Good morning and thank you for that kind introduction...

First of all, I’d like to welcome you all here today, and thank you for joining us for the launch of Qatar’s first-ever National Broadband Plan—a major step in a journey that will establish Qatar as a leading broadband economy in the region.

Many of the illustrious speakers, panelists and participants with us today have had a hand in developing this ambitious blueprint for change, and we appreciate your time and efforts.

After all, this is not just the government’s plan, and the government can’t do this alone. It belongs to all of us in Qatar and its success—which will also drive the continued prosperity and progress of our nation—depends on all of us.

**Where we started**
Nearly a decade ago, Qatar’s leadership made the decision to invest heavily in building a world-class ICT infrastructure with the capacity and speeds to set the country apart in the region, and around the world.

We knew the components of such an effort:
- Investments in high-speed, high-quality, affordable broadband, submarine cable systems and satellite programs.
- A focus on youth and workforce training and readiness...
- A focus on public services...health care delivery...education and lifelong learning...
- A focus on reaching every citizen, regardless of wealth or prestige, no matter where they live.

And in the end, we aimed to measure our impact not just on creating wealth and opportunity, but opening up Qatar to the world.

**The Impact We’re Having**
We are seeing the impact we’re having.
- In Qatar, broadband penetration among households continues to rise, from 41 percent in 2008 to 80 percent in 2010 to a high of 85 percent in 2012.
• Our extensive, citizen-centric e-gov offerings have earned acclaim, with Qatar placing 27 out of 190 countries on the United Nations E-Government Survey 2012.
• The UN survey also placed Qatar at number 9 on the e-participation index, which assesses how well a government engages citizens in public policymaking through the use of e-government programs.
• Thanks to continuous infrastructure improvements and growing ownership of smartphones, 18 percent of mainstream individuals now use mobile broadband services, up from 15 percent in 2010, with even higher penetration rates among Qatari citizens.
• Looking ahead, demand for broadband access is only expected to boom, with the continuous evolution of communication and storage technologies, increasing device sophistication. A recent, annual Booz and Co study of R&D spending finds the software and Internet sector invested aggressively this year, growing its R&D spending by 22.1 percent. As awareness of the possibilities offered by broadband grows among consumers, so too will their expectations.

Unfortunately, service providers around the world are struggling to respond to the rising demand for faster and more secure broadband networks.

The speed and affordability of both fixed and mobile broadband remain major issues.

For example, research has shown that most broadband users in Qatar subscribe to lower-speed packages, due to the high cost of faster services and a lack of awareness of the benefits associated with higher speeds.

We must continue to address these challenges and to improve and expand broadband infrastructure and connectivity if we expect to be able to harness the true power of ICT to enrich people’s lives and secure a bright future for Qatar.

What’s Ahead

That’s where the new National Broadband Plan comes in, with its broad objective to promote broadband market development and provide high-quality, affordable and high-speed services to all.

This document lays out a 10-year plan with four ambitious targets for 2016 that will help ensure that the opportunities offered by broadband technology are realized and maximized. The Ministry has designed this strategy to boost and enhance the development of the high-speed broadband internet. This can only be achieved through providing high-quality, high-speed,
affordable services for all in line with the developmental goals of the Qatar National Vision 2030. These goals are:

- All residents of Qatar shall have the ability to choose between a minimum of two broadband retail providers, whether they live in the largest city or the tiniest, most far-flung rural community;
- 95 percent of households shall have the ability to access affordable and high-quality broadband service of at least 100 Mbps for downloads and 50 Mbps for uploads;
- All businesses, schools, hospitals and government institutions shall have high-quality access to at least 1 Gbps effective symmetrical speeds;
- And digital literacy shall be expanded to all of the mainstream population, in conjunction with guarantees of users’ digital privacy, protection of personal data and freedom of opinion and expression.

As I see it, these may be ambitious goals, but they are all doable.

**And so with the balance of my time today, I want to talk about how we will accomplish these goals:**

Nilson Mandela says “It always seems impossible until it is done.”

How to accomplish these goals:

- First, we will support healthy competition; towards this goal, the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology is in the process of implementing one of its major priorities—establishing an Independent Telecommunications Regulatory Authority that will encourage and support an open and competitive ICT sector.

- Second, we will ensure the efficient management of resources in order to guarantee that fixed and mobile infrastructures are deployed in the most effective, rapid manner;

- Third, we will expand the benefits of broadband by providing for and investing in extensive and high quality supply of broadband content and services that will drive adoption;

- And fourth we will address digital literacy, affordability, quality of service, awareness and safety barriers. In this last area, we are explicitly targeting 100 percent coverage.
with speeds of at least 8 mbps in areas where transient workers live, reflecting Qatar’s ongoing commitment to diversity and workers’ rights.

The Ministry’s work in all of these areas will build upon the many achievements of the last decade and will continue to be guided by the National ICT Plan 2015, Qatar’s National Vision 2030 and Qatar’s booming ICT market.

Now I would like to share with you a number of initiatives that the ministry is working on right now:

- **First**, we will focus on accelerating our e-government initiative. In this regard, the Prime Minister has established a steering committee, headed by the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology, focused on the National E-Gov plan 2020.

The eGOV2020 programs will be:

- Next wave Services-Increasing availability of services online on all relevant channels, improving customer experience and driving the customer uptake
- Open Government- Providing transparency and value by providing public data and engaging with citizens online
- Advanced Central Platforms- enabling advanced eServices and creating efficiencies through widely adopted central platforms and infrastructure

We plan to see new e-service offerings such as building permits, e-court management systems, and public registration of property, to name just a few.

In addition to e-services, each government entity will be automating its internal processes, and adding more ministries to the Government Network—a single ICT backbone that connects all government entities to each other through a secure communications platform.

We are also in the process of establishing a centralized Government Data Center that will house critical computer systems and associated components for all government entities.

- **Second**, Q-Post is being transferred to the Ministry this year, and it is our aim to bring the Qatari post office into the 21st century for good. “To provide best-in class postal services across Qatar and embrace advent of Digital Life”. The way to do so is by:
  - Enhancing Service Portfolio and Customer Experience- Improve performance of postal legacy services and pursue new growth segments
  - Building Best-in Class Postal Operations- Invest in efficient and automatized operations that enable personalized service provision
  - Nurture Organizational Capabilities
Fact is, what is happening here is happening globally – digital is replacing paper in all forms of communication.

Finally, the Ministry is ramping up our cyber security efforts. Because there’s really no point in spearheading the implementation of an advanced infrastructure if we can’t protect it.

Most of you know that several months ago, hackers targeted Qatari websites. We have established a National Cyber Security Committee to address the cyber agenda at the national level and to ensure that all public and private entities are adopting the right cyber policies, as well as conducting national drills to protect our information infrastructure.

In addition to developing a cutting-edge security network that can proactively defend against natural disasters, user error or cyber attacks, the Ministry is also focused on the creation of a robust legislative framework that guards against the misuse of ICT, with new policies such as the Critical Infrastructure Information Protection Law, which is designed to safeguard key systems in the country, including power grids, oil and gas production, financial transactions, and healthcare and government operations.

Luckily we don’t have to face the formidable task of cyber security alone. In this era of increasing—and increasingly malicious—cyber threats of all sorts, keeping our networks and our people safe is no longer the province of individual nations.

Cybercrime crosses borders of all sorts and so will our response to it. To that end, we are one of more than 90 countries who have come together, most recently in Seoul, South Korea, to develop a set of agreed upon principles and guidelines that nations can follow in order to create an open and secure cyber space.

In closing, I’d like to again offer my appreciation for all of you, and the numerous stakeholders who helped put Qatar’s National Broadband Plan together. I’d also like to ask for your ongoing participation in this and other related efforts.

The government, for one, is 100 percent committed to advancing the digital agenda in Qatar. But while the Broadband Plan provides needed guidance, the road ahead has any number of obstacles and challenges. We will need the help of public and private institutions, as well as individuals, to guarantee its success.
As a first step towards the plan’s implementation, I want to announce the formation of a supervisory task force that will be responsible for coordinating the efforts of all stakeholders. This multidisciplinary group, which will have representatives from government agencies as well as the ICT industry, media, developers and other critical sectors, will monitor fulfillment of the initiatives, measure progress and ensure that all targets are met.

I hope today’s symposium will give us all a chance to listen to each other, learn from each other, and establish the trust needed to overcome any of those obstacles along the way. If we all work together over the next ten years—remaining flexible and accounting for technological progress, economic factors, regional dynamics, stakeholder capabilities, and other uncontrollable factors—we will ensure a bright future for Qatar well into this century and beyond.

Thank You All