



## DRAFT – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

### Middle East and North Africa Public Administration Research (MENAPAR Hosts the First Regional Virtual E-Workshop Platform **Jalsa** Powered by Amazon Web Services

**New York, 15 June 2020:** The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bahrain, and UN Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) Bahrain, in partnership with the Middle East and North Africa Public Administration Research (MENAPAR), the Bahrain Institute of Public Administration (BIPA), and the Bahrain Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), had their Annual conference. This year's conference hosted over 150 high-level government officials, business leaders, and development agencies among others, from across all regions of the globe for the first time electronically using the novel online platform Jalsa, developed and powered by Amazon Web Services (AWS).

The AWS virtual conference platform enabled the attendees to collaborate online and discuss means to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under the overarching theme of 'Promoting conducive policy, enabling business and legal environment, and integration in the Arab States Region.' Held exclusively online on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 16<sup>th</sup> of June 2020 for the first time utilizing Jalsa, the e-workshop included expert panel discussions and regional perspectives on the first and second day. The third day saw the continuation of talks and began the process of formulating research agendas from the findings of the event as post-workshop activity by UNOSSC's Global Coalition of Think Tank Networks (GCTTN) to strengthen investment policies using informed policymaking.

It requires usually travel and personal contact, which the C19 Pandemic has put severe restrictions on. BIPA had to choose between cancelling the conference and finding a creative way to run a virtual e-workshop using innovative technologies. Before COVID-19, conferences, travel and physical meeting were the norm, while now with social distancing, closure of most airports and travel ban, life should continue, and we need to come up with innovative technologies to continue business as usual.

Jalsa is leveraging the Amazon Chime SDK (1), which is a set of real-time communications components that developers can use to add quickly audio calling, video calling, and screen sharing capabilities to their own web or mobile applications. This SDK was the base to build a customized virtual conferencing e-workshop solution. Jalsa is a customized virtual e-conference & e-workshop solution with white labelled customized mobile & web application. It will be conference & panel mode with full registration & notification and enrolment functionalities, audio calling & video calling, screen-sharing capabilities. Jalsa will also provide voting with poll, moderation & control system, queuing, questions & recording capabilities, sign language & subtitles for the conference and Social media sharing.



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The first release of Jalsa had single track (no breakouts), gave the participants the ability to select their language preferences of either English or Arabic for the application, the on-air live voice translation and for the automated transcription settings in both written form and for the hearing-impaired. Jalsa provided communication fostering between attendees, encourage interaction, more than a webinar format, and gamification of the event, rewarding interactions, hashtags on twitter/Instagram, preserving the valuable collaboration that occurs in a physical event even while converting this to a virtual event.

QUOTES TO BE ADDED LATER

To experience a demo version of Jalsa, please reach out to :-

BIPA team email :- [m.alsabba@bipa.gov.bh](mailto:m.alsabba@bipa.gov.bh) and AWS team email:- [nidbasha@amazon.com](mailto:nidbasha@amazon.com)