

Thank you Mr. Leon Williams, CEO, BTC and co-Host of this auspicious event for your warm introduction!

- The Rt. Hon Perry Gladstone, Prime Minister of The Commonwealth of the Bahamas
- Government Ministers and their Representatives from the various islands represented
- Dr. Hamadoun Touré- Secretary General – ITU
- Mr. Dirk Currie, Chairman of CANTO
- Mrs. Helma Etnel, Ag. Vice Chair of CANTO and Other Directors of CANTO
- Ms. Bernadette Lewis, Secretary General, CTU
- Mr. Chris Dehring, Chairman & Chief Marketing Officer, LIME
- Dr. Earl Suttle, Motivational Speaker
- Board of Directors of BTC
- Senior Government Officials
- Members of Diplomatic Corps
- Members of the Clergy
- Special invited guests
- Members of the Media
- Conference Delegates
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, WELCOME!

I am beyond honored and privileged to deliver remarks at this our 30th Annual Conference and Trade Exhibition. 2014 heralds CANTO's 'Pearl' anniversary – 30 years of proudly serving its members in the ICT sector, in a multiplicity of ways. CANTO, founded in 1984, started with 8 operators from 8 Caribbean countries. 30 years later the association has proudly grown to over 141 members in 34 countries! Over the years, CANTO has evolved through many stages, ranging from the collating of a common agenda for the region to being a facilitator for the Caribbean during the process of liberalization. Our genesis came from a need to articulate a common agenda for the Caribbean in dialogue with international partners.

Pre-Liberalization saw CANTO proudly emerging as an industry champion in international negotiations, advocating on issues on behalf of its members. For example, CANTO acted as a part of a lobby group on Capitol Hill seeking to minimize the impact of the FCC Benchmark Order on reduction of settlement rates to regional operators, one of the key issues of the time.

With the onset of liberalization CANTO focused its work in the area of telecommunications policy development and training. Training courses, handbooks and workshops dealing with policy issues such as understanding the regulatory framework, interconnection guidelines, universal access/ service policy, were held to equip members with the skills needed to thrive in competitive markets.

The post-liberalization ongoing agenda has been underscored by CANTO working to construct a "Common Caribbean Agenda". Fruits of this effort include Connect the Caribbean, a bold People, Public and Private Sectors Partnership, or PPPP, the Broadband Infrastructure Inventory and Public Awareness in the Caribbean Project or BIIPAC, the Regional i-create e-content Competition, the World Telecommunications Information Society Day Regional Video Competition, the CARICOM Single ICT Space initiative and the launch of the Caribbean Women in ICT or CWIC forum. One can thus observe that our evolution has provided critical assistance to the region at the most important junctures and we will continue to advocate for our region's needs whenever necessary.

In 1999, CANTO took the strategic decision to broaden its membership to include service providers, telecoms equipment suppliers, government departments, regulatory authorities and institutions with an interest in the Caribbean telecoms sector. This decision caused for the growth of both of CANTO's groups of members: Active, being Telecoms operators in the Caribbean and Affiliate being all other members. We've grown from having only 1 Affiliate member to now having over 100, with the number of Affiliate members surpassing the Active ones from as far back as 2005!

To mark our 30th milestone CANTO will continue to observe its present broadband thrust through its theme "Strategic Alliances for Sustainable Broadband Development". This theme exudes the association's desire to enter into Strategic Alliances to accomplish most especially, broadband infrastructural development throughout the Caribbean. There is an acute need at this juncture as the demand for high-quality broadband in the Caribbean especially that of a wireless nature, far exceeds supply.

Broadband is viewed as networks of deployed telecommunications equipment and technologies necessary to provide high-speed Internet access and other advanced telecommunications services for the market.

Broadband access is absolutely crucial to a country's development and is instrumental for a nation to remain economically competitive in the 21st century. Testament to this is the fact that Broadband serves as the foundation that bolsters a nation's GDP growth, as it drives innovation, boosts a country's startup ecosystem, revolutionizes the delivery of education, creates employment opportunities and bolsters creativity. Most importantly, it can facilitate access to all basic human rights that form the fulcra of any society, such as access to health care, education, government services, to name a few.

However, the ability to utilize broadband hinges on the existence of the necessary infrastructure, which in turn can only be established through countries investing in the relevant resources and subsequently pricing access affordably for its people. Failure to do this will severely impact our region's development and leave us ill equipped to compete on the international stage or reap the immeasurable socio-economic benefits to be had from increased broadband access, a risk we can ill afford to take.

CANTO continues to focus on its BIIPAC Project. This project serves Barbados, Belize, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago and is divided into four components namely:

1. Production of Broadband diagnostics and infrastructure maps
2. Review of legal and regulatory framework and current sector trends
3. ICT awareness and capacity building in the Caribbean
4. Preparation of public policy recommendations for the design of national Broadband strategies

Some major achievements of CANTO to date are:

1. Three hundred percent increase in membership over the past 10 years
2. A global membership base with 141 members from 34 countries and spanning 4 continents.
3. An expanded Membership base to include all regional operators, being C&W, Digicel and Columbus Communications.
4. A diversified membership base with Affiliate members from various sectors, including equipment suppliers, service providers, regulators, government ministries, consultants, educational institutes, innovation incubators, mobile application labs, among others.
5. There has also been increased visibility and impact through partnerships with other likeminded regional and international organizations, agencies and institutions such as the ITU, CTU, CARICOM, IDB, Cost Quest Associates and many other agencies as we strive to meet shared objectives. CANTO is acutely aware that PPPPs are absolutely critical to delivering on the region's ICT for Development goals. As such we moved to consolidate the diversified membership base and forge relationships which have led to impactful agendas such as Connect the Caribbean and the CARICOM Single ICT Space. Given the size and shared goals of our countries, no other approach is feasible.
6. Strengthened staff capacity at the Secretariat, manifested through development opportunities. Additionally, the Secretariat now boasts regional representation from other Caribbean territories.
7. Increased influence with regional governments; Many Government Ministers from across the region are repeat attenders of our Annual Conference and Trade Exhibition. We are proud that these Ministers get actively involved, through giving presentations, asking probing questions and religiously turning up on time at our regularly occurring 7 am Ministerial Meeting! 😊

8. The introduction of the i-Create e-Content Annual Competition, which, now in its 5th year, seeks to promote the development of local and regional content.
9. The yearly commemoration of the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, geared at engaging our youth in exploring the meaningful use of ICTs, through essay and now video competitions. 2014 represented CANTO's 8th year being staging this initiative.
10. Celebration of Women and Girls in ICT. The aim of the celebratory activities has been to create a global environment that empowers and encourages women and girls to seek a career in the growing field of information and communication technologies (ICTs). This has resulted in the upcoming launch of CWIC!
11. Agreement with LAUREATE to cooperate in the promotion, facilitation and implementation of a program, which allows employees or members to pursue online higher education through, affiliated Universities at a reduced cost.
12. Increased use of the PPPP model of development. A prime example being BIIPAC, a spin off from the Connect the Caribbean Project. This project is one of CANTO's most ambitious to date. Please join us on the next leg of the journey as we form "Strategic Alliances for Sustainable Broadband Development. I urge you to stay abreast of these developments, share your thoughts and ideas and keep in mind our goal is to advance the development of the Caribbean through ICTs. We pledge to do our part as we collectively work towards a Connected Caribbean.
13. This year's conference features the first face-to-face Public Private Sector Dialogue on the CARICOM Single ICT Space. Key points for discussion are its design and implementation. This project has a far-reaching timeline and needs everyone on board to ensure its success. We thus encourage you to become a strong stakeholder and partner with us in the creation of the CARICOM single ICT Space!

With all these exciting developments on the horizon for 2014, CANTO will focus its 30th year on creating strategic alliances with all stakeholders to bolster and develop broadband infrastructure in the Caribbean. This will create a more economically viable region for all and in so doing strengthen the social fabric of our beloved Caribbean basin.

For the future, CANTO will strive to remain the authoritative fertile ground, acting as a catalyst for fruitful networking with the region's key industry champions. Members have expressed that CANTO has helped them to build ICT capacity and capability in the region and we want to discover even more innovative ways in which we can continue to build value for you in this arena. Administratively, we will continue with the implementation of our Secretariat's Reputation Management Plan and the boosting of our Human Resource capability. These goals align with our objective of constant evolution.

Another major goal as we look to the future is to continue work towards establishing **broadband infrastructural development throughout the Caribbean. A key aspect of this objective is the identification of possible funding models to support the rollout of broadband.** The time is now to put tangible steps in place to secure the realization of this goal.

It would be remiss of me to not use this opportunity to recognize those who play critical roles in helping us towards achieving our mission. Firstly, our members, whose investments, skills, hard work and commitment to the region make all this possible. We welcome the new members, you are joining at a very exciting time in our development and we are looking forward to your contribution in the coming years. We thank our exhibitors, many who work with us year after year, to keep the

Caribbean at the cutting edge of technology. Thank you to our advertisers, sponsors and partners, without your kind support, this would not be possible.

The value and currency of this conference will only be predicated on the extent to which you choose to participate. We thus look forward to your vibrant feedback and input as we continue to evolve this conference and trade exhibition. Let us have a successful CANTO2014!