



Chairman's Speech for CANTO Opening Ceremony 2017

Welcome

Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to CANTO 2017. It is wonderful to be here in beautiful Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. Once again, it's my great honour and indeed a privilege to chair this prestigious event. This is our 33rd Conference and Exhibition. 33 years of building relations and networking with key Telecoms/ICT stakeholders. A unique experience and a unique event that brings all stakeholders together in one Caribbean ICT space.

1 Prime Minister. 12 ICT Ministers. 47 Regulators and most of the network operators and suppliers in the region says a lot about this conference and exhibition.

As most of you know I work for Digicel Group but seventeen years ago, in January 2000 to be precise, I worked for the Antigua Public Utilities Authority where we launched the first GSM network in the English speaking Caribbean. I can clearly remember a few months after the launch of the network..... I was driving to work very early in the morning around 6:00AM and having stopped at a traffic light I noticed that there was a garbage truck in the lane next to me. Six (6) months before the cell phone was still considered a luxury item by many in Antigua and Barbuda. So as I sat at the lights I heard a cellphone ring – all 3 men in the truck went to their pockets to answer the call. I have to confess that I was very proud

of the fact that in Antigua and Barbuda in the year 2000 just about everyone, from varied economic backgrounds, had a cellphone.

Less than two decades later, if I were to stop alongside that same garbage truck, at that same hour of the morning and those three phones were to ring, I would bet that at least two of those phones being used by those men won't be on a voice network that's represented in this room. At least two of those conversations would not be regulated by any regulator in this room.

Back then you knew where your competitors were - they were in offices across the street or down the road somewhere. Today, your real competition, the OTTs, are not from the country in which you operate. Your real competitor doesn't know or care about the socioeconomic conditions of your country. Your real competitor does not employ citizens in your country nor does he pay taxes.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the reality with which we are faced with as we start CANTO 2017.....we are here to make a difference, we are here to face the challenges head on.

Prime Minister

I wish to make special mention of the presence of the Honourable Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Mr. Gaston Browne. This is the first time that we have had a Prime Minister from Antigua and Barbuda speak at this conference. Honorable Prime Minister thank you for making the time to join us. I believe it's also the first time that we have had present at a CANTO conference.....a Prime Minister who is Antiguan and also the chairman of CANTO who is Antiguan. Honorable Prime Minister I am looking forward to hearing your speech this evening. You know at almost all of my presentations around the region over the past 20 years or so I mention the fact that Antigua and Barbuda has 365 beautiful beaches..... as you know there's one for every day of the year. If you know me I am always looking for an opportunity to promote Antigua and Barbuda – I make no apology for that. Of course sometimes my friends and colleagues from CANTO like to speak about their beaches as well –especially my friend from The Bahamas. Of course this is fine – *competition is good!*

Re-elected as Chairman of CANTO for a second term

In January at our AGM I was fortunate enough to be re-elected to serve a second term as Chairman of CANTO. It is not often that one gets the opportunity to serve in such a privileged position and for this I am truly grateful. I shall certainly do my utmost to serve all of our CANTO members to the best of my abilities.

Collaboration CICC

Within the last year CANTO has been working with the Caribbean Telecommunications Union, Senior Government officials, Regulators, network operators of the region and civil society; working together in a collaborative effort to tackle key ICT issues. This working group is called the Caribbean ICT Collaboration Committee (CICC).

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is collaboration. Make no mistake - this is a challenging exercise. All those involved **must** truly believe in collaboration if our goals are to be achieved. Hence, the Caribbean ICT Collaborative Committee has been one of the most significant developments this year. This high level regional committee has a mandate to make recommendations to Governments via the CTU on key ICT topics including Net Neutrality, Over the Top players, Roaming charges and Incentivizing Broadband.

Currently draft papers are being worked on by various sub-committees and it is hoped that these papers would be finalized shortly so that recommendations can be made to Governments on the way forward.

As Vice Chair of the CICC committee it is very gratifying to work with my colleagues on such a project. Trust, open-mindedness, recognition of different perspectives are important factors for the success of collaboration. We must persevere with this collaboration project as the goals if achieved would be of tremendous benefit for all Caribbean citizens.

Historic moment

On the 2nd August 2016 at the CANTO Annual Conference a signing ceremony took place by Network Operators on the 'Voluntary Code of Practice for Safeguarding

the Open Internet'. CANTO and its members supported the concept of the open internet and the general principle that legal content, applications and services, should not be blocked. More than 30 network operators in the Caribbean signed the Voluntary Code of Practice. This was an alternate way of doing things. It was industry led regulation rather than introducing new regulation. This was a historic moment as it was the first time that the Caribbean telecoms industry has seen industry led regulation.

Disaster Risk Management

In Caribbean countries, modern telecommunications infrastructure is vulnerable to an array of natural disasters. Telecommunications service especially mobile telephony and data services can provide invaluable support to disaster management efforts. Thus as a matter of public safety, ensuring the resilience of telecommunications infrastructure in the face of national hazards is of national importance.

In May 2017 our own CANTO Disaster Risk Management working committee contributed to a significant publication with ECLAC entitled 'strengthening cooperation between telecommunications operators and national disaster offices in Caribbean countries'. CANTO's logo is on the front cover on this ECLAC publication. I understand ECLAC had to seek permission from the UN for CANTO's logo to be shown on this publication. This shows CANTO strength in collaboration and is a significant achievement.

This research has identified a number of areas in which enhanced collaboration between telecoms companies and national disaster offices can help to streamline disaster response efforts and public safety.

Conference theme

Our theme this year is a very creative one: **Reimagining ICT as a Tool for National Growth & Development**. Special thanks to our Marketing Committee led by Mr. Joseph Samuel for creating the theme. This theme says a lot about our organisation.

Reimagining ICT is high on CANTO's agenda and focuses on ICT connectivity for all our citizens. The onus is on us to encourage innovators, developers and consumers to take advantage of the dynamism of ICT and expand their thought processes to create the possibilities. This dynamism will require a paradigm shift. It will require the fostering of an environment which will stimulate the necessary creativity that is needed for the development of our national markets. Network operators need to change their business models to adopt to the OTT environment – we are already seeing this with some operators restructuring, cost cutting with a number of job cuts but we also seek the support of our Caribbean Governments and Regulators to create a good regulatory environment to incentivize investment in the Caribbean region.

What we plan to deliver in the future

At our AGM I mentioned the new strategic direction that is being charted via three distinct goals: 1) to Engage 2) to Lead and 3) to Advocate.

We want to **Engage** with members' value proposition. In CANTO, we don't just want to be acknowledged as the best organization for representing the industry, we want to engage with our members as we work towards the best solutions for all of us. So engage with us, tell us your concerns and let's work together.

Secondly, we want to **Lead** the industry. Our industry is currently in a state of flux and there is absolutely no indication that this will change anytime soon. It is therefore incumbent on us to understand the trends, successfully negotiate the turns and give the required guidance in this increasingly chaotic time.

And thirdly, we want to **Advocate** and increase CANTO's visibility and influence at all levels in the ICT arena. To advocate is, at its core, an exercise in empathy. So, we must ask ourselves, how much do we understand the challenges of our customers? At CANTO we want to speak on behalf of our members because this eventually translates into speaking for and in defense of consumers. We aim to take common positions of CANTO members and make these positions visible within the Caribbean. We will aim to promote industry led regulation where possible.

Leon Williams

I would like to give special thanks and recognition to Mr. Leon Williams of The Bahamas for his leadership as the former Vice Chair and Chairman of CANTO. Leon please stand. As you may know Leon stepped down as Vice Chair at our AGM in January. On behalf of the Board of Directors we thank you for your support and many years of service. Thanks Leon.

New Vice Chair

Rochelle Cameron please stand. Let me take the opportunity to congratulate Rochelle Cameron representing Cable & Wireless Grenada on being elected as Vice Chair of CANTO at the recent AGM in Curacao.

Board recognition

My Board Directors have consistently demonstrated their commitment and support. Board members I am truly thankful for your support. Would the following Board members please stand. Helma Etnel our Treasurer from Telem, St. Maarten; Opel Neil from Cable & Wireless Communications, Jamaica; Melesia Sutherland representing Cable and Wireless Antigua & Barbuda; Charles Carter from TSTT, Trinidad & Tobago, Lyrio Gomez from UTS, Curacao, Corrine Philip representing Digicel Turks and Caicos Islands and our new Board member Delreo Newman representing GT&T, Guyana.

New Board Member

Welcome to our new Board member Mr. Delreo Newman. Delreo brings a wealth of experience in telecommunications and regulations and we look forward to his participation on the CANTO Board. However, even with the addition of Delreo I am very happy to report that the men on the CANTO Board are still outnumbered! We still have more women on the Board than men!

Secretary General and the CANTO Secretariat Management and Staff

At CANTO we have many challenges being a non-profit organization however, our Secretary General Teresa Wankin has unwavering enthusiasm and motivation to ensure that the organization continues to prosper. Our Secretariat managers and

staff although small in number have been excellent and I look forward to your continued support, energy and enthusiasm. Thank you Teresa and all the management and staff at the Secretariat.

I would also like to recognize and acknowledge a former Secretary General of CANTO, Mr. Selby Wilson now representing the Caribbean Telecommunications Union.

Conclusion

In conclusion, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I wish to say 'thank you' to all of our sponsors and exhibitors and indeed all of our participants. I wish all stakeholders attending this conference a most successful conference and exhibition.

Let me borrow a quote from Abraham Lincoln's message to Congress in 1862 that I hope would inspire us as we deliberate over the next few days.

Lincoln said, "the dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise -- with the occasion." End of quote. We must take up the challenge and collaborate with all stakeholders to make our Caribbean region the best that it can be.

Thank you and may God bless you all!

Julian Wilkins

CANTO Chairman