



Feature Address by
Senator the Honourable Robert Le Hunte
Minister of Public Utilities
At
The Opening Ceremony
of the
CANTO Annual General Meeting

February 4, 2018

Regency, HYATT

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SALUTATIONS

- Hon Curtis Richardson Minister, Minister of Infrastructure, Communications, Utilities, Housing, Agriculture, Fisheries and Information Technology of Anguilla
- Dr. Ronald Walcott, Chief Executive Officer, TSTT
- Mr. Julian Wilkins, Chairman of CANTO
- Ms. Rochelle Cameron, Vice Chair of CANTO
- Mrs. Helma Etnel, Treasurer of CANTO
- Mrs. Teresa Wankin, Secretary General of CANTO
- Senior Government Officials
- Board of Directors of CANTO
- Board of Directors of TSTT

- Senior Executives of TSTT
- Mr. Wendell Etienne (Master of Ceremonies)
- Members of CANTO
- Sponsors and Exhibitors
- Members of the Media
- Other invited guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening. It is indeed a pleasure to address such a prestigious gathering of representatives from telecommunications sectors across the region.

I would especially like to welcome all of our visitors to the beautiful twin-island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

The next four days will be packed with discussions, presentations and workshops but I hope that you will somehow find the time to enjoy some of what our country has to offer, and that your stay will be as refreshing as it is productive.

The theme that you have chosen for this year's AGM, along with some of the topics that will be covered in the various presentations, give me every confidence that the next few days will provide you with information and resources that are needed to successfully navigate the rapidly evolving world of Information and Communication Technology.

I say 'rapidly evolving' because I can remember a time, not so long ago, when telegrams and letters were the primary means of communication across great distances. In those days, mobile phones were unheard of.

Today, apart from being used for interpersonal communication across the globe, mobile technology is now used to interface and

interact with a digital universe of applications, websites, platforms and data.

This universe is now so expansive that it now impacts almost every aspect of our lives – from our news and entertainment, to our finances and shopping.

Today, over **3.2 billion** people, worldwide, use the internet. While mobile subscriptions have **more than tripled** over the past decade to **7.1 billion**.

Businesses are now taking advantage of this expanding market while utilising digital technologies to build capacity and accelerate growth.

Governments are also joining in the transformation afforded by digital platforms and systems by investing heavily in ICT. Which leads to, among other things, productivity and efficiency in the delivery of public services.

If digital technologies and their impact is so pervasive and extensive, it follows that our adoption of these technologies should be proactive and strategically aligned to our development goals as Caribbean states.

Many of you here represent telecommunication agencies in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like Trinidad and Tobago. And so, I do not have to spend too much time highlighting the fact that many of our countries are characterised by mono-product economies. In our case, it is the oil and gas industry. In the case of St. Lucia and

Barbados, it is tourism. And others are sustained by mono-crop agriculture.

This has been the history and lived-experience of the Caribbean, and we are all aware of how it has shaped our landscape and culture. We are also all aware that if we are to remain resilient in the face of a rapidly changing global environment, we must diversify.

Often, when we think of diversification, we think of the service industry. I would like to remind us all that ICT offers opportunities in this area.

ICT manufacturing and maintenance, cybersecurity, customer-relations management, data-base management, software development and app creation. These are just a few of the many

services that can be developed and provided by a tech-savvy population with access to the relevant resources and infrastructure.

In recognition of this fact, we in Trinidad and Tobago are currently drafting a **five-year National ICT Plan**. That plan, which is currently in its consultative phase, declares a bold vision of a future, transformed through ICT and characterised by **empowered people, competitive businesses, and transformational government**.

That vision is, of course in keeping with the **17 Sustainable Development Goals** mapped out in our Vision 2030 and outlined by the United Nation's Sustainable Development Agenda. And as such, the National ICT Plan signals our intent to use ICT as a catalyst, as we work towards those goals.

Already, we, as a Government, and more specifically as the Ministry of Public Utilities, have implemented initiatives that utilise ICT to the benefit of our various stakeholders.

Just last week, TSTT signed an MOU with iGOVTT, the state company responsible for the provision of ICT services to Government Ministries and Agencies.

That agreement will facilitate the adoption of **TSTT's e-Tender Software** as a Service (SaaS) procurement portal for government projects. And its utilisation will greatly improve the transparency of the bidding process, while removing some of the barriers to inclusion that would have previously existed.

In addition to this, we at the Ministry of Public Utilities have, in collaboration with our various Agencies, launched **four apps** over the past **three months**.

Two of these apps, launched by the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission and the Water and Sewerage Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, provide customers with a mobile platform through which they can make reports about disrupted or unreliable service, and pay bills.

The third application, launched by the Trinidad and Tobago Meteorological Services Division, gives persons access to weather information on their mobile devices.

And the fourth, called the MPUi, was created by the Ministry of Public Utilities to enable persons to lodge reports and requests on any of the utility services under our purview.

Each of these initiatives was established with the aim of improving communication between the utility service providers and the general public so that their concerns in relation to those services could be met in a more timely and efficient manner. And I am happy to report that we are already seeing results.

I must note, however, that projects like these would not be possible without collaboration. That is the glue that holds various stakeholders with different agendas together – all for the greater good.

We, at the Ministry of Public Utilities, are grateful for the various Agencies and external organisations that work with us in service of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

And I am pleased to see that telecommunications agencies throughout the region are banding together to share expertise and to advocate for the conditions that would encourage the growth of our telecommunications sectors.

This can only redound to increased opportunities for the growth and development of our economies and the happiness and prosperity of our people.

And so, I commend you all for your presence at this AGM and for the work which I am sure you are doing back in your home countries.

And I once again wish you a productive and enjoyable Annual General Meeting.

Thank you.