



## **Innovations 2005 Expert Panel Makes Key Recommendations**

The second day of the Innovations 2005 conference focus on technical sessions and on producing a summary of the panel recommendations on “Producing Information Technology – Can the Middle-East Do It? The expert panel is compose of:

Moderator: Mr. Gilbert Lacroix, VP Computer Associates  
Dr. Yergen Knorr, CEO Dubai Silicon Oasis  
Mr. Mark DeSimone: VP Cisco EMEA  
Dr. Krishna Nathan: IBM VP and Director of Zurich Research Lab  
Dr. Vijay Chandru, Chairman & CEO, Strand Life  
Mr. Chris Moyer, Fellow, EDS

The panel raised the principal barriers and opportunities for the Middle-East to become a major producer of Information Technology. The topics considered are:

What are the barriers to making IT production a reality in the region?  
What are the roles that different regional countries can play?  
What is the role of Incubators and spin-off companies - what is required to make this happen?  
How can academe contribute to this effort?  
What are the government responsibilities and why has government in the region in general not stepped up to these responsibilities yet?  
What is the role of the IT-producing industry and what do we need to do to get them on board?  
What is the role of major IT regional resellers?  
How do we establish synergy between academe, industry and government and who acts as the catalyst for this synergy?  
What is the role of Research & Development and what do we need to do in this regard to be a player in it (PhD programs, government research labs, etc...)

The panel recommendations are being compiled by some of the scientists that are participating in the program, a summary of which follows:

## General Recommendations:

Major IT companies need to transform their Middle-East operations from purely local sales of technology produced elsewhere, to international sales of technology produced locally.

Middle-East governments must enact Intellectual Property (IP) rights that protect companies and individuals from IP theft.

Government must bear some initial development costs to make it attractive for companies to invest in technology development in the region.

Government must make serious and massive investments in Applied Research and Development.

Political regional stability is necessary to build up confidence for international investment in local technology development.

The region should learn from but not try to imitate India's or China's models, but rather should focus on new niche technologies such as bioinformatics and network intelligence.

Universities need to build a culture of innovation and an environment conducive to the creation of spin-off companies. This requires reduced teaching loads and an investment in applied research.

Universities must be much more proactive in reaching out to the industry to partner on applied research projects.

The panel is also concerned that with roughly half the regional population below the age of 20, the future can be either be very bright or a disaster. It can be very bright if these young minds are nurtured and opportunities provided to them to innovate. It can be a disaster if current high levels of unemployment are allowed to persist and the young men and women are discouraged by lack of opportunities and political instability.

Over the next few weeks the panel will meet again to detail the above recommendations and make specific proposals to government, industry and academe.