Profile:
Nabil Benamar

> **" I'M AN ISOC AMBASSADOR EVERYWHERE I GO"**

For Dr. Nabil Benamar, participation in the Internet Society's Next Generation Leaders programme (NGL) was the start of a chain of opportunities—including the opportunity to support Middle Eastern and African countries in preparing for the transition to IPv6.

Nabil, an associate professor of computer science at Moulay Ismail University in Morocco, started his studies as a physicist. While completing his Ph.D. he received an invitation to complete a masters in computer networking at an institute specializing in telecommunications.

He says, "I knew that the market for computer scientists would be better than that for physicists, so I completed the computer networking degree, and it was life changing."

He was encouraged to apply to the NGL programme by an Iraqi member of the Internet Society (ISOC), who responded to one of Nabil's posts on an email list of the IPv6 Forum.

The NGL programme includes a six-month moderated eLearning course, Shaping the Internet: History and Futures offered in English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. Despite being bilingual in Arabic and French, Nabil choose to take the course in English, because he felt it would open more doors for him.

> *"The IETF uses English as its default language, and as someone with a technological focus, I wanted to be able to interact with those people, and debate comfortably with people of different nationalities around issues relating to the Internet. Taking the course in English was hard at first, but it got easier."*

He was soon able to take what he learned from the ISOC eLearning course and write articles about the Internet in Arabic and French, allowing readers in his region to become more aware of relevant Internet issues. And then the connections started.

As an ISOC Ambassador to the global Internet Governance Forum (IGF) 2012, he met Vint Cerf—"father of the Internet"—as he walked into the lobby in Baku on the first morning.

NABIL BENAMAR, MOROCCO

Internet Society fellowships: eLearning programme, Ambassador and Returning Ambassador to IGF, Fellow and Returning Fellow to IETF

Advice to those seeking to work in Internet governance: "Study it! Take the NGL programme or another course."

Admired leader: Fahd Batayneh, an NGL alumnus, now working with ICANN. "He is incredibly helpful, answers every email anyone sends him; it's really rare to find someone like that."

What he wishes he had known: "I would prefer to have had more English skills at the beginning. The majority of up-to-date technical references are written in English; very few are written in Arabic. People should accept that this as a fact. You can't shape the Internet technically without English."

Favourite place: "Bali was unforgettable. Traveling for MENOG allowed me to visit the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, and that was exceptional."

Favourite food: Moroccan Couscous

"It was a complete shock, and even more when we ended up talking. We met during many different sessions at the IGF, and I was so impressed that he could speak in an equally informed way about the Internet of Things and Internet access as a human right—going from the technical to the ethical. Since then we have exchanged emails, and he's connected me with other people and opportunities."

Just after his participation in the IGF in Baku, Nabil started to share information about Internet governance issues on blogs. He was especially interested in the topic of Internet access as a human right, and had heard many different views on this during one of the IGF sessions. He also wrote about the different actors responsible for Internet governance, and about the multistakeholder model.

He received an invitation from a Google staffer to attend a regional Arab IGF in Kuwait. Among those he met at that meeting was the chair of the Middle East Network Operators Group (MENOG), who asked Nabil to collaborate with MENOG as an IPv6 trainer in their roadshows.

"IPv4 is running out of addresses, and IPv6 is essential to bringing the remaining two-thirds of the world online," Nabil notes. "We absolutely must migrate to IPv6 within one to two years. It offers many technical advantages over IPv4. It's a completely different system, and all the network engineers need to be retrained so they can deploy IPv6 in their networks. They need one course at an absolute minimum, but three or four is better. AFRINIC (the regional Internet numbers registry for Africa) is doing training, but they can't alone handle the training needs of the entire continent."

Since the invitation from MENOG, Nabil has been training computer specialists in IPv6 in the Middle East and Africa, through MENOG, AFRINIC, and in a workshop he developed for African speakers of French, through the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF).

His regional involvement in IPv6 required that he follow the work of the relevant IETF working groups. He received two ISOC Fellowships to the IETF, and now participates regularly in two IETF working groups and has written two Internet drafts.

On another level, he worked with the ISOC chapter in Morocco on the IPv6 launch date in 2012, not only promoting IPv6, but also telling chapter members about ISOC's role in promoting the new protocol.

He has also worked with ICANN on the development of domain names that are written in non-Latin scripts, such as Arabic, Chinese, and Cyrillic. He is member of the task force for Arabic scripts IDNs.

Nabil says, "Thanks to the NGL programme, I've been able to participate in all these other things."

> "I'm an ISOC ambassador everywhere I go. I encourage my students to apply to the NGL programme, so they can understand the Internet from all sides—not just the technical, but the governance aspects, access, ethics, and rights."

– NABIL BENAMAR