The Information Technology Authority has primarily emphasised digital automation and computerisation across Oman. Its aim is to promote the use of IT in everyday life by improving digital connectivity, networking and setting up systems for processing information and delivering services.

This thrust has varied across initiatives, with some focusing on enabling citizen-state interface for various government services, whilst others focus on bettering individual departments and promoting high volume governmental transactions through IT.
“Information Technology and communications have now become the main elements that move forward the development process in this third millennium; therefore we have accorded our attention to finding a national strategy to develop the skills and abilities of citizens in this domain with the aim of further developing eGovernment services. We are closely following the important steps that we have made in this regard. We call upon all government institutions to speedily enhance their performance, and to facilitate their services, by applying digital technology in order to usher the Sultanate into the constantly evolving spheres for applying knowledge.”

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said
Council of Oman, 11th November 2008
Annual Report 2008
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Chairman’s Message

Chairman’s Message

Chairman’s Message
It gives me immense pleasure to present before you the Second Annual Report of the Information Technology Authority (ITA), which has completed its third year of operations. By the grace of God, we have made significant progress in the year 2008 on several fronts. This Annual Report is an attempt to reflect upon the progress made during the period January 2008 to December 2008 and I feel privileged to present this on behalf of the Board of Directors of ITA.

This report is presented to you as we stand inspired and directed by the speech of His Majesty to the Council of Oman in which he urged his people to use information and communication technologies for the rapid development of the country. We accept and revere His Majesty's call as a guiding light in ITA's mission towards creating a sustainable knowledge society in the Sultanate.

I am further delighted that His Majesty's emphasis on a national strategy for building a “Digital Oman” has motivated and re-energised all our spirits to carry on this mission with zeal. Since ITA was established, with a clear mandate “to transform the Sultanate of Oman into a sustainable Knowledge Society by leveraging Information and Communication Technologies to enhance government services, enrich businesses and empower individuals”, we are making dedicated efforts to coordinate with all ministries and government agencies, in order to facilitate their awareness and embodiment of the eOman vision through the Digital Oman strategy.

Since its inception, ITA has implemented a vigorous approach to achieve its goals. Through the Digital Oman Initiative we have spearheaded a three-pronged strategy of providing technical support to government institutions, undertaking necessary IT infrastructure projects and empowering our people through IT training so that they can reap the benefits of the imminent information and communication revolution.

In 2008, the focus was on IT training programmes for the public sector, named the Government IT Training and Certification (GITTC) and Community IT Training, and the establishment of the Centre for Information Security. These initiatives have been supplementary to our efforts of the past by which we laid solid foundations for a convergent Government Network, eGovernment Services Portal, Electronic Payment Gateway and the establishment of a National Data Centre. We have also commenced Phase Two of our eOman Awareness Programme and initiation of an eTendering system. There have been intensified efforts in 2008 to make our presence felt in the international arena through our participation in many major international events and programmes.

ITA has also been instrumental in drafting a comprehensive Electronic Transactions Law which was issued by a royal decree on 17th May 2008, ushering the Sultanate of Oman into a new era of safe and secure electronic transactions. The eTransactions Law legalises all electronic transactions in Oman and ensures that all parties are well protected.

The Innovation and Support Centre is another feather in our cap for 2008. The Centre houses international and local technical experts and offers innovative solutions to the government’s electronic projects while developing trained Omani IT experts.

We are proud and delighted that as a result of the Information Technology Authority’s continued efforts, Oman has been ranked in 50th position out of 134 countries in the Global IT Report 2008-09 that was published at the World Economic Forum.

Enhancing national capabilities and skills in the field of technology will continue at full pace and new projects are launched to fulfil our goals. ITA facilitates the education of all citizens in the field of modern technology and make every effort to eradicate digital illiteracy within our society.

On this momentous occasion, we extend our heartfelt thanks to His Majesty for the encouragement and guidance we receive from Him. His Majesty's call to fully utilise our ICT potential for the benefit of the nation has motivated us all and we undertake to move forward in his royal direction. We also thank all government agencies for their cooperation and support, and the private sector entities, citizens and residents for their continued patronage.

Mohammed Nasser Al Khasibi
Chairman, ITA
Board of Directors

Board of Directors

Board of Directors
H.E. Mohammed Nasser Al Khasibi  
Chairman, ITA  
Secretary General, Ministry of National Economy

H.E. Sheikh Al Fadhel bin Mohammed Al Harthy  
Deputy Chairman, ITA  
Undersecretary for Development Affairs, Ministry of National Economy

H.E. Engineer Ahmed Hassan Al Dheeb  
ITA Board Member  
Undersecretary for Commerce and Industry  
Ministry of Commerce and Industry

H.E. Dr. Mohammed bin Ali Al Wohaibi  
ITA Board Member  
Undersecretary for Communication  
Ministry of Transport and Communication

Engineer Nashiah Saud Al Kharusi  
ITA Board Member  
Member of the Telecommunication Regulatory Authority

Dr. Hammed Al Rawahi  
ITA Board Member

Dr. Salim Sultan Al Ruzaqi  
Chief Executive Officer, ITA
The year 2008 has been a year of foundation building for the Information Technology Authority (ITA). Not only has ITA continued with projects that were initiated during the previous years, but it also laid solid foundations for the establishment of a digital Oman society through a number of initiatives aimed at increasing online services, enabling ePayments, infrastructure additions, legislative support and capacity building through training programmes.

As a direct result of implementing the eOman Strategy, Oman now ranks in 84th position in the UN eGovernment Readiness Index 2008, a jump of twenty-eight points from 112th position in 2005, and has been placed in 50th position in the Global IT Report 2008-09, featuring 134 countries.

The main achievements and milestones are summarised below

Oman’s eTransformation

- His Majesty issued the eTransactions Law (Royal Decree 69/2008) in May 2008 paving the way for safe electronic transactions in the Sultanate of Oman.
- The Unified eGovernment Network extended its rollout ahead of the planned target to link 158 sites and the IP address migration of twenty-four organisations.
- The eGovernment Services Portal was completed and internally launched for testing purposes in December 2008. It is now prepared for public launch.
- ITA conducted three workshops for enlisting the support of public entities and businesses, to introduce them to the salient features of the portal and to include their particulars in it.
- The National ePayment Gateway was commissioned in August 2008. A total of ten organisations (including five charities through the donations portal) are now accepting ePayments through the gateway. Work for Phase Two of the Gateway has commenced.
- ITA’s Stand-by Data Centre commenced operations. It currently hosts the government’s security infrastructure and it is planned that it will include ITA backup operational systems as well as the eService Portal hot stand-by system.
- The Centre for Information Security was established to provide comprehensive round-the-clock security implementation, management and operational services to all government agencies.
- The Tender Board, coordinating with ITA, initiated an eTendering project that aims to automate all manual processes required during tendering and train Tender Board staff and IT professionals to ensure effective use, management and efficient monitoring of the system.

Capacity Building

- The Government IT Training and Certification (GITTC) project was launched. It aims to train all public sector employees in digital literacy over the period 2008-2011.
- ITA provided training to a number of government staff, which resulted in 380 trainees graduating in basic IT literacy training programmes.
• A contract was signed with a specialist agency to set up four Community Knowledge Centres in Muscat, Sohar, Sur and Salalah. These centres are currently under construction and are scheduled for completion in 2009.

• In 2008, a pilot Community IT Training Programme was launched and resulted in 545 citizens achieving certification in digital literacy. 2009 will witness the full launch of the programme aimed at providing ICT training opportunities to citizens starting with four Community Knowledge Centres.

• An Innovation and Support Centre was launched in January 2008 with a mission to create innovative solutions, deploy the latest technologies, train local Omannis and support IT environments. It has, to date, provided training in a number of programmes to 263 people.

Enhancing Government Performance in IT

• ITA continued to provide technical, advisory and consultancy services to ministries and government departments. The consultancy and advisory services covered more than forty-two projects in twenty-five government organisations.

• ITA provided a series of technical services to over thirty-eight projects in a number of ministries, government departments and other government entities through the Innovation and Support Centre.

• The Information Technology Authority has defined a number of standards and guidelines for adoption by ITA and other government entities.

• ITA has started working on introducing an Information Security Management System (ISMS), a framework for managing information security in its own IT infrastructure as a pilot for implementing ISMS in other government organisations.

Public Awareness Programmes

As part of its outreach programme, ITA organised a number of workshops, seminars, conferences and events to create public awareness about eOman and ITA’s core activities.

• A workshop called “Capacity Building of eGovernment Services, Policies and Content” was organised in partnership with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA).

• A series of eCommerce seminars was organised by ITA in Salalah in collaboration with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Salalah.

• ITA participated in the International Conference on Educational Technology (ICOET 2008) at Sultan Qaboos University.

• Phase Two of the eOman roadshow was launched, coinciding with the Salalah Tourism Festival 2008. In addition to ongoing awareness programmes, a new series of education seminars was launched under the theme “Promoting Digital Culture”.

• ITA supported the 1st International Conference on eTechnologies and Environments (ETEC08) that was organised by Sohar University in collaboration with the University of Nizwa.

• As part of the Salalah Festival, An ePayment seminar series was organised by ITA in the theatre of the Directorate General of Heritage and Culture in Dhofar. The seminars were also part of eOman’s second awareness campaign organised by ITA.

• A number of seminars were organised in cities around the Sultanate to promote wider awareness about eOman.

• Workshops were also organised on eContent, Enterprise Architecture and eServices to prepare the government community for integration with the eGovernment Services Portal.
Event Participation

ITA took part in several important events in the Sultanate of Oman during 2008. These included the Muscat Festival, Salalah Tourism Festival and Comex 2008, where ITA hosted the first eGovernment Services Exhibition in which twenty government organisations took part.

- ITA celebrated Word Information Society Day on 17th May 2008 under the theme “Connecting People with Disabilities: ICT Opportunities for All”, and donated laptops, software and training programmes to visually impaired students.
- ITA won the award for its eGovernment initiatives and awareness during Comex 2008.
- The Authority joined hands with Microsoft to organise Imagine Cup 2008.
- In order to network with the student community, ITA supported the IT Open Day Students’ Festival in Higher Colleges of Technology.
- ITA managed the jury appointment and evaluations of the Oman Web Awards 2007 and hosted the Grand Finale Award Ceremony.

International Collaborations

ITA’s presence was apparent on the international and regional scene with the authority taking part in several events and establishing relationships and collaboration with a number of international entities.

International events in which ITA took part included:

- The Geneva Education Indicators Workshop, May 2008
- The Bahrain International eGovernment Forum, May 2008
- eGovernment Workshop, Lebanon, November 2008
- Infoconnect 2008, Kuwait
- Oracle CIO Executive Summit in Muscat, November 2008
- Several other Arab and GCC events
- A high-level ITA delegation, under the leadership of H.E. Mohammed Nasser Al Khasibi, ITA Chairman, visited the offices of Microsoft, Cisco and Google in the USA
- A delegation headed by H.E. Chairman of ITA, visited South Korea
- A delegation from Singapore, headed by H.E. Seah Chin Siong, the CEO of Info-Communications Development Authority of Singapore (IDA), visited ITA in September 2008.
- ITA continued its collaborative ventures with Microsoft, Cisco, Oracle and IDA International Singapore.

ITA as an Organisation

- The number of ITA staff increased from seventy-five in 2007 to 129 at the end of December 2008.
This year the ITA presents its Second Annual Report. The report is a reflection of ITA's activities over the twelve months from January 2008 to December 2008.

The report is divided into eight chapters for ease of reference. Each chapter focuses on one core activity of ITA’s strategy and the main developments pertaining to that activity that occurred during the year. In addition, the major events of 2008 are listed in the “Glimpses” section.

Chapter 1 highlights the vision of His Majesty as detailed in his Oman Council address, and his call to all government departments and ministries to make use of ICT for the benefit of the whole nation. This chapter also gives an overall introduction to ITA, its core activities, organisational structure, Business Plan for 2008-2010, Board of Directors and its operations during the report year. Chapter 1 also explains in detail the eOman vision and the progress made during the year.

Chapter 2 Oman’s eTransformation is outlined as well as the various initiatives undertaken during 2008 to transform the Sultanate of Oman into a knowledge society. This chapter also sheds light on Oman’s landmark electronic infrastructure initiatives — the Unified Government Network, eGovernment Services Portal, National ePayment Gateway, National Data Centre, Centre for Information Security and eTendering. It explains how infrastructure development is important for the successful implementation of electronic government and provides a brief on the eTransactions Law as promulgated by His Majesty in May 2008. It also highlights Oman’s readiness for eGovernance, as certified and supported by international organisations.

Chapter 3 of the ITA Report 2008 is a recollection of its capacity-building efforts during the reporting year. A multi-pronged approach towards training and IT skills development was adopted by providing training to public servants through the Government IT Training Programme, and the community at large through the Community Training Programme, as well as introducing Specialised Training Programmes in order for the fruits of development to be distributed equitably to all so that they become beneficiaries of eOman development. All training programmes were initiated under the umbrella of the National IT Training and Awareness Framework. The report also provides an insight into the National PC Initiative and the role of the Innovation and Support Centre.

Chapter 4 deals with ITA’s role in enhancing government performance through a number of initiatives focused on operations, and providing various advisory and technical support services to ministries and government departments. This chapter also contains details of the standards adopted by ITA and security framework and infrastructure that is currently under implementation.

Chapter 5 provides a detailed account of the seminars, workshops and conferences organised by ITA during 2008.
Chapter 6 deals with 2008’s major events and festivals, such as the Muscat Festival, the Salalah Tourism Festival, and COMEX, in which ITA took an active role disseminating the eOman message. It also gives an account of the various promotional activities hosted by ITA and its observation of some important international events, including the World Information Society Day.

ITA’s international expositions through a series of international and regional events are accounted for in:

Chapter 7 Important international visits by an ITA delegation to Korea, and Microsoft and Google in the USA are also described in this chapter.

The concluding Chapter 8 illustrates ITA’s relationships and collaborations with major international IT players such as Microsoft, Cisco and IDA International of Singapore.
The Information Technology Authority (ITA) of the Sultanate of Oman is now in its third year of operation. 2008 was characterised by being the year in which ITA further expanded the foundations on which the vision for eOman will be realised. This report is an attempt to outline our most important achievements along with ITA’s promises for the future.
1.1 His Majesty’s Vision

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos always lays emphasis on the importance of learning, knowledge and information technology.

In his address on the occasion of Opening the Annual Session of the Council of Oman on 11th November 2008, His Majesty stated, "Information Technology and communications have now become the main elements that move forward the development process in this third millennium. Therefore we have accorded our attention to finding a national strategy to develop the skills and abilities of citizens in this domain with the aim of further developing eGovernment services. We are closely following the important steps that we have made in this regard. We call upon all government institutions to speedily enhance their performance, and to facilitate their services, by applying digital technology in order to usher the Sultanate into the constantly evolving spheres for applying knowledge."

ITA is working towards the realisation of His Majesty’s royal vision by implementing major core infrastructure projects, assisting ministries in their eService projects and facilitating them through a variety of technical and advisory services.

The eGovernment’s Services Portal is being developed to seamlessly integrate services offered by the public sector to provide the public with a multi-channel interface to these services through this single gateway. Other initiatives of ITA include implementing the ePayment Gateway and the National Data Centre, both of which are considered as building blocks for the eGovernment architecture. A Centre for Information Security has been developed to ensure security for online transactions and for the protection of government information assets.

1.2 Digital Oman Strategy

The creation of a Knowledge Economy was first envisaged in the Sultanate of Oman’s Economic Vision 2020. Following a decision by the Council of Ministers in 1998, the National Information Technology Committee (NITC) was established to oversee the development of the Sultanate’s IT sector and to work towards the implementation of eGovernment initiatives under the Ministry of National Economy. With guidance from the NITC, the IT Task Force (ITTF) developed a National IT Strategy, commonly referred to as the “Digital Oman Strategy” or in short as “eOman”.

The Digital Oman Strategy envisions providing collaborative and cost-effective online services to the people, and public and private sectors through electronic means in order to move the Sultanate towards a knowledge-based economy and achieve sustainable development. The Council of Ministers approved the Digital Oman Strategy in November 2002 and an IT Executive Committee was formed in 2003 to oversee the implementation of eGovernment and Digital Oman Strategy. In accordance with the recommendations and observations of the Committee during the period 2003-2006, the Information Technology Authority was established through Royal Decree 52/2006, issued in May 2006.
The Digital Oman Strategy seeks to achieve the following major objectives:

- Streamlining government services to citizens and businesses (reduced bureaucracy)
- Enabling knowledge-based industries and developing a local ICT sector
- Supporting a better competitive environment
- Providing employment for young Omanis
- Enabling better healthcare
- Improving education opportunities
- Supporting tourism
- Enhancing social development
- Complementing Vision 2020
- Making Oman a more attractive destination for foreign investment

1.3 The eOman Vision

ITA is leading the implementation of eOman, which comprises a wide range of initiatives and services designed and created to electronically transform the government, improve efficiency of government services, enhance business activities and empower individuals with skills and knowledge to meet society’s needs and expectations as a knowledge-based economy. eOman transformation leverages the use of ICT in all walks of life, bringing about an enabled and empowered society that touches everyone, making it easier, more enjoyable and energising in an evolutionary and evolving manner.

In order to achieve this vision, ITA is executing a number of core foundation infrastructure projects such as the Government Network, National Data Centre, ePayment Gateway, eGovernment Services Portal and eService initiatives in coordination with a number of government organisations. These initiatives are supplemented by electronic laws, and standards and frameworks, which increase the efficiency and effectiveness of government services. Several capacity-building projects are in progress to provide the public sector and the community with the knowledge and skills necessary for the delivery of and interaction with eServices.

1.4 The Information Technology Authority

Most developed countries have established independent entities, working as nodal agencies, for the supervision and coordination of information and communication activities. The Information Technology Authority Oman was established on similar lines “to transform the Sultanate of Oman into a sustainable Knowledge Society by leveraging Information and Communication Technologies to enhance government services, enrich businesses and empower individuals.”

Royal Decree 52/2006, promulgated by His Majesty on 31st May 2006, created the Information Technology Authority of the Sultanate of Oman as a public, autonomous organisation responsible for the implementation of the Digital Oman Strategy. Since its inception, ITA has been focused on executing the Digital Oman Strategy and plans and, by the end of 2008, several milestones were achieved in the journey towards a knowledge-based economy.

1.5 ITA’s Business Plan 2008-2010

ITA operates on the basis of comprehensive three-year business plans that are developed and revised annually, and which represent a phased implementation to realise the roadmap for the implementation of the eOman strategy collectively and sequentially.

The ITA Business Plan for 2008-2010 strives to complete several critical foundation core projects in a phased
manner. Most of the projects are at various stages of implementation and achieved different operational status by the year’s end.

1.6 ITA’s Goals for 2008-2010

The following are the goals set by the ITA for the three-year period 2008-2010 and represent the targets to be ultimately achieved throughout the planning timeframe:

- Revise the organisational structure and properly staff the Authority with professionals to meet its goals, objectives, KPIs and milestones, and act as a centre of competency for Oman
- Drive ITA to be certified in project and quality management, and maintain the certification
- Innovate and implement IT solutions to enhance ITA operational effectiveness and efficiency and automate ITA internal processes
- Ensure the efficient and effective administration of ITA resources in order to achieve high levels of internal and external customer satisfaction
- Design, enhance and develop eStrategies to achieve the eOman vision in liaison with other strategic planning and regulatory organisations in Oman
- Follow-up on the synchronisation and implementation of plans aimed at realising the eStrategies for Oman, including other stakeholders’ plans
- Explore, plan and monitor the business opportunities and returns on investment in IT projects rolled out by ITA and other government organisations
- Play a central role in coordinating public and private sector IT development and adoption
- Set policies and standards for IT and ensure other organisations’ compliance to set standards through guidance and auditing
- Provide IT advice and technical expertise to other organisations through systematic and well-organised processes
- Develop Oman’s ICT industry to play a critical role in meeting the eOman vision and objectives through attracting direct foreign investments and opening up new opportunities for start-up and existing Omani companies
- Initiate general and specialised capacity-building programmes for citizens and public workers at all levels
- Elevate eLifestyle in Oman through taking advantage of computers and broadband connectivity at reduced rates while promoting access and use of online services and resources
- Coordinate and follow-up eLifestyle implementation plans with other stakeholders with special emphasis on taking advantage of broadband access to networks and the Internet, thus realising a high Internet penetration rate in the Sultanate
- Implement core national infrastructure projects aimed at creating the foundations of a strong and integrated IT infrastructure for both the government and public sector
- Ensure the security of government IT infrastructure and electronic transactions in eOman initiatives
- Collate ICT statistics and information from various sources and interpret the data to analyse progress and assist decision-making processes within the Sultanate
- Represent Oman locally and internationally at all events and activities related to IT
1.7 ITA’s Board of Directors

The present Board of Directors comprises:

**Chairman:** H.E. Mohammed Nasser Al Khasibi, Secretary General, Ministry of National Economy

**Deputy Chairman:** H.E. Sheikh Al Fadhel bin Mohammed Al Harthy, Undersecretary for Development Affairs, Ministry of National Economy

**Members:**
- H.E. Engineer Ahmed Hassan Al Dheeb, Undersecretary for Commerce and Industry, Ministry of Commerce and Industry
- H.E. Dr. Mohammed bin Ali Al Wohaibi, Undersecretary for Telecommunication, Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunication.
- Engineer Nashiah Saud Al Kharusi, Member of the Telecommunication Regulatory Authority
- Dr. Hammed Salim Al Rawahi, Internet Security services

1.8 Board Meetings

The Board of Directors of the Information Technology Authority held five meetings during the year 2008. In addition to routine administrative and business matters, the Board also discussed and made decisions on several important policy issues pertaining to IT Strategy in the Sultanate of Oman.
ITA has seven strategic divisions to implement its tasks under the Digital Oman Strategy, which report to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Dr. Salim Sultan Al Ruzaiqi.

**Strategic Planning Division**

The Strategic Planning Division is primarily concerned with strategic planning and the initiation of projects and initiatives, as well as the management of the ITA Master Plan. It is also responsible for investment analysis, project budgeting and the overall sourcing management of ITA.

**Governance and Advisory Division**

The Governance and Advisory Division ensures that the implementation and operation of initiatives, projects and IT systems are conducted according to unified and predefined standards and guidelines adopted internally in ITA and externally by other government organisations in Oman. This division performs necessary account management functions within ITA, and coordinates the relationships between ITA and other organisations in Oman.

**Digital Society Development Division**

The development and promotion of Oman’s digital society is the primary responsibility of this division. It is also responsible for rolling out projects and initiatives aimed at community development and transforming Oman into a digital society. The division undertakes training and skills development programmes aimed at spreading digital literacy, as well as developing Oman’s ICT sector.
Introduction to the Information Technology Authority (ITA)

Infrastructure and eServices Division

Developing and implementing the national IT infrastructure, applications and facilities utilised by government organisations to deliver online services are the primary functions of this division. It is also responsible for designing and managing ITA’s IT infrastructure and is modelled on the technical architecture proposed in the strategy.

Information and Awareness Division

The Information and Awareness Division is the marketing and public relations arm of ITA. It markets and promotes the eOman initiative locally and globally through events, eAwareness campaigns and various forms of publications and media. The division is also responsible for managing public relations as well as international relations and cooperation.

Centre for Information Security

The Centre for Information Security (CIS) defines security standards, policies and procedures for eOman, and implements the security infrastructure for government organisations. The centre develops processes for security monitoring while acting as a trusted competency, knowledge and support centre.

Finance and Administrative Division

This division is responsible for managing all ITA administration, procurement and purchasing, budgeting and finance, legal and human resources development.
1.10 Organisational Development

ITA has now integrated operational systems for accounts, human resources and tenders to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of its daily operations. The staff strength has increased from seventy-five in 2007 to 129 at the end of December 2008.

All divisions are currently operational, as per the organisational structure, with varying levels of staffing. Considerable efforts have been made to meet the staffing requirements of the divisions.

1.11 Quality Management System for ITA

ITA envisages being certified in quality management and obtaining certification underpinning efforts to develop the ITA Quality Management System in compliance with ISO 9001:2008.

The Quality Management project is being undertaken with the following objectives:

- To establish a Quality Management System (QMS) at ITA based on the ISO 9001:2008 International Standards
- To obtain ISO Certification by Q4 2009
- To achieve QMS benefits including:
  - A structured, systematic approach to process and product/service quality management
  - Ensuring consistency and promoting continuous process and product/service improvement
  - Consistently delivering quality services to ITA customers and meeting their expectations
  - A public recognition of ITA's business commitment to quality through its accreditation to ISO
- Improving performance and process efficiency and productivity
- Improving ITA's corporate image associated with ISO accreditation
- Reducing costs associated with defects, scrap, rework, complaints handling and training, etc.

The steps taken so far:

Quality Management System (QMS) Establishment Phase: Q3 2008

- A Quality Assurance and Operational Excellence (QAOE) Department has been formed to facilitate and manage the ITA certification project through the development of an effective Quality Management System
- A Project manager (ISO 9000 Management Representative) has been assigned
- A Quality Steering Committee (QSC) led by top management has been formed to support and oversee ITA's QMS performance. QSC Terms of Reference were developed
- A project plan has been prepared
- Quality Policy and Objectives has been outlined
- A Quality Task Team (QTT) has been formed, made up of members from every division who will facilitate quality initiatives in each division. QTT Terms of Reference were developed.

QMS Assessment Phase: Q3 2008

All ITA divisions and most processes went through an “Internal Gap Analysis”. The objective of this was to evaluate current ITA processes to identify those that already exist and meet ISO 9001:2008 requirements, and those
that need further development to meet the remainder of the requirements. ITA’s Quality Task Team performed the assessment exercise.

Phase 3 of the project will continue through 2009, until the certification process is successfully completed.

1.12 First Internship Programme at ITA

ITA organised an internship programme for aspiring candidates for a period of three months from June to August 2008. This was the first internship programme run by the Authority.

Candidates were identified through a selection process, including reviewing general academic progress and specialisation, which was followed by a personal interview with the relevant Department Manager or Chief of Division. The first batch consisted of twenty-eight interns.

Orientation activities presented to interns included presentation of an overview of ITA, eOman and marketing brochures among other things, before they were equipped with suitable workstations and placed in divisions.

The relevant immediate supervisor conducted regular follow-ups and evaluations, and certificates of training were issued at the end of the training programme.

Two candidates - one in HR and the other in the Digital Society Development Division - were selected for employment at ITA.
ITA plans to organise further internship programmes in the coming years.

1.13 Internal Administration and HR Activities

ITA has been sparing no effort in recruiting the right people for the right job. One of the important achievements of the HR Department was that it identified and selected properly qualified personnel at managerial levels, utilising an IT internal infrastructure fully automated interview process.

To further strengthen the relationship between its staff, ITA organised its second Away Day, which was full of various programmes and fun activities aimed at team building.
Since its inception, ITA has been charting programmes and projects aimed at transforming Oman into a Knowledge Society through the application of information and communication technologies. ITA underscores the fact that digital literacy is a precondition for such a transformation, which involves the government, businesses and individuals.
According to the United Nations eGovernment Readiness Report 2008, that ranks countries by eGovernment development, Oman now ranks 84th with an eGovernment readiness index of 0.4691. This is a great achievement for Oman, since the Sultanate jumped an impressive twenty-eight points within a short span of three years. Oman was at 112th position in 2005, roughly a year before the establishment of the Information Technology Authority in 2006.

This impressive leap in ranking shows the acceleration of eGovernment-related activities driven by ITA in association with the public and private sectors of the economy. Such initiatives include comprehensive eLegislation, the establishment of an ePayment Gateway, the development of the eGovernment’s Services Portal, the establishment of the Centre for Information Security, the introduction of eTendering and setting up of an Innovation and Support Centre.

Most public organisations are rapidly automating business processes and re-engineering their current practices to deliver electronic services through modern means. eOman has given a special impetus to public sector organisations to reach out to the public with information, interaction and higher levels of awareness from which they can benefit.

An appropriate legal foundation is essential for the healthy growth and protection of electronic transactions, eBusiness, ePayments and eServices. Accordingly, the Sultanate of Oman enacted the Electronics Transactions Law in 2008 to regulate eTransactions and to consolidate public trust in the safety and authenticity of electronic transactions, correspondence and records.
A major milestone in Oman’s eTransformation process, the Electronic Transactions Law, was issued on 18th May 2008 through Royal Decree 69/2008. The law forms an important component of the Digital Oman Strategy and marks the reaching of the first and most important eLegislation milestone, which will be followed by the development of others in the future.

The expected rapid uptake of electronic transactions necessitated the drafting of legislation to ensure that they are protected and bear the same enforcement, authenticity, commitment and accountability of parties as their paper counterparts. The eTransactions Law lays down ground rules for electronic transactions with a separate section addressing privacy and data protection.

The eTransactions Law also regulates the transfer of electronic data and messages through a number of electronic channels, such as the Internet, and identifies the legal implications and commitments made through the transfer of data. The law aims to raise public trust in the safe use of eTransactions and the electronic exchange of messages and records while assuring adequate protection for the privacy of an individual’s data involved in such eTransactions. By building trust in the security of electronic transactions, the development and use of eTransactions and eSignatures at a national, regional and international level will be reinforced as well as providing credibility to electronic information sharing and taking communication security to higher levels of authentication, integrity and privacy.

The law tackles cyber crime through the imposition of strict penalties on anyone compromising electronic systems, applications or data residents in electronic devices, or committing any other form of cyber crime where such criminal acts result from activities, such as hacking into computer systems, unauthorised capture or tampering of data, unauthorised tampering of encryption systems and eavesdropping. Other punishments stipulated by the Oman Penal Code, or any other law, can also be applied to cyber crimes committed in violation of the law.

The law legalises the use of digital signatures in electronic communications through tools such as emails. Organisations wishing to introduce digital signatures must obtain approval from the ITA through a formal registration process, the objective of which is to ensure that the legal framework authorising and facilitating eTransactions is abided by.

Given that the law provides for encryption as a means of protection for eTransactions, government entities can now use electronic records and digital signatures in tendering systems, licence request processing and taxation systems, as well as accepting fees or payments electronically.

The eTransactions Law, as it currently stands, consists fifty-four articles in nine sections, which have been developed and refined over a period of three years. ITA, along with a other government entities and a private law firm, drafted the law based on a range of studies of laws and model laws, including the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) guidelines on the Protection of Privacy and Trans-border Flows of Personal Data, and the eLaws of several countries covering personal data protection and electronic crimes involving eTransactions.

In 2008, ITA held five workshops aimed at educating the public on the Electronic Transactions Law. The objectives of these workshops were to increase awareness about the eTransactions Law of Oman and clarify specific applications of this law.
2.2 Convergent Government Network

The Convergent Government Network (CGN) is a nationwide, fully managed telecommunications infrastructure connecting government agencies and their respective sites. It aims to support other eGovernment initiatives and to ultimately improve public service.

The implementation and management of the Convergent Government Network was outsourced to Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel), which had invested heavily in the expansion of the national IP telecommunications network based on MPLS (Multi-Protocol Label Switching) protocol. MPLS allows the carriage of a number of different communication services on top of an IP network, and can also be used to create logical Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) thus isolating traffic belonging to many networks from each other while still operating on a single telecommunications network. This important feature has enabled the creation of CGN utilising Omantel's core MPLS network, resulting in all public organisations and ministries being interlinked into one large countrywide network. MPLS-based VPNs are extremely flexible when it comes to the addition of new sites, thus enabling the government to connect additional nodes to ministries' VPNs with relative ease, as well as reconfiguring existing links with minimal effort.

The government network team was tasked with connecting a total of fifty new sites to the government network by the end of 2008. The team managed to overachieve on this target by an estimated 46%, achieving seventy-three connections in total and connecting eight new ministries during the year. The current number of sites connected the government network is 195, spread across thirty-two ministries.
The chart below depicts the distribution of sites connected to the government network per ministry:

Being a completely managed service, Omantel provides access to a network management and reporting portal where ministerial staff can view network statistics in real time and review historical data, as well as create and follow up on trouble tickets that have been created as a result of problems. ITA, along with Omantel, successfully conducted two training sessions on the use of the portal helping participants to fully understand its potential and how best to interpret its various graphs and charts.

Chart-1 Distribution of sites connected to the Government network per Ministry
The biggest benefit of the government network is that it provides any entity that is connected to it with the ability to communicate with any other entity. For example, most government entities transact with the Ministry of Finance’s (MoF) mainframe server. This was traditionally conducted through legacy SDLC-based leased lines. With the advent of the government network and its connectivity to MoF, communication is now being conducted using standard TCP/IP protocols. The following entities are connected to the MoF through the government network:

- The Public Authority for Electricity and Water
- The Ministry of Fisheries
- Dhofar Municipality

Similarly, most government entities connect to the Human Resource Management System (HRMS) of the Ministry of Civil Services (MoCS) to update employee records. A number of ministries can now access the HRMS of MoCS through the government network.

2.3 eGovernment Services Portal

The eGovernment Services Portal is the main entry point for accessing Oman’s government services and information online.

All portal systems have now been installed in the National Data Centre and training for ITA staff has also been completed. The portal was released to a select group for content verification and their feedback implemented.
The portal has been structured on a live event model that provides services based on the profile of the portal visitor. This makes navigation easy and users can use the services without needing to know who is offering the service or even who is processing the service. The portal will enable the public to reach government entities at any time and from anywhere without having to physically visit the offices.

The portal can be accessed through standard browsers, as well as PDA and mobile phones browsers, and through Internet and GSM networks. Users will experience the same “look and feel” of all online services irrespective of who is providing the service. The portal will support Single Sign On (SSO) in the next phase, enabling one-time authentication, which can be carried on to other ministry sites for accessing government online services.

The next phases will also provide for the downloading of government services forms as blank or pre-populated forms for manual submission to ministries. They will also allow online form completion, digital signing and submission to respective ministries for processing. Personalisation features will enable individual users to change the contents and structure of their page based on their individual preferences and credentials.

The eGovernment Services Portal is integrated with the ePayment Gateway for processing payments related to eGovernment Services, thus providing a true electronic transaction environment.

All information is included as content on the portal, effectively transforming it into a one-stop shop for information (including forms) regarding government services. A search facility allows users to facilitate locating the right information based on user requirements. The portal content spans the following:

- Application instructions and requirements to apply for various services
- High-level description of the steps needed to acquire the service
- Forms required for the respective service
- Links to other government sites that provide online services
- Sections for interaction with government agencies
- General information about the Sultanate
- Administration modules which allow government organisations to create and manage forms online

eGovernment Services Portal Workshops

ITA organised three workshops in 2008 as part of its eGovernment Services Portal strategy, which were attended by government entities in order to give them an understanding of the portal and provide the input required to improve portal content.

First Content Workshop

The first content workshop was conducted in March 2008 to explain the portal and its objectives to all ministries. The portal team presented questionnaires to the participants, which they were required to fill in as part of the content collection process.

The government network team delivered a presentation explaining the project. At the end of the workshop, all participants (twenty-two in total) had a clear overview of the portal, the government network and how both projects interact to deliver key components of the eGovernment architecture.

Business Workshop

A Business Workshop was conducted in March, for
businesses and the private sector to provide participants with an overview of the portal and distribute questionnaires aimed at identifying their expectations of the portal.

Second Content Workshop

A Second Content Workshop was conducted on 16th September, to present the updated content of the portal to ministries. Each participant was given a virtual private network (VPN) access connection to enable them to access their respective organisation’s portal content and verify the information included in sections relevant to their organisations.
2.4 National ePayment Gateway

The National ePayment gateway was launched with grand ceremony in August 2008. The gateway service configuration was completed in September 2007 and user acceptance testing was completed in December 2007.

Nawras, OmanMobile, the Ministry of Sports Affairs and Omanbay were the first live services on the gateway. A total of ten organisations (including five charities through the donations portal) are now actively accepting ePayments for their services. More than eleven thousand transactions have been conducted on the gateway since its launch.

The National ePayment Gateway (ePG) provides an operational component of the eGovernment infrastructure and full eCommerce facilities that allow secure online payments (ePayments). ePG supports multiple banks and will operate as a critical shared service within the eGovernance architecture, along with Oman’s eGovernment Services Portal. The gateway currently accepts all international credit cards including Visa, MasterCard, and Diners cards, and, in Phase Two, other electronic payment instruments will be rolled out. ePG currently supports payment through the Internet, while mobile phone, IVR, Call Centre and other facilities will be offered in the future.

The ePayment Gateway supports delivery of eServices by the public sector and assists the private sector’s move towards eCommerce. For a full cycle of any buying or selling involving online transactions, it is imperative to have ePayment Gateway services. ePG enables efficient electronic transactions in Oman, and simplifies the processing of payment transactions for electronic services within the country. It allows merchants based in Oman to sell their products and services on the Internet to customers.
worldwide, where all information transmitted between the merchant’s website, customer and ePayment Gateway are encrypted and secure.

Online businesses will be able to offer their products and services electronically through any channel, resulting in a more effective and efficient way of communicating with their clients, and an expectation of increased online business. This will allow businesses with proper marketing tools, but only a limited number of branches across the nation, to promote and sell their products on dependable eCommerce platforms.

Government organisations will also benefit from ePG by offering their services online, for example the Royal Oman Police has launched a scheme whereby traffic fines can be paid online, which has been very well received by the public. ITA is currently collaborating with several government organisations to introduce more services online and to allow payments via the Internet.

In Phase One, ITA outsourced the ePayment service to MasterCard, the global payments provider, through their Internet Gateway Services (MiGS). Phase Two will be developed and hosted internally for offering ePayment facilities such as ePurse, account-to-account transfers and mobile payments. Consultancy for Phase Two has been commenced and a study for launching the ePayment business unit is underway.

2.5 National Data Centre

The National Data Centre (NDC) addresses the shortage of reliable hosting and co-location facilities in Oman to host critical systems and data belonging to government and the private sectors. It will enable the government to sustain services to the required mission criticality level. NDC is a multi-tenant high-availability data centre enabling government agencies to utilise the site either as their main IT site or as their Disaster Recovery Centre. It also addresses the requirement for business continuity as identified in the eOman strategy, which is absent in almost all government entities.

NDC is expected to provide improved efficiency and business continuity assurance. Public sector systems will also achieve improved integration and scalability of application. NDC provides high levels of confidentiality, integrity, availability and privacy of citizen data held in eGovernment systems while operating the equipment reliably, even under extreme circumstances.

NDC’s secure facility will provide a reliable infrastructure for ITA-led initiatives, existing or planned, such as the eService
portal, security infrastructure, ePayment Gateway and key public infrastructures.

A pool of Omani professionals will manage the Data Centre facility. Automated control systems have been installed, which will manage and monitor networking, storage, cooling, power, fire alarms and access control, among others, within the facility. Power systems supporting the centre include main power lines, generators, UPS systems and battery sources. These ensure that continuous power is provided to the systems that are linked.

NDC covers an area of approximately eleven hundred square metres, consisting of a server room, a network operation command centre, a client operation room, two battery rooms, electrical and UPS rooms, storage and holding areas and a staging room. It is fitted with a hundred and twenty racks of which twelve are network/communication racks with the rest being available for tenants. NDC includes an expandable SAN (Storage Area Network) system, which is currently designed to store up to thirty Petabytes of data. NDC tenants can meet their storage requirements through the acquisition of storage from the SAN, utilising secure virtual volumes that can be mounted on their systems in a similar manner to directly attached storage.

2.6 Centre for Information Security (CIS)

The Centre for Information Security defines security standards, policies and procedures for eOman. The centre will develop continuous processes for security monitoring while acting as a trusted competency, knowledge and support centre. It is operated and managed by trained Omani engineers who provide professional security consultancy services to all government agencies.

The centre operates a state-of-the-art fully managed security infrastructure that is being rolled out to all government organisations as a service, in addition to the government network. The security infrastructure includes all components necessary to protect government information assets and ensures the security of government data while in transit. The security infrastructure is being rolled out in phases and will reach every government site throughout the Sultanate.

The centre provides a set of security services based on standards and best practices to the Government of Oman to ensure information and data confidentiality, integrity, availability and non-repudiation. The centre has, to date, provided security consultancy to a number of government entities in establishing information security management systems, trained a number of government security professionals in implementing information security management systems as per the ISO 27001 standard, conducted a number of security seminars and conferences for government staff and provided security solutions and security advice and consultancy to other eOman projects and initiatives.

The centre assists government organisations in aligning their systems with unified security architecture, mitigating risk and ensuring business continuity with clear plans and processes. It provides organisations with a highly secure IT framework with well-defined security operational procedures and serves as a trusted competency, knowledge and support centre for the government.

Individuals will receive secure channels for acquiring government services in a seamless manner while the centre ensures privacy and confidentiality of systems handling citizen-sensitive information, simplifies authentication to government systems from a single point, creates improved awareness about secure transactions over electronic media and supports the provision of legal recognition and protection for electronic transactions.
2.7 eTender Contract

In September 2008, the Tender Board and Information Technology Authority awarded eTender Contract to a consortium of companies. The project will implement an automated tendering management system for the Tender Board and develop a new Electronic Tendering System for the whole government. The project aims primarily to automate all manual tendering processes and train Tender Board and other government staff and IT professionals on the new system to ensure effective use, management and efficient monitoring of the eTendering System.

Initiating the eTendering project is considered a basic foundation aimed at building the support systems that will eventually lead to implementing eProcurement in the government. It also forms an important part of government business applications, which ITA plans to develop in coordination with respected government entities.

The eTendering system will fully automate the Tendering and Companies Registration processes, which will be available online via the Tender Board website. ITA assisted the Tender Board in defining the appropriate interfaces to which to integrate other government applications utilising the government network system to ensure seamless service availability.

eTendering will enable all local and international vendors to register and renew their registration with Tender Board online, and to prepare, review and approve final tender documents, publish tenders, purchase tender documents, receive and reply to queries, send addenda/circulars to participating companies, receive offers, publish prices, award projects and pay all required fees through authenticated and secured remote access. In a later phase, the system will
be linked to the PKI infrastructure of ITA to enable users
to digitally sign documents during the submission stage
and thus achieve a fully transactional service supporting
non-repudiation of activities conducted online.

Phase One, which is planned for completion in nine months,
will automate all tendering processes of the Tender Board
and five government entities. The other fifty entities will join
the system in Phase Two. The selected eTendering system
can be used by all government entities whether they are
following the Tender Board Laws and Regulations or not,
since the selected system can be customised to include
different workflows, which can be adapted according to
business needs.

2.8 The Sultanate’s Readiness for
eGovernment Services

Oman’s ICT sector is poised for a quantum leap in growth,
especially after His Majesty’s directives to all government
institutions to enhance their performance rapidly and to
facilitate their services through applying digital technology.
ITA has been spearheading Oman’s digital transformation
in a consistent manner through the provision of a vital
digital infrastructure and various projects aimed at
capacity building.

The UN eGovernment Survey 2008, “From eGovernment
to Connected Governance”, indicates that governments
around the world are moving forward in eGovernment
development. Most developed and developing countries
have advanced, in varying degrees, from eGovernment
applications to a more integrated connected governance
stage.

Oman’s ranking in eGovernment has risen from 112th
position in 2005 to 84th position in 2008. The Sultanate also has an eGovernment readiness index of 0.4691, well above the world average of 0.4514. The Sultanate’s elevation in ranking by twenty-eight points within a span of three years is due to several initiatives and programmes launched by the Information Technology Authority since its establishment in 2006.

This considerable leap in ranking signifies the acceleration of eGovernance-related activities spurred by the public and the private sectors of the Sultanate. eOman has been given a special push in the way public sector organisations reach out to the public with information, interaction and higher levels of awareness.

Oman also ranks at 60th position in the eParticipation Index (out of 192 countries) with an index value of 0.2045. This has been the result of government websites offering information on policies and programmes, budgets, laws and regulations, and other briefs of key public interest. The eParticipation Index measures whether information dissemination tools exist for timely access and use of public information, including web forums, email lists, newsgroups and chat rooms. Oman public sector organisations use emails and SMS services to reach citizens, with regular updates on services and related information.

The prime objective of this UN survey is to provide a comparative assessment of the willingness and ability of governments in the use of eGovernment and ICT as tools in the public delivery of services. It is also meant as a benchmarking tool for monitoring the progress of countries as they progress towards higher levels of eGovernment and eParticipation service delivery.

Meanwhile, the Global IT Report 2008-2009, featuring 134 countries, published at the World Economic Forum, placed Oman in 50th position in respect to IT development. This ranking is an attestation of the great strides the country has made in the field of IT in terms of secure infrastructure, services, legislation, online payments, frameworks, policies and awareness.

In addition, Oman’s efforts in procuring advanced technology products for its IT systems have been ranked at 22nd position, thus increasing the overall government readiness index to the ranking of 39. The position of Oman in Government Usage is at 45, and this is based on the government’s success in ICT promotion, availability of government services online, presence and efficient use of ICT within the public sector and eParticipation.

This Global IT Report is part of the Global Competitiveness Report issued at the recently held World Economic Forum. With over a hundred indicators, along with a detailed profile for each of the 134 countries featured, this report is the most comprehensive assessment of its kind in global rankings.

Despite the global trends of economic recession and inflation, Oman has improved its position from 53rd in the 2007-08 report to its current place, in a ranking which focuses on mobility in a networked world. Thus, Information and Communication Technologies as an enabler contribute significantly to the core of national competitiveness through enhancing networked readiness. This report measures ICT diffusion in various dimensions to present the Network Readiness Index (NRI). The placement of Oman in terms of the importance given to ICT in the government’s vision for future is ranked as high as 21 among the 134 countries considered.

In realisation of His Majesty’s vision to augment public sector eServices, associated infrastructure is expected to continue to grow, eventually improving this ranking further in the coming years.
Society and Human Capital Development are essential to the success of any initiative under eOman. Along with the provision of infrastructure, it is necessary to train the end users properly to effectively use IT so that everyone in the community can benefit directly to development efforts, as well as producing contributors of content and services throughout the community. Likewise, offering the right tools to enable people to benefit from the eOman projects is of paramount importance. These tools are necessary to bridge differences that may exist between different sections of society, as well as the different regions of the Sultanate.
Digital literacy is defined as the ability to use digital technology, communication tools and/or networks to access, manage, integrate, evaluate and create information in order to function in a knowledge society. Such literacy is the target of ITA’s ongoing training and skills development programmes. Through a number of training and skill-building initiatives, ITA intends to raise public awareness about information and communication technologies so that they can reap the benefits of eOman projects and be able to maximise their use of them. Many of the training projects that were initiated during previous years continued in 2008, while new programmes have been added to bring more people into the fold of ICT literacy.

Likewise, a number of initiatives have been introduced that are intended to place the necessary tools within reach of every citizen so that they benefit from eOman. It is ITA’s firm belief that extending connectivity and providing access devices to the community are two of the most essential tools required to ensure that society is fully engaged in the progress achieved by eOman projects. Accordingly, ITA has launched, and is planning to continue to launch, a number of initiatives to make these tools available to society.

3.1 National IT Training and Awareness Framework

Achieving a Knowledge Society in the Sultanate requires empowering all sections of society with IT skills. Therefore, ITA has launched many projects and awareness programmes to raise public awareness, and to train and qualify them.

The National IT Training and Awareness Framework (NITTA) initiative is an ITA project aimed at developing, enhancing and expanding Information Communication Technology skills and capabilities, and increasing ICT awareness and proficiency within the government, community and private sector. The NITTA framework covers a wide range of ICT competency and skill development projects and is intended to consolidate the goals and outcomes of all such ITA development programmes under a unified plan to ensure integration of initiatives and synchronisation of their deliverables.
3.2 Government IT Training

The Government IT Training and Certification (GITTC) project initiated by ITA, in coordination with the Ministry of Civil Services and the Ministry of Education, aims to train all civil service employees in digital literacy over the period 2008-2011. The GITTC initiative aims to provide ICT training opportunities to civil service employees to enable them to offer electronic services to the public and businesses efficiently. The pilot phase of the GITTC pilot project initially provided certification training to four hundred civil service staff on the internationally recognised IC3 and Cambridge IT literacy certification programmes. Since the launch of the GITTC pilot programme, approximately 380 trainees have graduated in basic IT literacy from the training programmes.

Later in 2008, ITA awarded a contract for Government IT Training and Certification project to a training provider to facilitate training and certification to global digital literacy standards for an Internet and Computing Core Certification (IC3) curriculum. More than ninety-three thousand civil servants will be trained in IC3 over a period of three years.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) is a key partner in GITTC and their cooperation has ensured a successful pilot project. MoE provided the general education school computer labs as locations for training purposes and schoolteachers were trained to be IC3 certified. Ministry cooperation has also been secured for formal GITTC training programmes where school labs and training institutes will continue to be used as implementation channels.
3.3 Specialised IT Training

Specialised IT training aims at providing government IT employees with skills that are focused on specific products or services, mostly leading to vendor certification on IT platforms. A number of specialised training courses have been identified, such as those offered from Microsoft, Oracle and Cisco. These were based on assessing existing needs and catering for certification tracks that are commonly required in the government.

The National IT Training and Awareness Framework will seek to further identify exact existing and future needs of specialised training in more detail. Once identified, these will be catered for through the specialised training programmes. To supplement these programmes, several informative seminars have been organised in association with technology partners such as Gartner, Microsoft, Oracle, Cisco and BSI Management Systems.

ITA ran a number of specialised pilot training programmes during the year, which resulted in fifteen out of ninety-eight civil servants who participated being awarded Microsoft MCSA certification. ITA also utilised twenty training seats that were made available through the Microsoft Licensing Agreement to “Train the Trainers”. Other training seats made available through the Microsoft Licensing Agreement were utilised to train government employees and the public in general. ITA continues to benefit from these seats and will offer more training programmes in 2009.
3.4 Community IT Training (CITT)

CITT aims to deliver literacy training programmes to the community through the use of Community Knowledge Centres (CKC) that will be implemented throughout the Sultanate. CKCs aim to reduce computer illiteracy and bridge the differences in exposure to digital technologies among the community by providing free basic education in IT and Internet usage. CKCs aim to help and assist people expand their access to information, improve productivity, enhance their quality of life, and enrich culture and tradition by increasing communication and interaction.

The pilot phase of the Community IT Training project was launched during the 2007 Salalah Tourism Festival, which featured the bright perspective of realising eOman. Two hundred and forty-five participants, both male and female, were trained and awarded accredited certification in computer basics and Internet in a graduation ceremony. During the Salalah Tourism Festival 2008, ITA’s Community IT Training Program was resumed, and over three hundred participants graduated as part of its first phase. The training was organised at ITA exhibition booths located at the Municipality Recreation Centre and Salalah College of Technology (SCT).

As part of the pilot phase, eight instructors were trained by ITA in partnership with Microsoft under the “Train the Trainers” programme. Trainers were selected from a pool of unemployed IT graduates and they, in turn, have trained
over three hundred people (195 females and 108 males) under Microsoft’s Digital Literacy curriculum.

The training programme organised during the Salalah Festival season received excellent response and Omanis from Dhofar utilised the opportunity for cost-free IT education. A national rollout plan is being put in place to launch the Community IT Training programme in full. This is expected to take place in 2009.

Community Knowledge Centres (CKCs)

In July 2008, a formal MoU was signed between the Ministry of Sports Affairs (MoSA), Salalah College of Technology (SCT) and ITA to undertake cooperative efforts to establish permanent CKCs at their premises.

The establishment of the CKCs is part of the Community IT Training project, which falls under the umbrella of the National IT Training and Awareness Framework Initiative. ITA aims to establish several Community Knowledge Centres in different parts of the Sultanate and a contract was signed with Vendor to equip and set up four in Muscat, Sohar, Sur and Salalah. Each CKC will be fully equipped with the necessary computing and communication items and furnishings. Further, the “Train The Trainer” programme will be provided to a pool of unemployed IT graduates who are being prepared to act as trainers.

The public can utilise the CKCs for accessing the Internet and eServices, and participating in information technology training. This eOman initiative will further support members of the community to prepare for higher Digital Literacy certification.

3.5 National PC Initiative

The National PC Initiative aims to boast two main pillars in ITA’s strategy, namely, capacity building and PC penetration. The programme intends to create a PC bundle package that is affordable and provides value through Internet access vouchers and basic training modules. The latter are designed to get the citizens off to a flying start in his/her ability to use the core system and Internet, and to further increase the PC penetration rate.

A feasibility study has been carried out to determine the best options to implement this project. A national rollout plan for selected sections of the community is expected to be carried out in 2009.
ITA has been working with government organisations to enhance their overall performance through the use of innovative IT solutions and services, which has been achieved primarily through governance and advisory services whereby ITA has continued to assist ministries and other government organisations in evaluating and implementing IT projects and eService initiatives.
Focused advisory services have resulted in aligning exciting plans towards the ultimate goals of the eOman initiative, while ensuring projects being rolled out by government organisations are meeting globally accepted standards and best practices, as well as satisfying the technical requirements of the eOman strategy. Typically these initiatives are aimed at automating work processes, redeveloping or enhancing existing applications, adding new online services, integrating services to ensure end-to-end delivery and addressing the security of internal networks. It should be noted that all governance and advisory services offered by ITA to other organisations were delivered through in-house professionals with a strong technical knowledge as well as a deep understanding of the ultimate technical architecture to be achieved as part of implementing the eOman strategy to government enterprise infrastructures.

ITA has also focused on implementing a number of initiatives that were geared towards achieving a set of goals that meet the immediate and long-term requirements of the government and which form building blocks in the overall eGovernment architecture. These are listed in Chapter 2: Oman’s eTransformation.

In this chapter, we outline the governance and advisory services offered to government organisations, and highlight the achievements of projects launched by ITA, in collaboration with other government organisations.

4.1 Connected Government

Between 2005 and 2008, the United Nations adopted a clear view of the concept of electronic government that focused on delivering government services online to achieve the more comprehensive concept of connected government.
This concept is derived from various government units being linked into a seamless single unit through the use of integrated IT systems to enable the provision of high-quality services to the public and to activate the production and promotion of innovation. This can only be achieved through the adoption of frameworks, standards and technical processes aimed at providing access to the concept of connected government.

ITA has been pursuing the adoption of this objective through the eOman Digital Society Strategy in support of the connected government concept currently adopted by the UN. Since their inception, all ITA plans, as well as core technical infrastructures currently under implementation, have been geared towards the ultimate goal of integrating government applications and services and providing access to the connected government through a unified multi-channel access infrastructure.

By ensuring that projects and initiatives within the government are executed through a unified IT governance framework and are in alignment with best practices in this field, ITA will ensure that government performance is maximised and ultimately reaches the desired state of integration.

4.2 Advisory Services to Ministries

In 2008, ITA offered a number of advisory and consultancy services to different government entities ranging from assessing investment proposals, studying and analysing functional requirements, developing requests for proposals and performing vendor evaluation, among others.

ITA developed the scope of work for the Standards Review Consultancy Contract (Phase Two), reviewed contract proposals from vendors and selected vendors for contract negotiations. It also finalised negotiations on the eTendering Project Contract with vendors, approved contracts from relevant bodies and assisted in the project launch.
Some of the consultancy services rendered are listed below:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entity/Customer</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Authority for Social Services</td>
<td>Review of the Evaluation of Smart Card Proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry of Sports Affairs</td>
<td>Evaluation of computer network – Al Saadah Complex – MoSA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry of Civil Service</td>
<td>Transfer of payroll system from MoF</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cabinet of Ministers</td>
<td>Decision Support System for Cabinet of Ministers – Request for Proposal Preparation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dhofar Municipality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
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<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>Business Process Re-engineering Advisory Services</td>
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<td>Ministry of Commerce and Industry</td>
<td>IT Infrastructure Upgrade and Disaster Recovery Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry of Sports Affairs</td>
<td>Document Management System - Vendor Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry of Heritage and Culture</td>
<td>Data Center and Office Automation Applications – RFP (Request for Proposal)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>Portal Rollout and Managed Operations Budget Requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ministry of Justice</td>
<td>Document Management System - Implementation Review and Analysis</td>
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<td>Ministry of Heritage and Culture</td>
<td>Request for Proposal - Manuscript Archival System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Heritage and Culture</td>
<td>Vendor Evaluation - Manuscript Archival System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Civil Service</td>
<td>Vendor Evaluation - Document Management System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>Request for Proposal for Agricultural Statistics System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs</td>
<td>Evaluation of Data Centre Proposals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs</td>
<td>Request for Proposal for the Data Centre and New Infrastructure Requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs</td>
<td>Support in the Tendering Process for the Data Centre and Infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Research Council</td>
<td>Advice on the Research Council’s IT Strategy and Project Management Office Setup</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Ministry of Justice
- Study of the Draft of Common Rules to Combat Crimes of Information Technology in the GCC

### Ministry of Civil Service
- Transfer of Payroll System from MoF – (MoNE)
- MoCS Advisory on Documenting Business Processes

### Ministry of Sports Affairs
- Advise on Developing an Request for Proposal – Gulf Cup 19

### Telecommunication Regulatory Authority
- Study on of the Import and Export Controls and Re-export and Use of Encryption Systems and Devices

### Tender Board
- eTendering System – Pre-implementation Phase
- eTendering – Implementation Phase

### Central Bank of Oman
- Study on of the Draft Royal Decree to Amend the Banking Act 114/2000

### Ministry of National Economy
- Evaluating Ministry of Social Development’s IT Requirements

### Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources
- Advisory Services on Technical and Budget Requirements for Connecting the Ministry’s Regional Offices

### Ministry of Higher Education
- Developing a Fibre Optic Request Proposal for the College of Applied Sciences

### Ministry of Information
- Cisco Maintenance Proposal Review for MoI

### State Council
- State Council Existing Software and Solutions Assessments and IT Roadmap

### Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources
- Request for Proposal for Data Centre Shifting

### Supreme Committee for Town Planning
- Anti-virus Upgrade and Licence Renewal

**ITA was also involved in:**

- Assisting in drafting RFPs and evaluating proposals for other ministries not mentioned above
- Developing relations management frameworks aimed at managing ITA relationships with government organisations
- Completing enhanced project management methodologies, processes and a manual published as ITA’s standard
- Developing the Oman eGovernance Framework (OeGAF) draft, including technology and process management practices
- Brochure conceptualisation, design, development and publishing for Oman eGovernance Framework
- Developing and approving the ITA Information Security Policy
- Developing the Privacy Policy and Security Policy for the eOman portal
- Developing Document Format Metadata Guidelines for collaborative document management environments and liaising with NRAA
to spread awareness to other government entities.

4.3 Innovation and Support Centre

The Innovation and Support Centre (ISC) was initiated on 22nd April 2007, with a core team of five Microsoft consultants. In its first year, ISC employed eight Omani nationals as its first batch of specialised professionals delivering the centre’s services. It now employs twenty-one people (five Microsoft employees and sixteen ITA employees). ISC was formally launched on 22nd January 2008.

ISC’s vision is to create a local ICT centre with world-class capabilities, managed and operated by highly trained Omanis. Its mission is to create innovative solutions, deploy the latest technologies, train local Omani talent, support IT environments through best practices aimed at enhancing government services and helping people, as well as government entities, to realise their potential.

The Innovation and Support Centre operates in line with the following objectives:

Empower individuals with skills and knowledge through training local Omani talent based on best practices and industry standards and becoming a host hub for internships.

Improve efficiency of government services through profiling of government entities, conducting IT and environment health checks, ensure best operating practices are followed and draft IT roadmaps for government entities.

Enhance the activities of IT departments through deployment of the latest Microsoft software, sharing development codes with clients, helping develop solutions for government
entities and developing shared services and solutions.

Operations Excellence Support through the deployment of high-quality backend server support, delivering proactive preventive maintenance services and sharing real-life experiences with all entities.

ISC is committed to transferring knowledge to local government staff and offering quality services through qualified professional staff. As a customer-service-oriented organisation, ISC focuses on encouraging creative and innovative thinking among its staff, aimed at tackling challenges facing customers while coming up with customer-centric solutions. To achieve this target, ISC uses the latest technology in the market in its daily operations and for supporting its customers.

ISC has a number of inherent strengths including certified staff with extensive experience in their field, multinational experience obtained from large companies and industry-leading corporations, well-defined target groups, specialised teams in different technology areas and a direct link to Microsoft and its worldwide resources.

ISC services are built on the following three main pillars:

**Business and IT Strategy Alignment**

Business alignment is the process of identifying the best way that IT services can support business goals within an organisation. The primary objective is to assist in identifying the required business and IT capabilities for any business in order that it can achieve its goals.

**Enterprise Architecture**

Enterprise Architecture is the formal organisation (design or layout) of components, structures and processes required or relevant to the attainment of goals and visions invested or envisioned in an enterprise. The centre advises its customers on issues relating to their enterprise architecture and assists customers in their implementation of them.

**Solution Design Services**

ISC provides Solution Design Services comprised of developing the guiding principles and architecture blueprint for core enterprise-wide services such as security, directory, application hosting, application integration and workflow, data access, data mapping and consolidation, portal and collaboration. This architecture definition and roadmap will guide subsequent service improvements through various projects.

**Microsoft Workshop PLUS Programmes**

The Innovation and Support Centre organised several Microsoft Workshop PLUS programmes as part of its efforts for capacity building through technical support and training.
The following table gives an itemised description of the number of trainees who participated in the programmes organised by ISC:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of workshop</th>
<th>Participants (No.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Desktop Deployment for Microsoft Vista and Office 2007</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Desktop Deployment: Windows Vista and Office 2007</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defense in Depth: Microsoft Windows Server 2003</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eServer Pro: Introduction to Network Infrastructure Configuration</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eServer Pro: Windows Server 2008 Overview</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eVista Pro: Vista Technology Specialist</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eZajil 4: Microsoft Exchange 2007 Troubleshooting</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eZajil 5: Migrating to Microsoft Exchange 2007</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eZajil 7: Microsoft Exchange 2007 Clustering</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eZajil 1: Introduction to Messaging and Microsoft Exchange 2003</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eZajil 2: Introduction to Microsoft Exchange 2007</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eZajil 3: In-Depth: Microsoft Exchange 2007</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eZajil 6: Introduction to Clustering on Microsoft Windows/Clustering Essentials</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Microsoft Virtual Server 2005</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft Active Directory Troubleshooting</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft System Centre Operation Manager</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft Vista Performance and Reliability</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Clustering Essentials</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security Outreach Workshop</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4.4 Technical Support to Ministries

A series of technical services were provided to a number of ministries, government departments and other government entities by ITA through the Innovation and Support Centre. Some of the major services are listed in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry/Govt. Entity</th>
<th>Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Defence</td>
<td>Change Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>Infra Consultancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Sport Affairs</td>
<td>Strategy Document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Oman Police Pension Fund</td>
<td>WSUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Sport Affairs</td>
<td>Exchange 2007 Upgrade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (KOM)</td>
<td>ITAP - Business Alignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Defence</td>
<td>Vista Deployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Audit Institution</td>
<td>ITAP – RFP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Defence</td>
<td>ITAP – PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Defence</td>
<td>Microsoft Forefront Client Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscat Securities Market</td>
<td>Microsoft Forefront Client Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Defence</td>
<td>Microsoft Forefront Client Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Manpower</td>
<td>AD Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscat Securities Market</td>
<td>Network Diagram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supreme Committee for Town Planning</td>
<td>CORE IO Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Information</td>
<td>CORE IO Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (KOM)</td>
<td>CORE IO Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Research Council</td>
<td>Exchange 2007 Upgrade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supreme Committee for Town Planning</td>
<td>WSUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Research Council</td>
<td>WSUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Bank of Oman</td>
<td>WSUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>Additional DC/Remove DC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Governance and Standards:
The Oman eGovernance Framework

ITA established the Oman eGovernance Framework and a number of associated standards and guidelines for adoption by IT and other government entities. Such standards and guidelines are:

- Oman eGovernance Framework
- Oman eGovernance Architecture Framework Design Principles
- XML Messaging Schema Guidelines
- IP Schema
- IP Schema Migration Guidelines
- Information Security Policy Manual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Manpower</td>
<td>AD Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>Model Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Audit Institution</td>
<td>Enabling of External e-mails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sultan’s Special Force</td>
<td>AD and Exchange implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>Desktop Deployment Training Session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Bank of Oman</td>
<td>Messaging Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman Establishment for Press, News Publication and Advertising</td>
<td>Hosted Messaging Setup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Audit Institution</td>
<td>Messaging Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>Model Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>AD Consultancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>AD Consultancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>AD Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Manpower</td>
<td>AD Upgrade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Manpower</td>
<td>Exchange 2007 Installation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Manpower</td>
<td>MDT/DOVO/DDPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Sport Affairs</td>
<td>Domain Upgrade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Sport Affairs</td>
<td>Vista Deployment Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Sport Affairs</td>
<td>Office Communications Server</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Abbreviation Legend

- **AD**: Active Directory
- **DC**: Domain Controller
- **ITAP**: Microsoft Information Technology Architecture and Planning
- **CORE IO**: Core Infrastructure Optimisation DC
- **WSUS**: Windows Server Update Services
- **RFP**: Request For Proposal
- **PM**: Project Management
- **MDT**: Microsoft Deployment Toolkit
- **DOVO**: Desktop Optimisation Services using Windows Vista and 2007 Office
- **DDPS**: Desktop Deployment Planning Services
The Oman eGovernance Framework (OeGAF) is a set of standards/best practices and processes for management of systems aimed at enhancing the delivery of government services in alignment with the mission of ITA. The eGovernance Framework was developed in-house, utilising ITA professional resources and was published as a draft. This governance framework will be further reviewed in accordance with OeGAF standards, once completed, to arrive at an enhanced version that is further aligned to the architectural framework to be developed in the future.

The Oman eGovernment Architecture Framework, which is the technology component of the Oman eGovernance Framework, serves as a guide to the development, deployment and operations of information systems of government entities, and OeGAF contains the principles, strategies and building blocks that support the business goals of the government. The architecture can direct the selection, use and operation of technologies needed to support government business requirements and delivery of services. It also reduces the time and cost of deploying applications, while making it easier to integrate information and services.

OeGAF helps the government to act as an integrated enterprise and to manage IT as a strategic investment.

ITA finalised a services RFP and has entered into negotiations with a global leader for the provision of services related to the development of technical and business standards and thus the establishment of an Oman eGovernment Architecture Framework and standards.

OeGAF will consist of the following architectural layers:

- Business Architecture
- Information Architecture
- Technical Architecture
- Solution Architecture
- Security Architecture

On completion, the standards will be adhered to by government agencies, suppliers and contractors for IT projects in order to reach the goal of connected government and to provide high-quality electronic government services.
4.6 Security Framework

Information Security Management System (ISMS) is a framework for managing information security in an organisation. It is a risk-based approach to enhance the security of an organisation through a systematic process.

**ISMS includes the following components to protect and preserve information and manage information risks:**

- Policies, procedures, plans, processes and practices
- Organisation structures – people – their roles and responsibilities
- Technology (hardware and software)

ITA will pilot ISMS internally before introducing it to other government organisations, once successfully completed.

**The benefits of implementing ISMS in ITA, as well as in other organisations, are:**

- Demonstration of ITA’s commitment to information security
- Enhanced security strategy and planning
- Effective, efficient and ongoing management of information security
- Reduced likelihood of information security incidents from occurring
- Detection of incidents and their effects
- Protection of the information from the effects of an incident
- Responding to incidents, recovering quickly and reducing the impact of a security incident.
- Improved customer, employee and partner confidence
- Enhanced and manageable security auditing and assurance
- Implementation of a standardised and repeatable approach for government

4.7 ISMS Consulting Services

Apart from planning for the establishment, implementation and management of ITA’s internal ISMS, the organisation has provided guidance and consultancy services to Oman’s government agencies geared towards establishing, managing and consistently monitoring their Information Security Management Systems.

**ITA guides and supports government agencies to:**

- Understand the concept of Protecting Information Assets from a business perspective
- Understand risk management methodologies and apply commensurate controls to handle the identified risks
- Act proactively and reactively to ensure the timely management of information security incidents
- Maintain up-to-date knowledge of government policies and recommended practices
- Spread the importance of information security across various levels – executive management, IT management, business departments and the entire user community
- Acquire, maintain and share resources related to all aspects of information security
As part of its outreach programme, ITA organised several seminars, workshops, conferences and events during which the progress of Digital Oman and the transformation of Oman as a Knowledge Economy were discussed and analysed.
5.1 eGovernment Capacity Building Workshop

In his address to the Council of Oman, His Majesty stressed the importance of information and communication technologies in the nation’s progress into the 3rd millennium, and directed government institutions to enhance their performance and develop eGovernment services through a national strategy.

In light of His Majesty’s directions, ITA, in partnership with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), conducted a workshop on “Capacity Building of eGovernment Services, Policies and Content” in November 2008.

This was the first workshop held for senior public sector IT professionals and was conducted by Mr. Richard Kerby, eGovernment Advisor, and Waimin Kwok, Knowledge Management Advisor at UNDESA.

The workshop aimed to build capacity within the government sector in aligning efforts towards eGovernment and working together to transform the delivery of public services through digital technologies.

The second workshop was held under the auspices of H.E. Mohammed Nasser Al Khasibi, Chairman of ITA. High-level government officials attended the workshop.

The workshop aimed to achieve the eGovernment vision through collaboration and support between public sector entities in the process of transformation. The workshop sessions sought to share UN guidelines for a quality online presence in order to serve the public more efficiently and effectively.
The workshops focused on discussion of the advantages of eGovernment services, solutions and content. The interactive working session was built on existing knowledge available to create an eGovernment-friendly environment among ministries and government institutions and included the objectives and aims of improving the web presence of government information online (Government Online) and how to achieve the objectives by introducing Knowledge Management (KM) within public offices.

Based on the challenges identified and the recommendations presented during the workshop, the following action points were identified as the way forward:

- Utilising the workshop as a beginning to move forward by developing ministerial action plans to align efforts in line with the nation’s Digital Oman strategy
- Recommending improvement of government agencies’ presence online and offering more eServices for the benefit of the public
- ITA’s continuing support to the public sector by enhancing technical infrastructure to offer eServices, re-engineering business processes, online and face-to-face training for civil employees in IT programmes
- The need to form a network of government IT professionals to facilitate increased cooperative efforts in developing Oman using ICT
- Maintaining up-to-date content online by and extending increased support through offering and aligning eServices through the integrated eGovernment Services Portal
- Giving increased priority to training employees and building capacity within the civil service and public so that the benefits offered by eServices are fully utilised
- Emphasis was placed on the ownership of eGovernment initiatives and the need to motivate every professional to act as an eGovernment champion and drive their organisation towards changing from a traditional style to a modern citizen-oriented philosophy harnessing the power of ICT tools.

5.2 eCommerce Seminars in Salalah

The eCommerce seminar series, organised by the Information Technology Authority in collaboration with Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Salalah, was held in the theatre of the Directorate General of Heritage and Culture in Salalah under the auspices of Ahmed bin Sulaiman Al Maimani, Undersecretary for Administrative and Financial Affairs at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The seminar was attended by Dr. Salim bin Sultan Al Ruzaqi, CEO of ITA, along with a number of government officials and IT specialists.

The seminar was part of Phase Two of the eOman awareness campaign that aims to promote a digital culture within the community and encourage individuals to acquire IT-related skills. The effort to promote eCommerce and highlight issues related to it was part of ITA’s “Promoting a Digital Culture” awareness campaign.
Specialists and eminent speakers presented a number of working papers from ministries, government departments, trade organisations and ITA. The topics included eCommerce and the role of IT in its development, experiences gained from eCommerce, the impact of eCommerce on business sectors, and the importance of ePayment portals and eMarketing for individuals and the corporate sector.

5.3 eLearning Seminars

ITA organised a seminar series on eLearning that was held in the theatre of the Directorate General of Heritage and Culture, Salalah, under the auspices of H.E. Dr. Abdullah bin Mohammed Al Sarmi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Higher Education. The seminar was attended by Dr. Salim bin Sultan Al Ruzaiqi, CEO of ITA, and a number of local officials, IT experts and members of the public.

The seminar series was held as part of Phase Two of the eOman awareness campaign organised by ITA under the theme “Promoting a Digital Culture” to coincide with the Salalah Tourism Festival 2008. The campaign aimed to raise awareness of the importance of IT and encourage individuals and corporate entities to benefit from the wide range of services available through the Internet.

5.4 ePayment Seminars

A series of ePayment seminars was organised by the ITA in the theatre of the Directorate General of Heritage and Culture in Dhofar.

The ePayment Gateway is one of the infrastructure projects for eOman, which provides individuals and businesses in the Sultanate with the ability to pay fees for services and the value of products through the Internet.
The seminars were part of eOman’s second awareness campaign organised by ITA under the theme “Promoting a Digital Culture”, held during the Salalah Tourism Festival 2008 in a bid to raise awareness of the importance of IT and encourage individuals to acquire necessary skills.

5.5 eTransactions Law Seminar

ITA organised a seminar on the eTransactions Law under the auspices of Majid bin Abdullah Al Alawi, President, Court of Administrative Justice, at the Grand Hyatt Hotel on 23rd November 2008.

In a move towards creating a suitable environment for secure electronic transactions, the Sultanate of Oman has issued the eTransactions Law by Royal Decree 69/2008. This seminar aimed to bring local and regional experts under one roof to understand the purpose and scope of this new law.

The seminar consisted of the following sessions: “Authentic Email as Evidence” by Makram Osman, “The Tunisian Experience in the Field of Electronic Validation” by Engr. Adel Al-Sultani, “Information Privacy” by Dr. Rashid bin Hamad Al Balushi, “Electronic Signatures” by Ashraf Khafagy, “General Framework of the Electronic Transactions Act” by Dr. Shihab bin Ahmed Al Jabri, “Methods of Proof in Civil and Commercial Transactions between the Evidence Act and the Electronic Transactions Act” by Assem Abdel-Jabbar Saad, Chancellor, and “The Concept of E-Editing and the Extent of its Authority in Evidence” by Dr. Mostafa Mandour.

5.6 Workshop on eContent

ITA organised a two-day workshop on 15th and 16th December 2008 for public sector representatives on eContent. The sessions were delivered by Jak Boumans, Deputy Chair of the Board of Directors, World Summit Award.

eContent is defined as digital content that can be delivered through different media, including online and offline modes. Boumans explained the latest trends and informed participants that due to advancements in information and communication technologies, the production and supply chains for digital content has changed to include user involvement and user-generated interactive content. With this new model in mind, it is important to identify good digital content, recognise its excellence and present it as a role model for solutions in specific applications.

The digital revolution in information and communication technologies has created a platform for the free flow of information, ideas and knowledge across the globe. The purpose of the World Summit on the Information Society is to ensure that these benefits are accessible to all, while promoting specific advantages in areas such as eStrategies, eCommerce, eGovernance, eHealth, education, literacy, cultural diversity, gender equality, sustainable development and environmental protection.

The workshop was held as part of the efforts being made by the ITA to build capacity within the government sector and enable them to provide quality eContent to the public in an inclusive manner.
Seminars, Workshops and Conferences

5.7 Seminar on Enterprise Architecture

A seminar on Enterprise Architecture was organised by the ITA on 28th May 2008 at the KOM Building, Rusayl. The event was attended by IT managers in the government sector and selected ITA staff.

The seminar was organised with a view to addressing two main themes, namely the planning and governance aspects of enterprise architecture. It also aimed to introduce the public sector to concepts and an overview of “Enterprise Architecture”.

Brian Burke, an analyst for Gartner Consulting, specialising in enterprise architecture and IT portfolio management, conducted the seminar. He covered issues such as the role and value of Enterprise Architecture, stakeholders and their involvement, and how to incrementally roll out initiatives that benefit from Enterprise Architecture. Brian shared his experience of over twenty years with public sector participants in the areas of technology and strategy, as well as his groundbreaking work in developing federated architectures.

5.8 eGovernment Services Portal Content Workshop

ITA conducted a workshop on the eGovernment Services Portal, the Sultanate’s main gateway to electronic services offered by the government.

Presentations were made on the content and infrastructure of the eGovernment Services Portal at the workshop, which was attended by representatives from a number of ministries. Details of the content collection process involving stakeholder ministries and how Oman can integrate the delivery of eServices were discussed. The ITA team briefed participants on how ministries can prepare content in a manner that will facilitate its delivery through the portal, the first national project towards eGovernance.
The Information Technology Authority hosted several landmark events to mark the close of the year, in addition to its participation in a number of important festivals that took place.
6.1 Muscat Festival 2008

ITA participated in the Muscat Festival for the first time and showcased innovative government services to visitors.

The following organisations presented their eService initiatives under the single umbrella of eOman: Muscat Municipality, the Ministry of Sports Affairs, the Ministry of Higher Education (Higher Education Admission Centre), the Ministry of Transport and Communications (Civil Aviation and Meteorology), the Ministry of Manpower, the Public Authority for Social Insurance, the Omani Women’s Association Muscat, the State Council, the Ministry of Civil Service, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and Muscat Securities Market.

Muscat Festival is the most important annual event that attracts both a national and international audience from all walks of life. This event is a unique opportunity for public and private sectors to deliver key messages about their mission and projects in an entertaining manner.

ITA utilised the event to address small gatherings of visitors and explain eOman’s mission, its status and the benefits to them as end users. The common theme of eOman gave the opportunity for other government units to showcase their achievements. There were several citizen-centric projects presented during ITA’s awareness sessions at its pavilion, which included the Government Citizen Training Programme, CTLC, the Innovation and Support Centre, and the PC Initiative.

In order to make the event educative as well as entertaining, ITA’s marketing team used several tools, such as brochures, cartoon films, presentations and corporate films to deliver customised messages to different groups of the audience.
6.2 Salalah Tourism Festival 2008

The ITA pavilion in the Salalah Tourism Festival provided visitors with a number of programmes and performances on eOman initiatives. ITA also had a facility at the Al Lubnah Family Village specially designed for families and children. The facility included an electronic corner for training children on IT services, as well as a children's theatre performance called “My Computer and I”.

The campaign included a number of seminars that covered IT-related issues including the infrastructure for eOman, ITA initiatives, eEducation, eCommerce, ePayment, the eTransactions Law and safe transactions using the Internet.

ITA also implemented a number of training programmes during the festival 2008 aimed at improving skills in using eServices.

Awareness Roadshow

During the Salalah Tourism Festival 2008, ITA launched Phase Two of the eOman roadshows under the theme “Promoting Digital Culture”. A series of educative sessions on averting online security risks, eLaw protection, ePayment and eLearning services were held with experts from ITA, public and private sectors and industry. This was aimed at motivating the community to adopt a digital lifestyle and become pioneers of a digital culture.

Through a schedule of awareness programmes and skill-building workshops, ITA raised public awareness about the secure use of information communication technologies, the progress of eOman projects and their benefits to the community. With a special focus on children and women, ITA also hosted a series of plays and competitions at the Al Lubnah Family Village. The plays depicted the newly emerging digital culture and the benefits of using technology.
in various walks of life. In addition, weekly raffle draws of laptops were conducted through television programmes, and several other live competitions were conducted specially for the children. The IT Talent Corner in the family village, established by ITA, housed a host of computers loaded with interactive software designed especially for children to interact and learn.

6.3 eGovernment Services Exhibition

The Information Technology Authority took part in COMEX 2008 for the second time with a eGovernment Services exhibition showcasing the eServices offered by public sector entities in Oman.

ITA is fully cognisant of the fact that Comex is an important exhibition that stimulates keen interest within the information and communication sectors of Oman and the region. This annual event is increasing in size every year, both in terms of participants and visitors.

ITA initiated broad participation of the public sector under the wider gamut of eOman, highlighting progress in the delivery of eServices. Approximately eighteen different government entities were present under one roof to showcase their services and encourage the public to utilise them.

ITA also presented the progress of its flagship projects such as the eGovernment Services Portal, ePayment gateway, government network, Digital Society projects, the National Data Centre, community training programme and the national PC initiative, among others.
Through the dedicated section of the eOman pavilion, ITA conducted informative and interactive seminars on its eOman projects. These were further complemented by technical presentations by several private sector companies including Microsoft, Oracle, Cisco and Fortinet.

**ITA wins the Comex 2008 Award for eGovernment Awareness**

ITA won the award for eGovernment initiatives and awareness in the most important ICT event in Oman – Comex 2008.

The award recognised ITA’s contribution to Comex 2008 by including a large number of government organisations and presenting their websites and eServices to the public, Public Prosecution, State Council, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of Civil Services, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Sports Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of National Economy, the Ministry of Manpower, the Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources, the Ministry of Transport and Communication (Civil Aviation), the Public Authority for Social Insurance, the Ministry of Social Development, Sultan Qaboos University and Muscat Municipality were all present at the eOman pavilion.

Some of the ministries launched their websites during Comex 2008 and Muscat Municipality launched their customer relationship management system during the event. ITA staff organised several technical presentations in association with the private sector, and many school students benefited by attending them. It is estimated that over fifteen thousand people visited the eGovernment Services Exhibition and walked away with increased awareness about the eServices offered, as well as those that would soon be launched in the Sultanate.

### 6.4 Imagine Cup 2008

Following the success of the inaugural event across the region this year, the Imagine Cup was given another boost when the Information Technology Authority and Microsoft joined forces to run the Imagine Cup 2008 programme in the Sultanate of Oman.

The worldwide technology competition, which included nearly a hundred thousand students from one hundred and eleven countries, was a way to inspire young people to apply their imagination, passion and creativity to technology innovations in order to create a better world.

Imagine Cup is a premier student technology competition in which teams and individuals submit their projects online or in person for a chance to compete at the global finals – like the Olympics of Technology. Held in a different country every year, the event aims to inspire young people to conceive and build innovative technology solutions to real-world challenges.
Competitions covered nine categories including software design, embedded development, Web development, short film, photography, IT, algorithms and a programming battle called “Project Hoshimi”.

Microsoft has formed a strong alliance with the Government of Oman by way of agreements for the public sector to use licensed Microsoft desktop and server software and the establishment of Oman’s first Innovation and Support Centre.

6.5 World Information Society Day

The Information Technology Authority celebrated the World Information Society Day on 17th May 2008. The theme for the year was “Connecting People with Disabilities: ICT Opportunities for All” and it aimed to address the special requirements of people with disabilities. ITA honoured visually impaired students with laptops and specialised screen reader software.

The World Summit on the Information Society, through the Geneva Plan of Action, urged member states to address the special requirements of people with disabilities in their national eStrategies, and encouraged the design and production of ICT equipment and services required for their needs, including adherence to the Universal Design Principle and use of assistive technologies. A further call was made for research and development to facilitate accessibility of ICT for all.
The World Information Society Day 2008, called for action from all stakeholders to raise awareness on the need to adopt policies and strategies that would meet the ICT needs of those with disabilities by ensuring that both equipment and services are made accessible to them.

Oman’s focus during the year was on meeting the ICT needs of people with disabilities and empowering every citizen with information and knowledge, improving the lines of communication to the remotest and most vulnerable groups, and building an inclusive information society geared towards the advancement of a better, more peaceful and productive world.

6.6 HCT-IT Open Day

The Information Technology Authority of Oman backed the IT Open Day Students’ Festival of the Higher Colleges of Technology.

Several activities for students, educators and professionals from both public and private sector organisations were held with the aim of promoting excellence and acquainting attendees with the latest advances in IT. The event fostered an open and fruitful relationship with participating companies and institutions.

The highlights of the open day included a technology exhibition with an interactive forum for product demonstration, technical sessions conducted by invited IT professionals and experts from industry, interactive sessions between the IT industry and academia, project presentations by selected IT students and a quiz.

ITA’s team presented a range of activities, including presentations on eOman initiatives, and ITA’s vision, mission and key projects. They created an opportunity for direct interaction with students, engaging and educating them in the use of electronic services. Students also utilised the open day to conduct a survey on their awareness of ITA, eOman initiatives, availability of Internet services, demographics and IT knowledge.
6.7 Oman Web Awards 2007

The Third Oman Web Awards Competition grand finale, held under the auspices of the Information Technology Authority, was held on 8th March 2008, during which the winners for the year 2007 were formally announced. There were over one hundred and seventy participants in twenty-three different categories.

The Oman Web Awards are held to promote the spirit of innovation and creativity, raise the standards of web design and websites, advocate the growth and development of local talent, promote intellectual property awareness and encourage all sectors to become involved in the digital economy. Furthermore, competition among national websites develops an interactive, proactive and reactive community, and the Oman Web Awards encourage all sectors to showcase their websites and be effective in promoting their online identity.

The most valuable Diamond Award for the Best Website of the Year was conferred on the Ministry of Education’s Education Portal. The prestigious Best Web Designer of the Year Award went to TBWA/Zeenah, based on a scoring system that awarded points to the web designers on the winning websites in each category. Due to the large number of registrations, the competition was intense compared to the last two years.
The year 2008 was one of consolidation for the Information Technology Authority, which spread its gamut of influence to several countries in the region. In addition many international trips were undertaken, as well as participation in major regional and international events.
7.1 Geneva Education Indicators Workshop 2008

For the first time in the history of the Middle East, the Ministry of Education presented its Education Portal at this major intentional event held in Geneva, in May 2008.

This portal is an electronic communications system that links all educational components using several online programmes. It also facilitates educational and administrative processes for presentation in an effective and attractive manner.

The online portal achieves the fast completion of transactions in a simplified manner, eliminating cumbersome procedures. Since the portal provides an extended and flexible educational environment for innovative teaching and learning, it will provide additional impetus to distance learning through virtual classrooms and self-learning skills. The efficiency of educational planning and evaluation methodologies has improved through operational management efforts. The portal has, so far, been introduced in two educational zones, with total of 304 schools connected and approximately 112,807 students and 6,855 teachers using it for online interaction.

7.2 Government Leaders Forum (GLF) Arabia 2008

H.E. Mohammed Nasser Al Khasibi, Secretary General, Ministry of National Economy, and Chairman of the Information Technology Authority, led a delegation to the Government Leaders Forum Arabia held on 24th and 25th April 2008 in Abu Dhabi.

The event was organised by Microsoft Middle East and Africa under the theme “Accelerating Arab Competitiveness”. Government leaders from across the Arab world exchanged experiences and discussed driving forces for enhancing government competitiveness.

Bill Gates was the keynote speaker at GLF Arabia 2008.

The ITA delegation comprised members of the ITA Board, the CEO of ITA and other government officials from various public sector organisations. The key themes of the Forum were enhancing government competitiveness through capacity development, innovation and government modernisation.
7.3 Bahrain International eGovernment Forum

ITA participated in the Bahrain International eGovernment Forum from 19th to 21st May 2008, held under the auspices of Sheikh Muhammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister, Kingdom of Bahrain.

The Forum assembled GCC and international experts to discuss and debate key issues and future directions in eGovernment.

Bringing together the very latest solutions and the brightest minds in government and industry, the Bahrain International eGovernment Exhibition and Forum was an important event and ITA considered it a perfect opportunity to promote eOman.


For the first time, a panel comprising the Heads of GCC eGovernment Directorates joined a general open discussion with all participants attending the forum. Dr. Salim Al Ruzaiqi, CEO of ITA, joined a panel with other eGovernment experts from Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.
The aim was to share GCC eGovernment experiences, current and future plans, and to discuss the challenges facing eGovernment strategies and operational management.

As part of this conference the ITA team also participated in an exhibition showcasing the progress of eOman projects including infrastructure, eServices and capacity-building initiatives. The Ministry of Education (Education Portal) and Muscat Municipality also exhibited their systems, along with those of ITA.

ITA showcased a number of initiatives at the Bahrain eGovernment Forum, including the current status of projects undertaken by the Authority, such as the eGovernment Services Portal, through which citizens and businesses can access government information and services online; the Government Data Centre, a centralised business engine and repository for mission-critical information, IT applications and corporate data; the National IT Training and Awareness Framework, which is aimed at developing ICT skills and capabilities, and increasing government and community awareness and proficiency; the Standards Framework, which ensures the seamless integration of eServices from public sector entities; and the eTransactions Law, promulgated to legalise the use of electronic transactions.

7.4 InfoConnect 2008, Kuwait

The Information Technology Authority’s participation in Kuwait’s 27th International Information Technology, Office Systems and Communications Exhibition (INFOCONNECT) 2008 was a great success and visitors received eOman projects and services, showcased at this expo, with great interest.

The InfoConnect exhibition is the second largest exhibition
in the region for IT and communications, after GITEX - Dubai. H.E. the Minister of Endowment and Islamic Affairs inaugurated ITA’s stand.

Representatives from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education spoke about the eServices they offer, such as the Education Portal and the higher education admissions system. The Education Portal is a very advanced system connecting the Ministry of Education’s teaching and administrative staff to the parents of school students.

7.5 Oracle CIO Executive Summit

Oracle hosted several hundred of the region’s chief information officers (CIOs) in Muscat on 13th October 2008 in association with the Information Technology Authority of Oman. Under the Patronage of H.E. Mohammed Nasser Al Khasibi, Secretary General, Ministry of National Economy, and Chairman of the Information Technology Authority, this exclusive CIO executive summit brought together industry visionaries, Oracle executives and business leaders.

Dr. Salim Al Ruzaiqi, CEO of ITA, delivered his opening address and spoke about connected communities and ITA’s strategic mission towards eOman. Speakers focused on the challenges facing CIOs and discussed ways to identify best-in-class approaches to information and technology. Sergio Giaimoletto, Executive Vice President, Oracle Europe, Middle East and Africa, delivered the keynote address, which focused on the challenges of return on investments and the infrastructure demands presented by diversified economies.

The summit provoked discussions around middleware, enterprise-wide performance improvement, customer relationship management and other issues facing business leaders. This event was highly interactive with numerous opportunities to exchange thoughts and ideas with global industry leaders, key Oracle executives and fellow CIOs and business leaders.

7.6 ITA Delegation visits Cisco, Microsoft and Google in the USA

The Information Technology Authority paid official visits to the offices of Microsoft, Cisco and Google in the USA. The Chairman of ITA, H.E. Mohammed Nasser Al Khasibi, headed the delegation comprising Vice Chairman H.E. Sheikh Al Fadhel Mohammed Al Harthy, Eng. Nashiah bint Saud Al Kharousiyah, ITA Board member, Dr. Hammed Salim Rashid Al Rawahi, ITA Board member, Dr. Salim Al Ruzaiqi, CEO of ITA, and selected ITA staff.

The delegation visited Microsoft in Seattle, Washington, and attended a series of workshops and presentations at the executive briefing centre. Discussions were held between the team and Gerry Elliot, Microsoft’s Corporate Vice President for US Enterprise and Worldwide Industry Solutions. The tour included a visit to the Information and Testing Centre, the Simulation Centre and the House of the Future on the Microsoft campus. The main outcome of the visit was the initiation of a partnership between ITA and Microsoft to nurture creativity and innovation in IT through the Innovation and Support Centres that have been established in Oman. Through the various discussions that took place, Microsoft shared its strategy for its engagement programmes with governments, education and training
sectors. Officials of Microsoft affirmed their support for all education and capacity-building initiatives undertaken by ITA in the Sultanate. A workshop was held covering the EMEA citizenship programmes of the public sector, resulting in the company confirming that it will support promotion of Oman as a destination to host regional seminars and forums in the field of technology.

The delegation subsequently visited Cisco’s office in Silicon Valley, California, and met with John Chambers, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the company. The team from ITA was briefed on Cisco’s strategy for the upcoming markets of the region. As outcomes of several talks between the two parties, Cisco agreed to explore opportunities to partner with ITA and map projects in alignment with ITA’s visions. eLearning, new generation eGovernment and capacity building are areas in which both parties have agreed to work in close cooperation. The ITA delegation visited the Cisco Data Centre and toured their security infrastructure to gain a better understanding for Oman’s IT deployment. Both parties agreed to jointly focus on projects such as education, especially in the use of teleconferencing facilities, health and connected schools.

In the last leg of the US tour, the ITA team visited the premises of Google where they were briefed about the strategy of Google in the specialised areas of language translation and cooperative research partnerships with governments. Touring the Google premises helped the delegation understand the facilities that helped its staff engage creatively and enhance overall organisational productivity. In all, the tour to the IT giants in the US helped the ITA delegation understand the direction of these corporate houses, and the visit was very successful in forging useful cooperative and viable partnerships for the country’s IT projects and initiatives.
7.7 ITA Delegation to Korea

A delegation headed by H.E. Mohammed bin Nasser Al Khasibi, Secretary General of the Ministry of National Economy and Chairman of the Information Technology Authority, visited Korea.

H.E. Al Khasibi met with Korea’s Minister of Knowledge Economy, the Minister of Public Administration and other public and private sector officials. The delegation held discussions regarding ways of promoting cooperation in IT, communications and eGovernment. The team also learnt about Korea’s experience on developing its ICT industry.

The Chairman was accompanied by H.E. Sheikh Al Fadhel Mohammed Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Ministry of National Economy and Vice-Chairman of ITA, Dr. Salim Al Ruzaiqi, CEO of ITA, and other officials.

7.8 Delegation from Singapore


The meeting explored cluster development initiatives in the fields of eEducation and eJustice and further developed bilateral cooperation. The delegation from IDA also included
Yip Yuen Fong, Director; Serene Ho, Deputy Director; Syed Faruk, Executive Consultant, and Suzanna Lim, Senior Consultant at IDA.

The delegation visited officials at the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Law and Justice to hold further talks.

IDA is a statutory board of the Singapore Government and operates under the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA). Earlier, in November 2007, ITA and IDA signed a MoU to strengthen bilateral relationships between the two countries and to promote the exchange of information and experience on ICT matters.

7.9 Dubai Government Tech EMEA Conference

This conference was attended by high-level ICT personalities from different countries. ITA’s Chief of Infrastructure and eServices presented a paper on infrastructure and network, and the Chief of Governance participated as a moderator in the eGovernance session.

7.10 eGovernment Applications Conference, Syria

Participants from a number of Arab countries took part in the seventh Conference on eGovernment, jointly hosted by the Arab Administrative Development Organisation and the Arab Countries University.

The theme of the conference, held in Damascus, Syria, in August 2008, was “Direct Service for Citizens”.

ITA presented the eOman experience in building a community based on digital knowledge. Oman’s presentation was highly acclaimed and the country’s experience was cited as one of the most successful stories of eGovernment.

7.11 Good Governance Seminar, Tunis

The Arab Countries Initiative Working Group, in partnership with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), organised a seminar on Good Governance that was held in Tunis.

The main objective of this seminar was to explore solutions to obstacles in eGovernment development in Arab countries and to identify priorities in eGovernment implementation. It sought to address key priorities for eGovernment in each country in the next two years by identifying the challenges currently faced in implementing eGovernment and administrative simplification.

Initiatives and policy responses to overcome challenges were discussed in detail, and examples of good practices or innovative solutions developed and implemented in the area of eGovernment and administrative simplification were shared with Arab and OECD countries.

Oman presented its strategy goals and vision of eOman in eGovernment initiatives.

7.12 Electronic/Mobile Government in Arab States, Lebanon

ITA participated in the “Electronic/Mobile Government in Arab States: Building Capacity in Knowledge Management through Partnership” workshop, organised by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA) in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, from 18th to 20th November 2008, at the UN-ESCWA Headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon.
Oman participated in this workshop by presenting eOman initiatives and ITA’s strategy to achieve its vision and goals. ITA also presented a paper entitled “Challenges for eGovernment Implementation in the Arab World”.

The workshop explored the challenges and barriers to e/mGovernment development and reviewed current research. It also charted innovative practices of e/mGovernment development citing best practices and experiences.

The major objectives of the workshop were to facilitate active dialogue between the UN, various regional stakeholders and member states towards a framework of assessment on e/mGovernment development and to provide training on knowledge management in the development of the UN Global Knowledge Repository.

The workshop also aimed at forging partnerships for the future work on the UN Global Knowledge Repository and promoting regional cooperation and perspectives in e/m-government development through discussions and presentations.

7.13 Workshop on Cyber Legislation, Lebanon

This workshop aimed to encourage and motivate countries in the region that have not started to implement legislative procedures for electronic transactions. The workshop provided guidelines and the best practices to be followed.
Oman shared its experience in the field of eLegislation, and the Sultanate was showcased as the first country in the GCC to fight cyber crimes.

7.14 United Nations Public Service Award

The United Nations Public Service Award (UNPSA) is the most prestigious international recognition of excellence in public service. It rewards the creative achievements and contributions of public service institutions to more effective and responsive public administration worldwide. Through an annual competition, UN Public Service Awards promote the role, professionalism and visibility of the public service.

ITA nominated a number of ministries that serve citizens through electronic systems for this award. Three government offices reached the finals, and the Royal Oman Police (ROP) - Civil Status Systems (National Registration System) - was selected as the winner of UNPSA 2009 in the category of “Improving the Delivery of Services”. The ROP and ITA will travel to New York to receive the award and to attend an experts’ meeting on “Sharing Innovation in Governance and Public Administration”.

ITA Annual Report 2008
International tie-ups and collaborations form an integral part of IT development. ITA has initiated several steps to strengthen existing international collaborations and to open new fronts for furthering Oman’s IT development.
8.1 Agreement with Microsoft

ITA signed an agreement with Microsoft in July 2006 to procure licences in order to facilitate the use of Microsoft products by government organisations in the Sultanate of Oman. The three-year agreement encourages use of licenced software applications by government bodies and ensures the protection of intellectual property rights by discouraging the use of pirated applications. The programme initially covered 22,500 desktops and now encompasses 31,320 units. For servers 1,956 licences were issued in total.

8.2 Tie-up with Cisco

ITA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Cisco to undertake collaborative efforts to facilitate the draft of a high-level technical architecture for eOman and to create increased opportunities to enhance technical capabilities in a move to support the country’s transformation into a knowledge society. The MoU was signed by Dr. Salim Al Ruzaqi, CEO of ITA, and Sam Al Kharrat, Managing Director of Cisco Gulf.

Cisco will be sharing its Connected Government expertise in citizen centricity, standard common infrastructure, back-office reorganisation governance, new organisation models and social inclusion to develop a technical blueprint for eOman.

The scope of the MoU includes supporting human capital development within the country through Cisco’s Net Academies, the establishment of Connected Schools and offering of graduate programmes. Both ITA and Cisco will undertake several initiatives to share the expertise of Cisco and to serve the Omani community through eOman activities.

In addition, as part of its strategic relationship, ITA will be working with Cisco to organise seminars, specialised training programmes for the public sector and conferences that will enable Oman to play a leading role in the ICT landscape in partnership with the public and the private sectors.

ITA is pioneering the implementation of eOman, and signing the MoU with Cisco demonstrates its commitment to empowering individuals with skills and knowledge to meet society’s needs and expectations and to direct Oman towards becoming a knowledge-based economy.
To further promote a connected education community, selected schools in the Sultanate will be empowered with the latest in wireless technology, as well as ICT training programmes, as part of the MoU with Cisco. This will create new opportunities to improve the learning experience and prepare students to meet the challenges of a knowledge-based society.

To create a specialised pool of networking experts in Oman, Cisco will further extend the reach of its Networking Academies across the Sultanate. A graduate programme will be introduced to provide selected university graduates with the opportunity to enrol in Cisco’s International Programme to receive world-class training and certification.

8.3 Oracle Licensing Update

ITA and Oracle conducted the “Advanced Meta Link Workshop” on 27th August 2008. Meta Link provides access to online support, materials and offers Oracle’s technical consultancy through a dedicated Oracle site.

ITA and Oracle conducted the Oracle CIO summit, which is an important event in the region and is held annually in one of the countries in the region. In 2008 it was conducted in Muscat. Oracle presented their roadmap, strategy and latest technologies.

ITA issued a circular to all government entities informing them that the licences in the 2001 Oracle agreement have been fully utilised and any additional licensing requirements
International Collaborations

8.4 MoU with IDA International, Singapore

The Information Technology Authority signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Info-communications Development Authority (IDA), Singapore. The MoU aims to promote collaboration between the two organisations on ICT matters; specifically in the use of ICT in education, justice and the law, and trade and customs.

Through this agreement, efforts will be undertaken to promote exchanges regarding the use of ICT by the government and private sectors, which may further enhance and advance trade, investment, business and technology partnerships, and the collaboration between Oman and Singapore ICT industries.

The scope of collaboration through the MoU includes cooperative efforts on programmes and projects to be implemented by both public and private sectors, further accelerating the development and adoption of ICT in Oman, and developing ICT capabilities, manpower and industry in Oman. The MoU also envisages closer cooperation between companies based in Oman and Singapore to implement specific ICT projects in both countries. A high-level delegation from Singapore visited Oman to discuss areas of cooperation.
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## Auditor's Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2008

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Auditor's Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2008

Deloitte

Independent auditor's report
to the members of
Information Technology Authority

Report on the financial statements

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of the Information Technology Authority ("the Authority"), which comprise of the balance sheet as at 31 December 2008 and the statement of receipts and expenses, statement of changes in equity and cash flow statement for the year then ended and a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes as set out on pages 3 to 23.

Management responsibility for the financial statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards. This responsibility includes: designing, implementing and maintaining internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies; and making accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstance.

Auditor's responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing. Those standards require that we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatements of the financial statements. In making those risk assessments the auditor considers internal control relevant to the Authority's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Authority's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.
Independent auditor's report

to the members of

Information Technology Authority (continued)

Opinion

In our opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Information Technology Authority as of 31 December 2008, and of its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards.

Deloitte & Touche (M.E.) & Co. LLC
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
27 June 2009
Balance sheet at 31 December 2008

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
<th>2007 RO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASSETS</strong></td>
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<td>Non-current assets</td>
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<td>Intangible asset</td>
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<td>Property and equipment</td>
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<td><strong>CURRENT ASSETS</strong></td>
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<td>Trade and other receivables</td>
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<td>Cash and cash equivalents</td>
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<td><strong>Total current assets</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Total assets</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EQUITY AND LIABILITIES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
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<td>Retained surplus</td>
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<td>Non current liability</td>
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<td>End of service benefits</td>
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<td><strong>CURRENT LIABILITIES</strong></td>
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<td>Unearned revenue</td>
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<td>Trade and other payables</td>
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<td><strong>Total current liabilities</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Total equity and liabilities</strong></td>
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<td>23,873,989</td>
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</table>

The accompanying notes form an integral part of these financial statements.
Statement of receipts and expenses for the year ended 31 December 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
<th>2007 RO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RECEIPTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contributions from Ministry of Finance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reinvestment revenue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other income</td>
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<td>Total receipts</td>
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<td>17,825,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPENSES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinvestment cost</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>754,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amortization of intangible asset</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2,945,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depreciation of property and equipment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>264,153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries and employee related costs</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2,577,873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing expenses</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>384,871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance cost</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>442,421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultancy costs</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>221,471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General and administrative expenses</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>855,595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total expenses</td>
<td></td>
<td>8,446,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surplus for the year</td>
<td></td>
<td>9,379,130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statement of changes in equity for the year ended 31 December 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retained surplus</th>
<th>RO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balance at 1 January 2007</td>
<td>2,320,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surplus for the year</td>
<td>3,271,899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance at 1 January 2008</td>
<td>5,592,549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surplus for the year</td>
<td>9,379,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance at 31 December 2008</td>
<td>14,971,679</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The accompanying notes form an integral part of these financial statements.
Cash flow statement
for the year ended 31 December 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
<th>2007 RO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operating activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash receipts</td>
<td>21,750,388</td>
<td>7,365,471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash paid to employees and other suppliers net of receipts</td>
<td>(5,742,824)</td>
<td>(5,307,998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net cash from operating activities</td>
<td>16,007,564</td>
<td>2,057,473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investing activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of property and equipment</td>
<td>(433,885)</td>
<td>(323,814)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment of capital assets in progress</td>
<td>(7,491,376)</td>
<td>(499,336)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment for intangibles</td>
<td>(3,433,468)</td>
<td>(2,170,624)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net cash used in investing activities</td>
<td>(11,358,729)</td>
<td>(2,993,774)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net change in cash and cash equivalents</td>
<td>4,648,835</td>
<td>(936,301)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year</td>
<td>635,904</td>
<td>1,572,205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash and cash equivalents at end of the year</td>
<td>5,284,739</td>
<td>635,904</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The accompanying notes form an integral part of these financial statements.

1. General

Information Technology Authority (“the Authority”) was set up by the Royal Decree 52/2006 promulgated on 31 May 2006 with the objective to:

- Transform the Sultanate of Oman into a knowledge – based economy for achievement of social and economical benefits to the Omani society.
- Assist Government units in implementing IT projects.
- Implement National IT infrastructure projects and supervise all projects related to eOman Strategy implementation.
- Prepare regulations and implement measures necessary for the fulfillment of digital Oman society requirements and realization of integration for electronic service delivery.

The address of its registered office is P O Box 1807, Postal Code 130 Al Athaibah, Sultanate of Oman.

2. Adoption of new and revised International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)

For the year ended 31 December 2008, the Authority has adopted all of the new and revised standards and interpretations issued by the International Accounting Standard Board (IASB) and the International Financial Reporting Interpretations Committee (IFRIC) of the IASB that are relevant to its operations and effective for periods beginning on 1 January, 2008.

The adoption of these standards and interpretations has not resulted in changes to the Authority’s accounting policies and has not affected the amounts reported for the current year.

At the date of authorization of these financial statements, the following standards and interpretations were in issue but not yet effective:
The management anticipates that the adoption of the above standards and interpretations in future periods will have no material impact on the financial statements of the Authority.
3. Significant accounting policies

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared on the historical cost basis modified to include certain financial assets and financial liabilities at fair value.

Significant Accounting Policies

The following accounting policies have been consistently applied in dealing with items considered material to the Authority’s financial statements.

Revenue recognition

Contributions from Ministry of Finance (MOF) are recognized on the following basis:

- Contribution against general and administrative expenses are recognized according to approved budget by MOF during the concerned period,

- Contribution against capital expenditures are recognized according to the cash calls raised by the Authority.

Interest income is recognized in the statement of receipts and expenses as it accrues, taking into account the effective yield on the asset.

All other income is recognised on accrual basis.

Financing costs

Financing costs comprise interest payable on any financial transactions and foreign exchange gains and losses.

Intangible assets

Costs relating to licences are capitalised and amortised on a straight-line basis over the period of the licence.

Property and equipment

Property and equipment are stated at cost less accumulated depreciation and any impairment in value. Borrowing costs relating to fixed assets are capitalised up to the date the related asset is put to commercial use. Where an item of property and equipment comprises major components, having different useful lives it is accounted for as a separate item of property and equipment.

Expenditure incurred to replace a component of an item of property and equipment that is accounted for separately, including major inspection and overhaul expenditure, is capitalized. Other subsequent expenditure is capitalized only when it increases the future economic benefits embodied in the item of property and equipment. All other expenditure is recognized in the statement of receipts and expenses as an expense as incurred. Normal maintenance and repairs are charged to statement of receipts and expenses as and when incurred.

Depreciation is charged to the statement of receipts and expenses on a straight-line basis over the estimated useful lives of the asset. Freehold land and capital assets in progress are not depreciated.

Full depreciation is charged for the month in which asset is put in use and no depreciation is charged for the month in which asset is sold.

The estimated useful lives are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asset Type</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Furniture and fixtures</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor vehicles</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office equipment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware and terminals</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gains and losses on disposals of property and equipment are determined by reference to their carrying amounts and taken into account in determining operating profit.
3. Significant accounting policies (Continued)

**Impairment**

At each balance sheet date, the Authority reviews the carrying amounts of its tangible and intangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have suffered an impairment loss. If any such indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated in order to determine the extent of the impairment loss (if any).

The loss arising on an impairment of an asset is determined as the difference between the recoverable amount and the carrying amount of the asset and is recognised immediately in the income statement.

Where an impairment loss subsequently reverses, the carrying amount of the asset is increased to the revised estimate of its recoverable amount and recognised in the income statement immediately, provided that the increased carrying amount does not exceed the carrying amount that would have been determined had no impairment loss been recognised earlier.

**Capital assets in progress**

Capital assets in progress are stated at cost. When capitalized, these are transferred to the appropriate property and equipment category and depreciated in accordance with the Authority’s policy.

**Financial assets**

The principal financial assets are cash and cash equivalents and trade and other receivables.

Trade and other receivables are initially measured at their fair value and subsequently measured at amortised cost, using the effective interest method. Appropriate allowances for estimated irrecoverable amounts are recognised in the statement of receipts and expenses when there is objective evidence that the asset is impaired.

**Employees’ benefits**

Payments to a defined contribution retirement benefit scheme (Omani Government Social Security Scheme for Omani employees) are charged as expense as they fall due.

Employee entitlements to annual leave and leave passage are recognized when they accrue to employees and an accrual is made for the estimated liability arising as a result of services rendered by employees up to the balance sheet date.

End of service benefits for expatriate employees are accrued and accounted for as per Oman Labour Law.

**Cash and cash equivalents**

Cash and cash equivalents represents all cash and bank balances with a maturity of three months or less from the date of placement.

**Income tax**

The Authority is exempt from income tax.

**Foreign currencies**

**Functional and presentation currency**

Items included in the Authority’s financial statements are measured using Rials Omani which is the currency of the primary economic environment in which the Authority operates.

**Transactions and balances**

Foreign currency transactions are translated into the functional currency using the exchange rates prevailing at the dates of the transactions. Monetary assets and liabilities
denominated in foreign currencies at the balance sheet date are translated to Rials Omani at the foreign exchange rate prevailing at that date. Foreign exchange differences arising on translation are recognized in the statement of receipts and expenses.

**Financial liabilities**

The principal financial liabilities are trade and other payables. Trade and other payables are initially measured at cost and are subsequently measured at amortized cost.

**Account payables and accruals**

All goods or services received during the year, whether billed or not to the Authority, are recognized as liabilities.

**Provisions**

A provision is recognized in the balance sheet where the Authority has a legal or constructive obligation as a result of a past event and it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will be required to settle the obligation. If the effect is material, provisions are determined by discounting the expected future cash flows at a rate that reflects current market assessments of the time value of money and, where appropriate, the risks specific to the liability.

**Depreciation**

Depreciation is charged so as to write off the cost of assets over their estimated useful lives. The calculation of useful lives is based on management’s assessment of various factors such as the operating cycles, the maintenance programs, and normal wear and tear using its best estimates.

**Amortization**

License cost is amortized on a straight line basis over the period of the license.

**4. Critical accounting judgments and key sources of estimation uncertainty**

In preparing the financial statements in conformity with IFRS, requires the use of certain accounting estimates and assumptions which affect reported income, expenses, assets, liabilities and related disclosures. The use of available information and application of judgment based on historical experience and other factors are inherent in the formation of estimates. Actual results in the future could differ from such estimates. The significant estimate in the preparation of these financial statements is primarily in respect of income to be recovered in respect of expenses and useful life of property and equipment.
5. Intangible asset

(a) COST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
<th>2007 RO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>License and trade marks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening balance</td>
<td>6,497,547</td>
<td>6,490,385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software purchased during the year</td>
<td>1,250,968</td>
<td>7,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer from work-in-progress</td>
<td>138,120</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing balance</td>
<td>7,886,635</td>
<td>6,497,547</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AMORTIZATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
<th>2007 RO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening balance</td>
<td>(3,245,193)</td>
<td>(1,081,731)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amortization during the year</td>
<td>(2,945,316)</td>
<td>(2,163,462)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing balance</td>
<td>(6,190,509)</td>
<td>(3,245,193)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CARRYING AMOUNT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
<th>2007 RO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closing balance</td>
<td>1,696,126</td>
<td>3,252,354</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cost includes license costs of RO 6,490,385 acquired from Microsoft for products for a period of three years. Cost of acquisition is amortized over the period of the license in accordance with the agreement dated 27 June 2006.

Transfer from capital work-in-progress pertains to Phase I of the E-payment gateway website which is subject to impairment, if any.

(b) LIABILITY RELATING TO ACQUISITION OF THE LICENSE IS STATED BELOW:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
<th>2007 RO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost of acquisition</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4,321,948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid during the year</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(2,163,462)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total amount outstanding</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,158,486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less : current portion due within one year (note 11)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,158,486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-current portion due after one year</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In accordance with the agreement with International Information Technology Co. LLC, Microsoft Large Account Reseller and Microsoft Gold Certified Partner (MS LAR) is required to reinvest an amount of US $ 1,920,083 per annum for a period of
three years in respect of implementation of the ICT programs and initiatives or any other approved activities. Reinvestment installment due is initially taken to unearned revenue and transferred to revenue to the extent of expenditures incurred. Funds that have not been allocated or utilized within one year can be carried over to the next year. However, no funds can be carried over beyond the three year duration of the agreement.

(c) MOVEMENT IN UNEARNED REVENUE IS AS FOLLOWS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
<th>2007 RO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning balance</td>
<td>930,269</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unearned revenue</td>
<td>372,496</td>
<td>1,489,984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less: Transferred to income</td>
<td>(754,960)</td>
<td>(559,715)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing balance</td>
<td>547,805</td>
<td>930,269</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Furniture and fixtures RO</th>
<th>Motor vehicles RO</th>
<th>Office equipment RO</th>
<th>Hardware and terminals RO</th>
<th>Total RO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COST</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 1 January 2007</td>
<td>4,375</td>
<td>54,150</td>
<td>8,477</td>
<td>21,296</td>
<td>88,298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additions</td>
<td>266,342</td>
<td>25,900</td>
<td>7,666</td>
<td>23,906</td>
<td>323,814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 1 January 2008</td>
<td>270,717</td>
<td>80,050</td>
<td>16,143</td>
<td>45,202</td>
<td>412,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additions</td>
<td>161,330</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>47,010</td>
<td>225,545</td>
<td>433,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSFERS FROM CAPITAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work-in-progress</td>
<td>59,447</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>107,991</td>
<td>660,808</td>
<td>828,246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 31 December 2008</td>
<td>491,494</td>
<td>80,050</td>
<td>171,144</td>
<td>931,555</td>
<td>1,674,243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEPRECIATION</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 1 January 2007</td>
<td>2,279</td>
<td>3,570</td>
<td>2,879</td>
<td>7,595</td>
<td>16,323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charge for the year</td>
<td>31,824</td>
<td>18,934</td>
<td>4,517</td>
<td>12,137</td>
<td>67,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 1 January 2008</td>
<td>34,103</td>
<td>22,504</td>
<td>7,396</td>
<td>19,732</td>
<td>83,735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charge for the year</td>
<td>86,901</td>
<td>20,013</td>
<td>24,381</td>
<td>132,858</td>
<td>264,153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At 31 December 2008</td>
<td>121,004</td>
<td>42,517</td>
<td>31,777</td>
<td>152,590</td>
<td>347,888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARRYING VALUE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 December 2008</td>
<td>370,490</td>
<td>37,533</td>
<td>139,367</td>
<td>778,965</td>
<td>1,326,355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 December 2007</td>
<td>236,614</td>
<td>57,546</td>
<td>8,747</td>
<td>25,470</td>
<td>328,377</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. CAPITAL WORK-IN-PROGRESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security infrastructure</td>
<td>5,853,911</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National data center</td>
<td>3,836,312</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office automation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>592,939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-payment gateway</td>
<td>23,673</td>
<td>94,853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITA data centre</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>139,573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ubar portal project</td>
<td>3,263,851</td>
<td>47,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>12,977,747</td>
<td>874,675</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. TRADE AND OTHER RECEIVABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Receivable from Ministry of Finance against:</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General and administrative expenses</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,393,384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leased line and internet</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,372,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government network</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>24,699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advance to suppliers</td>
<td>2,576,469</td>
<td>2,537,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepayments</td>
<td>5,432</td>
<td>568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other receivables</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>752,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2,589,401</td>
<td>7,081,111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2007, the Government vide circular No. 8/2006 effective January 1, 2007, has instructed the Authority that payments to Oman Telecommunication Company SAOG (Omantel) against leased lines and internet related to all the Ministries shall be routed through the Authority. Subsequently, it was similarly decided to also route the payments related to the use of governmental networks (MPLS). Accordingly, the Authority has booked the liability related to leased lines and MPLS with a corresponding asset, in the form of receivable from Ministry of Finance, to match that liability. As the arrangement is only to route payments through Authority the activities are not reflected in statement of receipts and expenses.

Other receivables include nil (2007 - RO 744,992) due from Microsoft against reinvestment cost.
9. CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash in hand</td>
<td>1,138</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank balances (Current accounts)</td>
<td>5,283,222</td>
<td>635,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5,284,360</td>
<td>635,904</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. RETAINED SURPLUS

This represents the accumulated surplus of receipts over expenses of the Authority from the period since inception, 31 May 2006 to date.

11. TRADE AND OTHER PAYABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current portion of liability relating to acquisition of licence [note 5 (b)]</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,158,486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liability against leased lines and internet (note 8)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,372,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liability against government network (note 8)</td>
<td>24,576</td>
<td>24,699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creditors</td>
<td>2,857,664</td>
<td>721,757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accrued expenses</td>
<td>5,405,672</td>
<td>333,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision for civil services</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>14,398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advances from customers</td>
<td>5,780</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other payables</td>
<td>37,956</td>
<td>14,128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>8,332,050</td>
<td>5,638,680</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MINISTRY OF FINANCE

This represents contributions from Ministry of Finance recognized according to the policy adopted by the Authority.
13. OTHER INCOME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interest income – net</td>
<td>40,590</td>
<td>36,373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reversal of previous year liability</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other income</td>
<td>80,540</td>
<td>34,153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>121,130</strong></td>
<td><strong>91,526</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. SALARIES AND EMPLOYEE RELATED COSTS

**LOCAL STAFF**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic salaries</td>
<td>1,150,645</td>
<td>590,226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard allowances</td>
<td>263,214</td>
<td>147,588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff bonus</td>
<td>141,960</td>
<td>55,509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,555,819</strong></td>
<td><strong>793,323</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXPATRIATES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic salaries</td>
<td>324,017</td>
<td>211,996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard allowances</td>
<td>72,167</td>
<td>50,835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff bonus</td>
<td>60,840</td>
<td>23,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>457,024</strong></td>
<td><strong>286,621</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority’s contributions for Employee Civil Services</td>
<td>171,438</td>
<td>90,895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of service benefits</td>
<td>22,455</td>
<td>8,339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical expenses</td>
<td>61,038</td>
<td>31,821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training costs</td>
<td>71,854</td>
<td>26,603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel allowances</td>
<td>183,144</td>
<td>72,729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>55,101</td>
<td>7,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>565,030</strong></td>
<td><strong>238,128</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**                                | **2,577,873** | **1,318,072** |
15. MARKETING EXPENSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advertising expenses</td>
<td>231,957</td>
<td>87,328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giveaways and others</td>
<td>152,914</td>
<td>15,365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>384,871</td>
<td>102,693</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. MAINTENANCE COSTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Network maintenance</td>
<td>54,305</td>
<td>2,535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software support and maintenance</td>
<td>388,116</td>
<td>302,256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>442,421</td>
<td>304,791</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. CONSULTANCY COSTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information security and e-Government</td>
<td>187,861</td>
<td>239,438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard and integration</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23,263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration and finance</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19,522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resources</td>
<td>11,142</td>
<td>29,704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT training</td>
<td>22,437</td>
<td>31,271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>221,471</td>
<td>343,198</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
18. GENERAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense</th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General office expenses</td>
<td>361,524</td>
<td>176,753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traveling expenses</td>
<td>246,064</td>
<td>54,332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent expenses</td>
<td>193,958</td>
<td>182,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminars and workshops</td>
<td>9,383</td>
<td>12,223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicles expenses</td>
<td>10,020</td>
<td>4,264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal expenses</td>
<td>15,856</td>
<td>31,909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional services</td>
<td>18,790</td>
<td>5,828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total General and Admin Expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>855,595</strong></td>
<td><strong>468,219</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. End of service benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
<th>2008 RO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 January balance</td>
<td>10,923</td>
<td>2,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charge during the year</td>
<td>13,257</td>
<td>8,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payments made during the year</td>
<td>(1,725)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 December balance</td>
<td>22,455</td>
<td>10,923</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. FINANCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT

Financial instruments carried on the balance sheet comprise cash and cash equivalents, trade receivables and trade and other payables.

Financial assets are assessed for indicators of impairment at each balance sheet date. Financial assets are impaired where there is objective evidence that as a result of one or more events that occurred after the initial recognition of the financial asset, the estimated future cash flows have been impacted.

The classification of financial assets depends on the purpose for which the financial assets were acquired. Management determines the classification of its financial assets at initial recognition.
Financial risk factors

Overview

The Authority has exposure to the following risks from its use of financial instruments:

- Credit risk
- Liquidity risk
- Market risk

The Authority’s overall risk management programme focuses on the unpredictability of financial markets and seeks to minimize potential adverse effects on the Authority’s financial performance.

(i) Credit risk

Credit risk is the risk of financial loss to the Authority if a customer or counterparty to a financial instrument fails to meet its contractual obligations and arises principally from the Authority’s receivables from customers.

Trade and other receivables

The Authority’s exposure to credit risk is influenced mainly by the individual characteristics of each party. All major parties are based in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Authority has established credit policies and procedures that are considered appropriate and commensurate with the nature and size of receivables.

20. FINANCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT (CONTINUED)

Exposure to credit risk (continued)

In monitoring credit risk, receivables are segmented according to their credit characteristics in the following categories:

- Government receivables
- Others

The potential risk in respect of amounts receivable is limited to their carrying values as management regularly reviews these balances whose recoverability is in doubt. There is no credit risk in respect of receivable from Government.

The carrying amount of financial assets represents the maximum credit exposure. The exposure to credit risk at the balance sheet date was on account of:
The exposure to credit risk for trade receivables at the balance sheet date by type of customer was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Microsoft - reinvestment cost</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>744,992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other customers</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>7,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>752,945</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) The age of trade receivables and related allowance of doubtful debt at the balance sheet date was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not past due</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>752,945</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. FINANCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT (CONTINUED)

(ii) Liquidity risk

Liquidity risk is the risk that the Authority will not be able to meet its financial obligations as they fall due. The Authority's approach to managing liquidity is to ensure, as far as possible, that it will have sufficient liquidity to meet its liabilities when due, under both normal and stressed conditions, without incurring unacceptable losses or risking damage to the Authority's reputation.

Typically, the Authority ensures that it has sufficient cash on demand to meet expected operational expenses including the servicing of financial obligations. This excludes the potential impact of extreme circumstances that cannot reasonably be predicted, such as natural disasters. In addition the Authority has access to credit facilities.
31 December 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Carrying amount</th>
<th>6 months or less</th>
<th>6 - 12 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trade and other payables</td>
<td>8,332,050</td>
<td>8,332,050</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

31 December 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Carrying amount</th>
<th>6 months or less</th>
<th>6 - 12 months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trade and other payables</td>
<td>5,638,680</td>
<td>3,480,195</td>
<td>2,158,485</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(iii) Market risk

Market risk is the risk that changes in market prices, such as foreign exchange rates, interest rates affect the Authority's income or the value of its holdings of financial instruments. The objective of market risk management is to manage and control market risk exposures within acceptable parameters, while optimizing the return on risk.

Foreign currency risk

The Authority's functional and presentation currency is Rials Omani and the Authority's performance is substantially independent of changes in foreign currency rates. There are no significant financial instruments denominated in foreign currency and consequently foreign currency risk is not significant.

21. Fair value of assets and liabilities

The fair value of assets and liabilities are approximate to their carrying values in the balance sheet date.

22. Capital management

The Authority's objectives when managing capital are to safeguard the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern and benefit other stake holders. The Management derives its funds from the Government to be able to carry on with its operations.

23. Approval of financial statements

The financial statements were approved by the Members and authorised for issue on June 2009.