The digital future of Jordan in the 5G era

By HE Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh,
chairman and founder,
Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization

In the digital era, technology moves at a rapid pace. Sometimes it feel like every day there is a new technology ready to revolutionize our future. However, with many technological upgrades happening all the time, it is easy to lose track of the amazing ways the world is progressing and how these new technologies like 5G and Artificial Intellegency (AI) is benifiting our lives and future.

Jordan government's decision to launch 5G is a turning point in the country's digital transformation vision for economic modernization and is key to unleashing the potential to build a digital-led future. The key functional drivers of 5G will unlock a broad range of opportunities, including the optimization of service delivery, decision-making, and end-user experience. 5G will result in $13.2 trillion in global economic value by 2035, generating 22.3 million jobs in the 5G global value chain alone.

The unprecedented advances in 5G networks, deployment, ecology and experiences are at the heart of this progress. Whether for individuals, communities, or businesses, 5G generates remarkable value across various domains.

Therefore, as Jordan prepares to launch this next-generation technology, the country can pick essential lessons from its neighbors. Gulf countries were among the earliest globally in 5G implementation and commercialization. These countries have thus established a template for 5G performance in terms of fast internet speed, use cases, and applications beyond core telecom services. Today, examples of 5G business value can be seen in an increasing number of use cases.

This diversity in applications is because, unlike previous generations of mobile connectivity that were primarily geared towards communication, 5G lays the digital foundation for new infrastructure to upgrade connectivity, AI, cloud, computing, and industrial applications and inject new vitality into economic development. It enables smart personal and home connectivity in full scenarios, empowers AI to benefit various industries, boosts on-demand cloud storage and computing, drives cloud-edge-device collaborative computing, and accelerates fully connected intelligent business digitalization.

Jordan is well-positioned to leverage the benefits of 5G. The country has a rich ICT talent pool driven by a progressive education system that long prioritized STEM. Data shows that although Jordan represents only 3 percent of the Arab Region population, the Kingdom constitutes high percentage of the region's tech entrepreneurs. The country is also home to a thriving ICT ecosystem. In line with Jordan's Vision 2025 and REACH2025, digital transformation is taking place across the country at an accelerated pace, with the

ICT sector contributing 12 percent to the country's GDP.There are more than 900 active companies in the ICT sector that directly employ about 26,000 employees. The Kingdom now ranks 49th on the Global Entrepreneurship Index (GEI) and has more than 25 business incubators, accelerators, and creative centers.

While the above strengths point to a bright future for Jordan's 5G ecosystem, a few issues should be addressed to reap maximum gains from the technology as the carriers cannot do it alone. First,the importance of the government's support cannot be ignored. Jordan's forward-thinking government has already provided a rich stimulus package to operators to help boost 5G implementation. Second, there is a need to forge close collaboration to advance 5G through carriers. They must work with regulators, global vendors, verticals leaders and other ecosystem partners within industry standards and proven business models.

Third, the technology that will take us forward needs to be built on sound, ethical and smart principals. The country should ensure a fair business environment - an open and competitive operating environment that enables global ICT vendors to contribute to the government's efforts toward digital prosperity effectively. Therefore, we must offer all ICT vendors an ideal business environment that is fair and resilient to empower their capabilities and boost their input in our country's future. In particular, we need to empower those vendors with existing success stories and proven tracked records in empowering the digital journey in our country, as is the case with the global technology giant Huawei, which maintains long-term strategic relationships with telecom operators and many other Jordanian key stakeholders.

Such an enabling environment inspires these technology companies to share their global knowledge and expertise and use their capabilities to deliver the required value for Jordan's digitalization journey and help build a knowledge-based sustainable digital economy. This is the basis for building the right ecosystem for a sustainable digital economy.

Cross-sector collaboration over 5G is already a reality in many parts of the world, including the neighboring GCC countries. Jordan needs to pick up pace as the Jordanian society is set for unprecedented change. The launch of 5G and accelerating its commercial success will benefit every citizen and enterprise. The technology will help unleash the country's renowned creative spirit while ensuring the country's deep ICT talent is utilized to the maximum.

The flip side is the serious potential for delays in benefits that citizens and businesses alike stand to lose in case of any delay in the government plan to launch 5G. Therefore, through open collaboration and partnerships between public and private sectors, we can realise Jordan's true potential and ambitions for 5G launch, digital transformation, and economic modernization, while building a knowledge-based, sustainable digital economy that can herald the Kingdom's next wave of growth and development.

* * * *