

**CANTO Chairman Remarks**  
**Mr. Dirk Currie**  
**31st Annual General Meeting**  
**Theme: “Improving lives through Broadband Innovation”**  
**25th January, 2015**  
**Torarica Hotel**  
**Paramaribo, Suriname**

- **His Excellency, Robert Ameerali, Vice President of the Republic of Suriname**
  
- **Mrs. Jennifer Geerlings-Simons, Chairman of the National Assembly of Suriname**
  
- **Dr. Hamadoun Touré, outgoing Secretary General of the ITU**
  
- **Members of the Diplomatic Corps**
  
- **Mrs. Helma Etnel, acting Vice Chair of the CANTO Board of Directors**
  
- **Board of Directors of CANTO**
  
- **Ms. Regenie Fräser, Secretary General of CANTO**
  
- **Members of the Supervisory Board of Telesur**
  
- **Board of Directors, Management and other employees of Telesur**
  
  
- **Members of CANTO**
  
- **Sponsors & Exhibitors**
  
- **Members of the Media**
  
- **Other Invited Guests**
  
- **Ladies & Gentlemen**

Dear Colleagues,

I hereby welcome you all to the Republic of Suriname at this 31 CANTO Annual General Meeting . It is the 3rd CANTO Annual General Meeting that is held in Suriname and we are looking forward to a very fruitful and efficient meeting. I do hope that you will also explore the beauty of our country, the diversity of our people and the historical monuments in the heart of our capital. Make sure that your stay for the business of CANTO and the work of the Broadband Infrastructure Inventory and Public Awareness in the Caribbean (BIIPAC) Project is extended with some extra days to visit our tropical rainforest so you will leave relaxed and energized by the spirit of the interior our country has to offer.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Our sector is presently in a state whereby we all experience changes that are influenced by fast evolving and comprehensive technology. We are also facing the fact that the competitive arena does not only consist of companies that have a license to operate in our respective countries, but even companies that don't have a license to operate are competing to serve our local customers. At several meetings I used the following to describe this situation. We used to have only one fish in our swimming pool to provide local service. Then by administrative decision, our market was liberalized, and 2 additional companies were granted a concession to swim in the Telco pool. If we presently look at the pool we see that it is full of telco fishes of which the majority, without any license, are providing some kind of free service. We all know them by heart and we all use the service of one or more of them, namely Viber, Skype, Whatsapp, Facetime and many more.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is just one of the changes we experience. We can also ask ourselves the question, what is in the best interest for companies like Telesur, UTS Curacao, BTL Belize, Telem Saint Maarten, Setar Aruba and GT&T Guyana, to join other big groups of companies, to merge or just stay on their own. What is the best mode for survival? It is really a question of what will be needed for the future survival of these member companies. We experience mergers and acquisitions all over the world including in our region, but keen is, a well-functioning telecommunication sector and therefore the necessity to have a good infrastructure for fixed and mobile communications in each of our respective countries is of tremendous importance in support of economic development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we have to cope with all these changes in our sector we need to make sure that we embrace innovation not only in our respective companies, within our

organization CANTO, but also for our countries, as this will support and help us in our survival process. As CANTO we have for quite some years held our essay and I-create E-content competition and I am proud to mention the names of the first price winners Ryan Soemodihardjo and Clint Siadis, from Suriname, winners of the 2013 I-create E-content competition who presently work with another youngster from Suriname in a start up company and William Mahler from Belize winner in 2014 of the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual World Telecommunication and Information Society Day Competition- Video . William made the following video about his experience during the CANTO 2014 conference and trade exhibition and I would like to share this video with you.

8<sup>th</sup> WTISD <http://youtu.be/LIO4KDCYd58>

William is also with us today and I would like to thank him.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I showed you this video, because within CANTO we have the strong believe that to support an environment of innovation you need to embrace and involve youngster within your organization. They bring with them an excellent vibe of enthusiasm, knowledge, talent and an attitude where fear of the unknown is almost absent. They are ready to swim in a pool everywhere and are also committed to help bring our region to a higher level.

As CANTO we have incorporated in our Agenda of this AGM a youth forum which will be launched on Tuesday starting at one o'clock in the afternoon and I urge you all to be part of it. It is a matter of working together, young inspired innovators and present leaders and together strive for a better future for ourselves and those who will be our future citizens and leaders.

Ladies and gentlemen ,

our theme for this year is "Improving Lives Through Broadband Innovation". A theme gives us focus on a certain area but without commitment and action in that direction the theme really is of no value other than just a statement. It is therefore our task as professionals responsible in this area to act and bring this theme to life. I therefore call on all of you to act. Let us together improve the lives of our citizens by broadband innovation.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I stand before you tonight at the openings ceremony of this 31<sup>st</sup> CANTO Annual General Meeting here at my home front , the Capital Paramaribo, of the Republic of Suriname.

It is the last AGM that I will attend and speak to you all in my capacity of chairman. I am grateful for the trust bestowed in me and therefore I take this

opportunity to thank each and everyone of you whom I worked with over the last four years and more, serving the organization. It was only with your assistance and support that I have been able to fulfill the duties as chair. A chairperson, which doesn't have the support of the fellow directors within the board, the Vice Chair and the support of the members, but not the least the support of the Secretary General and staff of the secretariat of the organization, is never able to perform its duties as chair. My heartfelt thanks to you all for your outstanding support.

I separately want to thank my Telesur Family that supported me in my capacity of CANTO Chair. I would like to mention Mr. Henk Rahan and his team who have been very instrumental at the organization of the past CANTO AGM in 2008, The CANTO conference and Trade Exhibition in 2011 and also this 31<sup>st</sup> CANTO AGM.

The Government of the Republic of Suriname, currently under the leadership of our President Desire Delano Bouterse who was always very supportive at the preparatory stage the assistance from the ministry of foreign affairs, especially the protocol department and all the support we received during the meetings, even the availability of the Presidential Palace for one of our activities during the conference in 2011. Thank you very much for this support. We are also very pleased our Vice President Robert Ameerali has accepted our invitation to speak to us at this openings ceremony.

I cannot forget to mention my own family who supported me even when having to travel so often and in particular my Kids Giano and Tirzah who were always by my side when I needed them. I must also admit that I am very proud that my son Giano, together with quite a view more youngsters from our region through their organization called PIEDATA took up the responsibility together with the CANTO secretariat under the leadership of Regenie Fraser to organize the youth forum and I really would like to publicly thank them all. I also want to mention the name of one of the speakers at the youth forum. His name is Ryan Kopinsky and he is a PhD Candidate in Robotics at FSU, Co-founder of [Innovation District](#), Co-founder of [Shop X](#) and Founder of [TechNole](#). Ryan is 24 years and a Suriname national. I think enough assurance for an excellent youth forum so don't miss being part of it.

But most importantly, all I have been doing has been in the spirit and under the guiding hand of our Savior Jesus Christ. Without his guidance and support I would have not been able to fulfill my duties.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I will be stepping down tomorrow during the official meeting at our 31<sup>st</sup> AGM but I am convinced that the person who will be elected as my successor as CANTO Chair will at least get the support I received from you all.. Finally, I leave you with the following:

Be Good in Every sense:

"When a bird is alive, it eats Ants.

When the bird is dead.... Ants eat the bird.....  
Time and Circumstances can change at any time.  
Don't devalue or hurt anyone in life.  
You may be powerful today. But remember,  
Time is more powerful than you!  
One tree makes a million match sticks.....  
But only one match stick is needed to burn a million trees,  
So Be Good and Do Good.

In closing I wish you a pleasant stay in our country Suriname and that your deliberations will bring more value to CANTO and our respective countries. May God bless you all.

Thank You.