

LBSG launches the first series of the Conference Speakers Event to tackle broadband connectivity issues and push for the adoption of True Broadband in Lebanon

Kip Meek and Olivier Rosenfeld speak of their experiences in France and the United Kingdom and advise Telecom representatives

Beirut April 28, 2009: The Lebanese Broadband Stakeholders Group launched 'The Speaker Series Conference' on April 24th, introducing two renowned figures in the world of broadband, Mr. Kip Meek, President of the Broadband Stakeholders Group in England, and Mr. Olivier Rosenfeld, Founder of Iliyad. Present with representatives from the telecom sector, Meek and Rosenfeld shared their experiences and expertise in the domain.

The LBSG was founded by Salam Yamout, Gaby Deek, and Nabil Abou Khaled in late 2008, put together in a bid for broadband connectivity, a faster and more efficient Lebanon. It is a coalition of individuals, non-profit organizations, professional associations, and businesses with viable interests in broadband and its related services.

Bassam Tueni, a LBSG representative, outlined its goals of informing the public of the importance of broadband, to create a group that pressures to improve the connection, and to convince them of the importance of fast Internet connections.

One of the main aims is to have 100Mb/s connection speeds in Lebanon by 2011, to raise awareness at the public level of the country's need for broadband, and to offer it at affordable prices.

The fastest connection speed offered at the moment is 1Mbps, undedicated and capped. Ogero, a government owned entity, offers clients a fully dedicated 1Mbps connection speed with a capped limit of downloads. The private ISPs, however, provide clients with slower speeds at a higher price, from 256Kbps to 1Mbps with

unlimited downloads in the evening. What the broadband manifesto aims to do is bring together a collective number of users who want a faster Internet connection. Supporters have been signing the manifesto since the campaign began in November 2008, in order to speed up the implementation of broadband connectivity.

As Meek discussed his experience with the BSG in England, he touched on important points for a successful introduction to broadband in Lebanon. The BSG helped in stimulating the investment of more than one player in broadband, igniting the flame for competition in the country. They focused on terms agreed on with the government rather than not and from that first building block, constructed a successful broadband network. "Pro competition is the strategy for success," said Meek. He explained that starting at 1Mbps is not a bad thing. Consumers will get a taste for the possibilities broadband can offer and later be ready for faster speeds. Once ISPs offer faster and cheaper connection speeds, competition will begin to flourish and broadband will succeed.

Rosenfeld was questioned on the success of Iliad and had one simple answer: financial independence. The government owns France Telecom, which is a similar situation with Lebanon and Ogero. They also have a conflict of interest by different stakeholders. "If there is no political substance behind broadband, then the moderator will have trouble existing," said Rosenfeld. Free, an ISP part of Iliad, catered to the 'technical' user at the start and used them as a marketing tool. They became brand ambassadors and spread the 'Free' word quickly and efficiently. "There needs to be a strict focus on cash flow and profitability and later think about growth," he explained.

Many of us cannot imagine life before the advent of the Internet, even in its current state. Now, imagine what could be done with a connection 100 times faster. Take video chatting for example that has brought people from all corners of the world into the same room. Consider what a faster Internet connection would mean when downloading the latest songs and clips, the streaming of videos taking mere seconds

or the upload of files that you no longer have to sit idly in front of your computer to complete. With the extra time that a fast Internet connection would give you, imagine what you could do.

After the success of the first Speaker Series installment, LBSG will be announcing the second conference soon. Until then, visit the following website and fight for broadband in Lebanon, with a signature.

<http://www.broadbandlebanon.org/Manifesto.aspx?pageid=4&PID=1>

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