being planned and executed by the government.

Welcome once again and enjoy the traditional hospitality of Oman and wish a successful outcome of the proceedings.