In a world where economies must contend with both internal and external forces, the means for judging their success have changed. No longer are they evaluated on their achievements in isolation from the rest of the world, but rather by their ability to withstand international pressures and thrive in the global arena.

In this context, that Egypt's information and communications technology (ICT) sector has exceeded even the most optimistic of expectations is indeed a major achievement.

The ICT sector is pivotal to the Egyptian economy. It plays a key role in developing other sectors – notably health, education and foreign trade – and represents an important resource for the treasury in its own right.

Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) has worked since its establishment to build a successful ICT sector. While the potential of ICT was once locally ignored, the sector today is recognized a major driver of development in all areas.

**Telephone Communications**

The last few years witnessed huge improvements in telephone communications. Telecom Egypt, through its nationwide fixed line network, is working to expand broadband and value-added services, with the numbers of Local Exchange Capacity reached 14.64 million lines, Fixed Lines Subscriptions 8.65 million, Local Exchanges 1698 of which 1198 in rural areas.

For mobile telephones, the number of mobile subscriptions have reached 92.44 million with monthly growth rate 1.19 % and with annual growth rate 20.94%. Also MCIT has signed a number of agreements with international companies to offer telecommunication services on an international scale.
Internet

As for the Internet services in Egypt, Internet users in Egypt reached 31.21 millions with annual growth rate 20.64, and with internet penetration 38.07 %.

As for the ADSL services, number of subscriptions reached 1.99 millions, mobile internet users reached 11.36 millions with annual growth rate 27.65 %. USB Internet subscribers reached 2.96 millions, with annual growth rate 35.58 %.

Communications and Information Technology Companies

Due to the special support given by the ICT sector to companies working in this field, the number of ICT companies reached 4758, with annual growth rate 14.16 %. The numbers of employees working in ICT field reached 215.44 thousands, with annual growth rate 4.26 %. ICT companies issued capitals are 45.51 billions towards the end of June 2012.

Egypt Post

With 3,793 offices nationwide, Egypt Post provides the public with postal, governmental, financial and business-related services through an integrated system.

Egypt Post is also one of the channels through which the government delivers services to citizens. Electronic government services related to acquisition of birth certificates and national identification cards, the traffic department, the Court of Cassation, the Court of Appeal and the Real Estate Registration Department are just few of the services provided through post offices. Till now some 4.74 million senior citizens receive their pensions via the post office.

Additionally, Egypt Post savings mechanisms have attracted millions of customers, and its instant postal financial transfer services are proving increasingly popular, reaching 824 thousand transfers by June 2012.

Over the last decade, Egypt Post has seen the greatest rate of change in its history. It has established regional training centers and provided hands-on training for employees on new ICT systems. Courses covering languages, technology, management, marketing, customer service and prevention of money laundering, among other areas, are delivered to Egypt Post employees.
In addition, salaries and allowances for Egypt Post staff have been raised and they are also provided comprehensive health insurance without any additional burden on employees.

**Outsourcing and Foreign Investments**

Central to the economic plan of the Egypt is reducing unemployment. As part of its efforts to establish a strong, export-oriented industry, ICT sector has focused on attracting foreign investment, for a strong national industry aiming to export.

As a result of MCIT’s determined efforts over the last decade, Egypt is now in a position to maintain a powerful export-oriented technology industry that will create jobs for young people, boost national development, and improve education, health and other public services.

Efforts in this area include promoting exports in the field of outsourcing and opening new channels of communications with the rest of the world. Many agreements have been signed as a result of such efforts.

Business and knowledge process outsourcing services have been a particular focus. Consequently, leading studies mark Egypt as one of the most competitive and attractive locations worldwide in this field as a result of its international telecommunication centers and large pool of highly qualified, multilingual graduates.

The last few years have witnessed huge growth in Egypt’s ICT exports, ranking Egypt on top countries of outsourcing destinations, ranging from 4th to 7th, worldwide.
**Smart Village**

One of the most successful public-private partnership (PPP) projects in Egypt and the Middle East, Smart Village is an ICT-focused business park hosting companies and organizations from around the world in a tailor-made environment that allows them to excel.

In just a few years, Smart Village, which covers an area of 3 million square meters to the west of Cairo, has attracted a growing number of local, Arab and multinational companies seeking to begin or expand operations in Egypt and the region.

Smart Village currently houses 38 local and international entities, comprising specialized telecommunication and information technology service providers, financial institutions and governmental authorities. It is expected that Smart Village will house a total of 60 entities.

**Cairo Contact Centers Park**

MCIT and Ministry of Investment have established a Technology Zone in the Maadi district of Cairo focusing exclusively on outsourcing. The park, covering an area of 75 feddans (315000 square meters), is the result of a public-private partnership.

Basic infrastructure is in place, granting Egypt a strong technology industry aiming to export, create more job vacancies, enabling ICT tools to establish development.
Capacity Building

A Technology Incubation Project has been established to encourage young entrepreneurs to develop projects with potential in local, regional and international markets. This step towards establishing new technological entities around the country has been supported by increasing the value of prizes allocated by the annual business planning competition held by the Technological Development Fund and funded by the private sector.

The private sector has offered incentive programs through the Information Technology Industry Development Agency (ITIDA), including employee training on communications, information technology and languages and the introduction of specialized software to university students. ITIDA also offers incentives for local and international companies to invest in outsourcing services in Egypt.

Egypt has committed itself to work with international companies to establish centers of excellence for research and development, such as those established with Microsoft, IBM and Intel. These centers focus on Arabization, information security, cloud computing and many other areas of growing importance.

ICDL program finished on 29/02/2012 with 836801 certified candidates, and the ministry is now committed to start a new ICDL program, syllabus version 5 (Windows 7, Office 2010).

Technology Homes

MCIT launched “Technology Homes initiative” in September 2011, to serve the technology path project aiming to offer comprehensive services including “ training courses, e-government services, SMEs services.

It is worth mentioning that the number of Technology Homes reached 2163, the number of Technology Homes connected to the internet reached 1955.
Electronic Signature

In its pursuit for stepping into a digital world, the Egypt has launched Electronic Signature services, as a step forward into manipulating more technological tools and applications.

Based on this belief, Egypt could join a list containing 30 countries using Electronic Signature all over the world. Besides Egypt also walked into a “nano” technology world, in the first decade of the 21th century.

ICT: Achievements Compassed

Record-breaking top-notch advancements achieved by ICT sector during the last years, both on material and moral levels, cannot pass by without due respect by any evenhanded person.

The achievements of providing the treasury with billions, offering thousands of new jobs, achieving this tangible progress in Egypt Post, assuming top positions in the field of technological services exportation worldwide, let alone the Smart Village huge project, would never come true haply.

They are ripping fruits of planning, training, and a smart eye watching potentials from different perspectives, in a sought to grasp every glimpse of hope.

In spite of the critical role played by ICT and its imprints on the new digital era, which turned the world into a small village, the last decade has witnessed an increasing concern of expanding its mechanisms, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Ministry of Communications and Information Technology proves through its achievements, under the state general policy, that it is a true player in this cycle, reflecting the Egyptian pioneer role in the region.