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**Membership Charter**

**Arab-African e-Certification Authorities Network**

**AAECA-Net**

Arab Information and Communication Technologies Organization
 Last update: October 2019

**Arab-African e-Certification Authorities Network**

**AAECA-Network**

**Introduction:**

Nowadays, the world is witnessing a massive migration towards the Digital Economy where hyper-connectivity resulted by the huge technological trends at the international level as: Internet of Things (IOT), BlockChain, Virtual Reality, Artificial Intelligence, digital fiat currency, …., is becoming a fact.

Day-to-day, the Digital Economy catch the attention of governments around the world to become one of the main topics within their development strategies. However, in order to ensure a smooth and successful transition to this new model, a big focus has to be done on Digital Trust mechanisms and tools.

Thus, the tremendous technological development must go in pair with the implementation of strong security tools on the technical level and the setting up of strong and flexible regulatory frameworks on the legal level being able to provide the required safety for the new forms of transactions on local, regional and international levels.

**The Public Key Infrastructure (PKI)**, is known as one of the strongest authentication security mechanisms. Advances in the field are happening quickly to meet the need of a secure and reliable online transaction between entities worldwide. PKI, is becoming a must-have technology since it provides a wide range of applications dealing with the identity authentication, confidentiality, access control, and security.

In this respect, **the Arab ICT Organization (AICTO)** has proposed the setting up of the **"Arab-African e-Certification Authorities Network****"([[1]](#footnote-1) )** and it was adopted by its Council and General Assembly.

AICTO invites all e-certification authorities and all concerned parties in the field of Digital Trust from Arab and African countries to join the network. Below, the membership charter of the **“Arab-African e-Certification Authorities Network”** AAECA-Net.

**Membership Charter**

**Arab-African e-Certification Authorities Network**

**AAECA-Net**

**General Framework :**

1. **The conviction that:**
* the strengthening of digital trust services is a basic component of e-transactions, particularly e-commerce. It must be a priority in the digital world and a strategic component within the global economy
* The development of e-transactions & e-commerce between Arab countries from one hand and between them and African countries from other hand requires the setting up of a suitable interregional Digital Trust environment
1. The need of the setting up of a regional group/ or a structure for the reinforcement of interregional specialized capacities and the building up of a regional pressure force in the field of standardization

**Specific Framework:**

**Article 1: Name**

The name of this organization is **“Arab-African e-Certification Authorities Network”** AAECA-Net

**Article 2: Objectives**

The main objectives of the Network are:

1. Provide an appropriate platform to discuss and resolve issues related to Digital Trust within the Arab and African regions, either on the technical and legal levels and also regarding the standardization matters.
2. Provide the necessary support for the implementation of National e-certification authorities in the Arab and African countries and to promote their services
3. Coordinate efforts to develop common regulatory frameworks and policies in the field of electronic certification, e-signature and Digital Trust services
4. Promote collaboration between Arab and African e-certification authorities to ensure interoperability and mutual recognition
5. Establish adequate cooperation with international organizations and consortia operating in the field of Public Key Infrastructure "PKI" and Digital Trust services (Technical, legal and regulatory)
6. Encourage investors to be involved within this promising field
7. Harmonize positions in the field of standardization and propose norms/standards in PKI field and Digital Trust services
8. Create a solid interregional framework for "Digital Trust" while encouraging e-services and cross-border e-transactions.

**Article 3: Implementation**

1. **Setting up:** Gathering e-certification authorities in both Arab and African regions and all concerned stakeholders worldwide within a **“Common Mutistakeholder network”** to share experiences and transfer expertise in the field of Digital Trust between each other ([[2]](#footnote-2) )
2. **Technical aspect:** Working on the interoperability and the mutual recognition between the Arab and African e-certification authorities, as a first step, and between the countries of the two regions with the rest of the word in a further stage
3. **Standardization:** Working in coordination with all stakeholders to harmonize their positions in the field of standardization and propose norms/standards in PKI field and Digital Trust services
4. **Legal aspect:** Coordinating legal frameworks and policies related to e-certification, e-signature and Digital Trust services between Arab and African countries based on successful experiences on the global level
5. **Interregional strategy:** Developing **“Arab-African strategy”** to encourage Arab and African countries to create and enhance their local e-certification authorities and to set up the mutual recognition mechanisms, thus developing a secure platform for cross-border e-transactions and e-commerce between them and with the rest of the world

**Article 4 : Membership** ([[3]](#footnote-3) )

This network is open for all Arab and African countries represented by their e-certification authorities and other respective agencies in charge of this sector. All relevant stakeholders from the specialized private sector in the Arab and African regions and also in the world are expected to be among AAECANET members.

**Article 5: Fundamental Principles**

The members of the network shall be aware about the fundamental principles being set to meet the objectives mentioned in the Article 2.

1. The priority that AICTO is seeking to achieve through this network is the good coordination with all stakeholders to find solutions to the common issues regarding the creation/setting up of standards for the mutual recognition and interoperability in the field of PKI, e-certification solutions and Digital Trust services within the two regions (Arab region and African region)
2. This network will respect the principles of difference and disparities between member states and between the Arab and African regions both on technical and legal levels in the field of e-certification, PKI and Digital Trust services. It won’t spare any effort, with the support of all its members, to provide common solutions and ways towards the interoperability and the mutual recognition between their countries
3. This network is a non-profit structure, it is based on the principle of self-reliance and self-funding through the participation of its members. All its activities will be achieved by its members and potential sponsors from the private companies working in the field ([[4]](#footnote-4) )
4. All members are expected to participate actively to the **AAECA-Net** activities to achieve the creation objectives, each one from its position and its owned potentials.

**Article 6: Activities**

1. **Awareness activities & Capacity Building**
* Technical conferences to share knowledge and opinions about achievements and challenges in the field of e-transactions and e-commerce security in Arab and African countries. Thereby, defining technical and legal issues in the field of PKI and e-certification, and providing ways and solutions to overcome these challenges.
* Practical workshops and training sessions.
* International exhibitions specialized in the field.
1. **Studies and reports**

Assessment and evaluation of the status of e-transactions security and Digital Trust services in the Arab and African countries

1. **Technical assistance**
* Priority in the technical assistance activities is for Arab & African LDCs
* All other countries requesting this
1. **International cooperation**
* MoUs with other PKI forums and consortia in the field of Digital Trust and e-certification
* Joining the international efforts towards bridging the standardization Gap, especially in the PKI & Digital trust fields

**Article 7: Members categories** ([[5]](#footnote-5) )

**Category 1 : PRINCIPAL MEMBERS**

* Arab and African countries represented by their authorities for e-certification or other respective agencies besides Government institutions

**Category 2 : OBSERVERS**

* **International specialized entities/Bodies:**

Regional & International forums, alliances and consortia

* **Private sector:**

Private sector working in the field of e-certification and Digital Trust services

* **Academia and Individuals:**

Academics in the digital certification & digital trust fields and individual members

**Article 8: Organization**

The transparency and the cooperation are the main characteristics of the work within the **AAECA-Net**. It's an open space for all members and it will be organized as follows:

1. **Chairperson**The AAECA-Net shall have a Chairperson from its members for a period of at least one year (renewable)
2. **Steering Committee**Steering Committee will be composed of representatives of AAECA-Net members from the principal members
3. **Working Groups**

A dedicated **3 Working Groups** have been set up. These WGs will be composed of all wishing members aiming at participating as volunteers.

The main role of these working groups is the promotion of Digital Trust services amongst Arab and African regions countries through the organization of many related/dedicated activities. Thus, achieving the goal of **” Boosting Digital Trust within the Arab and African regions”** in order to develop the interregional and cross-border e-transactions besides the interoperability and mutual recognition.

**AAECANET Working Groups**

* **Working Group 1 : AAECA-Net WG1: Strategic Planning**

The main task of this team is to prepare working methods within the scope of the AAECA-Net  ; Prepare and update the Membership charter ( Member’s categories, Conditions, advantages, rights and obligations…., besides, this working group will be in charge of following the other working groups : WGs members, meetings, preparation for meetings and events, …. Among other tasks

AICTO is the supervisor of this working group, the membership is open to all members

* **Working Group 2 : AAECA-Net WG2: Digital Trust-T&S** [Technical Aspects and Standardization]

**This working group has the following duties**, among others:

* Study the economic benefits and impacts of introducing PKI and Digital Trust services in the two regions
* Investigate the ecosystem in the two regions
* Perform a gap analysis between the existing services and what is required
* Undertake an assessment of the benefits and lessons learned of the implementations of existing PKI and trust services both on regional and international levels
* Harmonize positions in the field of standardization and work on proposing standards in PKI field and Digital Trust services
* Lead Capacity building program development & Technical assistance
* **Working Group 3 : AAECA-Net WG3 : Digital Trust –L** [Legal frameworks Harmonization]

**This group will deal with regulatory issues related to public keys and Digital Trust services management**

* The Main objective of this group is to develop a regulatory framework of reference
* Assessment of the existing legal frameworks in both regions (weakness)
* Taking into account real needs and specific characteristics of both regions a first tentative of a harmonized legal framework should be developed by this working group. (General guidelines)
1. **Secretariat**

The AAECA-Net secretariat will be the responsibility of AICTO. It is in charge of the coordination between all members and all stakeholders and the management of the Network.

1. ) This charter is the first step/component of the achievement of the project.

 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. () This step is the principal component for this project; it will be achieved by the joining of countries representing by the e-certification authorities and other members from private sector and other relevant parties

 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. () Members have the freedom to join the AAECA-Net and to participate to the achievement of all its activities without any legal commitment. More details are available in the annex Membership

 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. () More details about membership and participation fees are in the Membership Forms.

 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. () More details about membership and participation fees are in annex

 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)