Speech by co-chair Dr. Obaid Al Saidy, Sultan Qaboos University


Your Highnesses

Honorable guests,
Dear participants,

On behalf of the Organizing Committee, I welcome all of you to this honorary session of the “Learning Technologies and Mathematics Middle East Conference”. We are honored, and privileged to have you here at Sultan Qaboos University.

First, I would like to thank everyone who made this event a successful one: participants, technical staff, coordinators, students and colleagues who worked extremely hard to bring this event to life.

I also would like to re-iterate our expressions of gratitude to our invited speakers and contributors for traveling from far away to enrich us with their knowledge and experience.
This conference is the fruit of cooperation between two universities at both ends of the globe. The Institute for Mathematics and Education at the University of Arizona and Sultan Qaboos University have invested both financial and human resources to enhance the delivery of Mathematics and Statistics in the Region. So, on behalf of the organizing committee and on behalf of the participants, we thank both institutions.

We would also like to acknowledge the generosity of the private sector sponsors from in and outside Oman: Oman Mobile, Oman International Bank, and Oman LNG and from the U.K. Wolfram Research- Europe the makers of Mathematica. Their sponsorship shows that our activities and goals are of keen interest not only to academic circles, but also to civil society in general.
Dear Guests and Participants,

In the last couple of days, we have heard from international experts from different cultures and backgrounds who mapped for us the road of change. All of the speakers agreed that it is time, we all incorporate technology in our mathematics and statistics classrooms. Interestingly enough, the challenges we face here in Oman, are similar to those faced by our colleagues in all of the 25 countries represented in this room. What came about is that despite the similarities, the solutions to these challenges have cultural and financial dimension in addition to involvement by both the public and private sectors.

Innovative methods of teaching, as well as curricular reform and update, and incorporation of IT are some of the strategic goals set out in our country. I am sure that all of the countries in the region share the same lofty goals. Achieving those
goals requires a coherent effort starting at the very beginning of the education scale with substantial means and commitment. Piling computers and software will not do it. Teacher training, continuous update, and a good feedback loop from elementary to high education institutions are an absolute must. Horizontal cooperation co-operation between people in mathematics and statistics and education departments is also equally important.

I would like to take this rare opportunity and address the press in this room. Please dedicate more time and coverage to science education and quantitative learning in particular. The future of our country and of the region does depend on the advance of science and it is paramount for civil society to be our partners in this endeavor.

Before I end, allow me please to reiterate both our side and the Institute for Mathematics and Education commitment to
this partnership and we hope that this co-operation will continue to bloom.

I would like to again thank his Excellency Sheikh Abdullah Bin Ali Al-Katabi Chairman of the Shura Council for honoring us with his presence and I thank all of you again for attending this conference.