

2019 AGM
Secretary General's Message
35th Annual General Meeting
27th to 30th January, 2019, Georgetown, Guyana

As we begin 2019 with our thirty-fifth Annual General Meeting, milestones and achievements are top of mind. It is only appropriate that we start this year with CANTO's AGM - being hosted by one of its founding members, GTT here in Guyana – a nation blessed with an abundance of natural resources – gold, silver, bauxite, and now oil.

GTT has been along with CANTO on its thirty-five-year journey and CANTO is now proud to stand beside GTT as it provides Guyana's emerging economy with the ICT infrastructure needed for unprecedented business activity.

CANTO has grown from eight members on formation to 145 today, including members from not only the Caribbean, Central and South America, but also as far as the UK, the USA and even Denmark. This continued growth in membership is a testament to the recognition of the important role we play in the region.

In 2018 we were pleased to add thirteen new members to our CANTO family – join me as I welcome the following companies -Cable and Wireless Panama; Cable and Wireless BVI; Cable and Wireless Cayman Islands; Columbus Communications Trinidad and Tobago; Columbus Communications Curacao; NTCS; Web Internet Telecoms; Tempest Telecoms;AGrandTech; PrePay Nation;

Ultimate Potentials; and 21Q. With the addition of these new members, we can now boast that our voice represents the entire region.

An association preparing its members, and by extension the region for digital transformation must constantly transition its products and services. to deliver what our members want. It is important to us that we add value to our members and much of this is done through the Working Committees of the Board. The committees are Disaster Risk Management, Technology Trends, Regulation, Corporate Social Responsibility, Communications & Marketing and Financial Advisory. These committees are building blocks for the work we do - and they, have over the years produced papers on policies and procedures; kept an eye on emerging issues and trends, and allowed us to make representation on regional and international platforms.

Nelson Mandela is credited with having said “**Remember to celebrate milestones as you prepare for the road ahead.**” While we celebrate our years of successes, we are certainly focused on preparing for the road ahead. Under the theme for this AGM, “**Transitioning to a Digital Region: Opportunities & Challenges**”, we will bring together multiple stakeholders and industry experts to share the highest quality solutions, products and services and showcase the latest technologies that will allow us to build a robust digital economy.

The agenda will focus on the theme, with discussions on the opportunities and challenges of digitalization; the use of the technology to aid our countries in advancing their economies and developing their transition path. Sessions such as Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies, Payments and Fraud Management which are critical to understand a digital economy are also included in the agenda.

One of the initiatives that will positively impact the digitalization of the region is the creation of a single ICT space, and we look forward to the update on this activity from the CARICOM Secretariat.

CANTO continues to collaborate with all our stakeholders to deliver benefits to the region - In 2017 Tripwireless - a CANTO member out of the United States, partnered with CANTO and started the C7 Initiative, a back pack and school supplies program for primary students affected by natural disasters. To date one thousand back packs have been distributed in Antigua and Barbuda and Trinidad and Tobago. We urge members to join this initiative as we continue the distribution in St. Maarten, Dominica, British Virgin Islands, and Guyana.

We have partnered with GSMA for enhancing the existing skills set in the region. The training on Wednesday “Unlocking Rural Mobile Coverage” will address the connectivity gap in rural areas. It will also give insights into the challenges and opportunities that the public and private sector face in bringing coverage to the uncovered. In addition, the Girls for Tech workshop is a joint initiative between, GSMA, CANTO, the Ministries of Public Telecommunications and Education in Guyana to host a hands-on educational workshop for girls, ages 15-18. This workshop will increase their self-confidence and interest in technology. They will learn simple coding skills using a Google Home kit and Raspberry Pi to help unleash their creativity.

We have also partnered with Prepay Nation to create an online portal which will enable subscribers of CANTO members to buy airtime using a credit, debit card or other electronic payment methods.

This AGM will see the end of the tenure of our Chairman Julian Wilkins and the installation of a new Chair. The outgoing Chairman has brought a wealth of industry knowledge and enthusiasm to the role, which has allowed us to make significant progress in the four years under his Chairmanship. He did not skimp on his availability and guidance to the Secretariat. We are privileged to have worked with him, and as we bid him adieu at the end of this AGM as Chairman, we know that he will continue to be a force within the industry and CANTO. Thank you, Chairman Wilkins, for your commitment.

On behalf of my Team (The CANTO Secretariat), I will like to thank you our members, our hard working and dedicated Board of Directors and all other stakeholders for your support in 2018 and I look forward to working with you in 2019.