

**Honourable Alvin Dabreo
Government of Grenada
Feature Address
CANTO
July 31, 2016**

THEME: *Inspiring ICT Innovations: Building an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem through Sustainable Strategic Partnership*

Salutations

- ✓ **Chairperson**
- ✓ **Members of the Head Table**
- ✓ **Chairman of CANTO Mr. Julian Wilkins**
- ✓ **Ministers of CARICOM Governments**
- ✓ **CEO'S of Telecommunications Service providers**
- ✓ **Senior ICT practitioners and officials from Governments and international and regional organisations**
- ✓ **Special Invitees**
- ✓ **Presenters**
- ✓ **Members of the Media**

1. I bring greetings from the Prime Minister of Grenada, Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell, Lead Head of Government in CARICOM for Science and Technology, including ICT, who is unable to attend this meeting due to a pressing schedule.

2. I am deeply honored to be here at the 32nd Annual CANTO forum and consider it an extremely important task to deliver the keynote address on the theme:

Inspiring ICT Innovations: Building Entrepreneurial Ecosystems through Sustainable and Strategic Partnerships.

3. I submit to you that there is not a more relevant time to discuss this important issue and its integration into the economies of the Caribbean Region.
4. I must first extend commendations to CANTO for its continued leadership and the hosting of this important forum that serves as a critical convergence platform for advancing the technological focus for our region.
5. Information and Communication Technologies have provided the pivot to many of our public and private sector operations. Over the years we have seen a significant increase in investments in the development of the Telecommunications Infrastructure. The development has propelled the provision of improved and enhanced ICT applications and services.
6. The development of an entrepreneurial ecosystem which supports technological innovation is, admittedly, a daunting but not insurmountable task.

It is, however, a necessary undertaking if we are to transform our economies and enhance our global competitive position.

7. Within CARICOM, the Governments have already taken the bold step of committing to the establishment of a single ICT space that is geared towards harmonized developmental efforts within the context of the CARICOM connectivity agenda.
8. This move sets the pathway to exploit opportunities for creating digital economies, which serve as the digital platform of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME).
9. It is therefore critical that, as a region, we begin to effectively channel our optimism for sustainable economic development by recognising the importance of repositioning technology and innovation as a priority pillar.
10. In order to realize the true benefits that are integral with a technological-integration approach, we must relinquish the currently existing sense of status quo maintenance by loosening our loyalties to traditional methods and approaches.

11. This essentially calls for a fundamental rethinking, whereby the absence of a culture of innovation becomes less obvious.
12. In order to establish an entrepreneurial ecosystem where innovation sits at the center, we must first recognise that interactions among all actors are required to transform ideas into solutions. Collaboration and engagement among the private sector and public sector entities should be a priority second to none.
13. We must shift from the siloed way of thinking. The development of technology life cycles that encourage and support entrepreneurship at all levels must be part of the new development paradigm.
14. The region must commit to developing and deploying entrepreneurship/technology incubators to fast track the commercialization of ideas.
15. We must create focal points capable of producing novel ideas –which will, in-turn, serve to stimulate and foster new innovations.

16. We must identify role models – successful, local entrepreneurs or companies should serve to attract risk capital, draw in new entrepreneurial talent and encourage others.
17. We must develop fora of entrepreneurship that can facilitate the process of social capital building.
18. We must create region-specific ideas – technologies and business models should emerge that are relevant to the region and can grow organically within the industrial landscape.
19. We must create safety nets—as a tolerance of risk and failure, tax and other enabling laws, and social support systems that are not punitive towards entrepreneurs.
20. We must develop gateways to international markets.
21. We must develop personnel with the skills, drive and determination to succeed in challenging environments and advocate for and encourage more research and development efforts.

22. We must also acknowledge the responsibility to develop policies that encourage, support and protect our innovation resource pool. It is imperative that entrepreneurship and innovation be placed at the centre of our development agendas.
23. Policy intervention needs to take a holistic approach, focusing on the entrepreneurial actors within the ecosystem; the resource providers within the ecosystem; entrepreneurial connectors within the ecosystem and the entrepreneurial environment of the ecosystem.
24. In doing so we must pledge to innovate by creating competitiveness frameworks that push boundaries.
25. We must change the status quo by accepting that there are only opportunities ahead. We must not hesitate to innovate our governance processes and tools to allow for more efficient management.
26. If we are to build an ecosystem that is truly sustainable, we must start the 'innovation renaissance', where governments, business, academia and citizens can interact to foster creative and bold thinking and a flexible, dynamic, stimulating and enabling environment,

allowing for innovation to drive economic growth, the creation of jobs, ground-breaking research and new solutions for societal and welfare challenges.

27. This begins by formulating a shared vision between public and private sector stakeholders that best serve the needs of the region.

28. It is hard to ignore the benefits that have been recognized from the direct integration of technology into developed economies. It would be illogical to consider technology and innovation in a vacuum without thinking about the potential social impacts.

29. While the need to innovate leads the charge in this forum, we must not hesitate to be advocates for innovations that are socially acceptable.

30. We now live in a knowledge-based society. Broadband infrastructure, applications and services must be positioned to become ubiquitous throughout the Region, in all sectors, among all groups, and in all spaces.

As such, we must commit to taking an interrogative approach to evaluate and ensure that the advancements in broadband infrastructural development are aligned and coordinated with the benefits accrued to our people.

31. The onus therefore, is on us, to put mechanisms in place to allow for the provisioning of an environment that encourages the development of broadband infrastructure, applications, and services. It is my hope that this ambition can be mirrored to reflect a unified and shared Caribbean vision.

32. While it seems natural to celebrate the victories we would have achieved so far within our various member states, especially with respect to the growth in mobile penetration, internet uptake, software development and next generation networks, we must acknowledge the challenges that still exist and also acknowledge that there is much more to be accomplished. Broadband penetration rates throughout the Caribbean are less than desired.

33. Big Data, the Internet of Things, Cloud Computing, Video Streaming, OTT services, and Open Data initiatives are now at the forefront.

We must ensure that our societies are strategically positioned to realise the benefits that come with these technological shifts.

34. I make a bold call for roaming charges within the entire Caribbean to be abolished. I make a call for the establishment of Number Portability throughout the entire Caribbean and for all ICT networks to be IPV6 compatible.

35. In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the importance of positioning entrepreneurship and innovation as a priority pillar. As we strive to advance our position, we must remember, as a region, to achieve entrepreneurial or innovative efficiency, we must think along the lines of the theme of this conference to inspire ICT innovations by building entrepreneurship through sustainable strategic partnerships.

36. I extend congratulations to the organizers of CANTO and best wishes to all, for a successful and productive conference. I thank you