

Business

Zain Group and Ericsson create roadmap to 5G

Cooperation will enrich digital lifestyle of our customers: Al-Kharafi

BARCELONA: Zain Group and Ericsson (NASDAQ: ERIC) have announced they have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to jointly develop and test selected 5G and Internet of Things (IoT) cases. The MoU, signed during Mobile World Congress 2018 in Barcelona, demonstrates the commitment of both companies to bringing next-generation connectivity and its accompanying benefits to the Middle East and Africa.

The new partnership will accelerate digitalization in the region, enabling rapid deployment of innovative services in the Internet of Things (IoT) in the coming years. The agreement covers technical demonstrations and strengthens technical cooperation between the two companies and will ensure smooth 4G to 5G evolution across Zain's networks.

Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO says: "Zain is committed to bringing the latest technology and cutting-edge services to its customers. 5G will open the door for new applications that will transform consumer behavior and industries. By introducing these new technologies, we will enrich the digital lifestyles of individuals and support the growth and development of businesses we serve by creating new opportunities for them to grow."

Rafiah Ibrahim, Head of Ericsson Middle East and Africa, says: "We believe next generation technology and its applications will provide tangible benefits in the real-world. Ericsson has enjoyed a long and successful history of collaboration with Zain and this new agreement demonstrates our ongoing support in transforming their networks to enable these benefits for users around the Middle East and Africa region."

5G technology will enable massive connectivity and open up new markets to (IoT). Consumers and enterprises will be able to take advantage of a seamless experience on their connected devices; they will be able to adopt and invest in new applications such as smart transportation, connected cars and appliances, remote health care and remote control of machinery.



BARCELONA: Bader Al Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman & Group CEO and Rafiah Ibrahim, Head of Ericsson MEA sign an agreement flanked by Zain and Ericsson executives.

Zain taps Google's Apigee Edge API Platform to boost digital strategy

BARCELONA: At the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Zain Group, the leading mobile telecom innovator in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announced that it will launch the Zain Group Application Program Interface (API) Platform, that will see the operator exposing its APIs, thereby helping to remove a significant barrier to developing potential digital partnerships from across the globe.

A ceremony was held at the Zain booth attended by Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO; Sebastian Marotte, VP EMEA from Google Cloud, and Hiroyuki Sato, CEO of DOCOMO Digital. Zain will initially launch the platform with a pilot phase in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, and will be thereafter gradually extended to all Zain operations.

Zain will work alongside the Apigee team at Google Cloud as the API platform provider, FOO, a leading regional mobile digital solutions entity as the developer, and Shift Technologies, the leading Apigee Edge API Platform implementer in the Middle East region, to introduce this Group-wide API program with the aim of connecting its operating companies across the region onto a single enablement platform. This strategic initiative is set to bring about greater agility to Zain as it considers new market opportunities, accelerating innovation and expanding into new business verticals and building future platform business model-based revenue streams.

Notably, Zain has partnered with the global alternative payments provider DOCOMO Digital, the European unit of Japan's NTT DOCOMO as its first new content partner using the new API layer. DOCOMO Digital offers an advanced mobile commerce ecosystem-enabling platform that encourages financial inclusion for citizens worldwide. Thanks to this partnership DOCOMO Digital will enable Zain with the most advanced VAS Digital Content hosted on its own Product Frameworks and supported by a Best in Class Advertising Solution Platform & Service. Zain Kuwait and Zain Saudi Arabia will be the first operations to offer DOCOMO Digital's services.

Commenting on the imminent launch of the API platform in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO said, "We are pleased to be collaborating with more blue-chip technology companies in the form of Google and DOCOMO Digital in rolling the platform initially in Kuwait. In an ever-evolving and challenging telecommunications market, technology acts as an enabler for service differentiation and digital enablement. It drives our ambition to ensure a superior customer experience, and we believe opening up our APIs will help us to push continuous delivery of the best user experience while also expanding contribution to the development of our digital services to a whole new universe of contributors." Al-Kharafi added, "This initiative is another step in our strategy to build a digital lifestyle provider partnering with the best possible technology providers and offer the best services for our customers."

Sebastian Marotte, VP EMEA, Google Cloud, "We are excited to be a part of Zain's digital journey. There



Left to Right: Sebastian Marotte, VP EMEA, Google Cloud; Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman & Group CEO; and Hiroyuki Sato, CEO DOCOMO Digital.

are tremendous opportunities for telcos to provide enhanced customer experience, create new products and partner with other organizations to create value for both consumers and business. We look forward to supporting Zain as they drive their various innovation initiatives forward."

Hiroyuki Sato, CEO of DOCOMO Digital said: "Our partnership with Zain is very strategic, demonstrating the focus DOCOMO Digital has on MEA to drive scalable growth for our payments and content platform services. I strongly believe this is one of the many such important partnerships we hope to forge in the region in coming months as it weaves into our prime aspiration of driving financial inclusion for 5 billion people worldwide with the greatest possible trust and convenience."

Yusef Al-Barkawie, CEO of Shift Technologies added: "The vision that Zain has set for itself as a true digital innovator across the Middle East is very exciting, and we are very proud to be the partner of choice to help Zain lay the foundation of its Digital Platform leveraging the exceptional capabilities that Apigee Edge API Platform offers. Zain has a deep understanding of the importance of Digital Ecosystems to power the new emerging economies, and we are excited to be provided this opportunity to translate this vision into reality."

The API platform is set to give opportunities for large digital players and individual developers alike to be able to launch services to Zain customers in a reduced amount of time. In due course, with the new open source digital enablement platform available at each of its operations, Zain will be able to offer inter-



BARCELONA: Zain booth at Mobile World Congress in Barcelona

net service providers, other mobile network operators, and its own customers the following features:

- Direct Operator Billing, SMS, Location Based Service and Identity Services
- A streamlined engagement model with a single contract offering access to other APIs
- Centralized support for fast track new partner integration
- Centralized reconciliation services and reporting

The group-wide agreement with Google and DOCOMO Digital will bolster Zain's efforts to further leverage the capable operations of FOO, a leading mobile digital solutions developer in which Zain holds a strategic stake. FOO's expertise in implementing and managing this platform played a critical part of the development of the API. FOO will further support the rollout of the API platform across other Zain markets.