

## Press release

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### E-Signature launch to provide the first authentication services to governmental entities, public sector companies and individuals in Egypt

**Cairo, 5 October 2009:** Egypt's IT industry has this week celebrated the launch of e-signature services for the public and private sector. The electronic signature will authorize the Ministry of Finance and a number of companies to offer the first authentication services to governmental entities, public sector companies and individuals in Egypt.

This E-Signature Law, issued in 2004 and established the Information Technology Industry Development Agency (ITIDA), is the first Egyptian legislation for regulating electronic business and highlights the advancements in Egypt's IT industry. All e-signature services are to be connected through a Root-CA<sup>1</sup> authority established at ITIDA.

Commenting on the launch, Dr. Sherif Hashim, Vice Executive President of ITIDA said: "The e-signature is the pillar in e-transactions for all governmental, commercial or administrative sectors. The law marks a key achievement across the IT industry in Egypt and raises the country's competitiveness as a key provider of ground-breaking IT services."

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<sup>1</sup> **About Root CA** - One of ITIDA's primary duties is to build and operate the Root Certificate Authority (Root CA). The Root CA issues digital certificates to smaller CSPs, in order to provide the proper infrastructure for the use of e-signatures in Egypt. It is a legal and national base upon which all IT applications; e-commerce and e-business transactions are performed. In addition, the Egyptian Root CA provides a point of communication to other Root CAs in different nations, supporting ITIDA's aims to encourage IT growth on a national basis

With the law in place, electronic tools can be used to issue and exchange documents, preserve rights and maintain credibility. The law will cover the necessary transient and technical regulations for legal confirmation on e-signature, e-writing, and e-documents and will have the same binding legal status as a traditional signature. Prior to the inauguration of this law, there was no electronic documentation that could be used as proof within court.

The use of e-signature will not only increase the capabilities of administrative operations and governmental service but will also advance e-commerce transactions, including the various technical areas of sales, other contracts and legal acts, commercial import and export activities, ticket bookings and banking transactions.

The Law also established the e-signature regulatory authority, namely the Information Technology Industry Development Agency (ITIDA). ITIDA, as a regulator for electronic signature, is related to the national Root CA establishment – the E-Signature CA Licensing Unit. This Unit was set up to address complaints, offer technical counseling, and mediate between disputing parties relating to e-signature services and forms part of the ICT industry ombudsman within the ITIDA framework.

Egypt's government recognizes e-business security not only as a necessity to computer users, but as an asset to the ICT industry. In 2007, the country spent nearly 1.17 billion US Dollars on information technology, which included computers, peripherals, network equipment, packaged software and IT services. At 1% of the GDP, that expenditure sustained 1,700 companies in the information and communications technology sector with a staff of approximately 49,000 talented IT experts (ICD, 2008).



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**About ITIDA:**

The Information Technology Industry Development Agency (ITIDA) is a governmental entity affiliated to Egypt's Ministry of Communications and Information Technology. It is responsible for growing and developing Egypt's position as a leading global outsourcing location by attracting foreign direct investment to the industry and maximizing the exports of IT services and applications.

Located in the heart of the modern business environment at Smart Village, the six hundred acre business park on the outskirts of Cairo, ITIDA is a self sustainable entity that drives the IT industry in Egypt and raises awareness among the Egyptian people of the benefits and use of ICT to advance socio-economic welfare of the whole community.

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