

Chairman's Speech for CANTO Opening Ceremony 2016

Salutations....

Special mention for Mrs Wilkins – my dear wife please stand. This is a very special moment for me since in my 22 years of attending CANTO conferences I believe this is the first time we have actually had present the chairperson's spouse – so welcome Mrs Wilkins.

Welcome

Good evening and welcome to CANTO 2016.

It was the late Steve Jobs who observed that, "you can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards." He went on to say....."So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something."

This is our 32nd Conference and Exhibition, so surely we do have a lot to look back on and we can ask ourselves, "how have we connected the dots?" This conference finds us at the crossroads. With advances in telecommunications technology that demand that we negotiate some turbulent waters ahead we have to ask ourselves, what will the future look like and how would our meeting here over the next few days have influenced it?

The disruption caused by the rapid advances of technology is unprecedented. Nothing today is sacrosanct, no industry is being spared, no business is safe from the impact of today's technology. Yet it is precisely at such a time as this, that we are being called upon to shape the future.

We can't just wait for the technology designers and innovators to provide us with our innovation; we too as an organization must demonstrate that we are ready to innovate in our thinking and respond to the current challenges and opportunities before us. We have to look forward as far as we may dare, because it's that forward thinking that leaves a legacy.

Our theme this year is **Inspiring ICT Innovations: Building an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem through Sustainable Strategic Partnerships**. As an organization we have set ourselves the task of “Inspiring ICT innovations”. The reason for this is that with innovation comes the building of Entrepreneurship through sustainable partnerships. It was Naveen Jain, the entrepreneur and philanthropist, who founded several successful companies including Moon Express, BlueDot and Intelius, who said “we begin to change the world when we stimulate long-term prosperity using technology.” He continued that, “there is not a problem that's large enough that innovation and entrepreneurship can't solve.”

The biggest need in most of our Caribbean countries is for growth in our economies. This requires huge amounts of capital and resources. We are connected to the world information engine via broad band internet and, like every other country big or small, what we have to ensure that our people get the best quality broadband internet so that we can adequately compete. Our people are gifted and talented: so the question is – how do we encourage them to produce – to innovate? How do we inspire and steer them towards excellence and more importantly to “think big”. This is why the regulatory environment is so important – we must create the right environment in order to facilitate innovation.

So let us see how we have been connecting the dots so far at CANTO.

The CANTO Conference and Exhibition held in Miami, August 2015 can easily be described as the number one Telecoms Caribbean event that took place that year. For some time now, this conference has been the leading telecommunications forum in the region, attended by key policy makers within the Caribbean. Our CANTO conference is a unique event with a wide cross section of stakeholders which includes Government Ministers and senior Officials, Regulators, network operators, equipment suppliers, media and academia. I am happy to announce that we have 12 ICT Ministers in attendance; over 40 Regulators from 16 countries and 33 network operators with more than 100 senior executives. Indeed, this is a historic event with 2 of the most powerful men in communications in this region – speaking at this event: Denis O'Brien,

Chairman of Digicel Group and John Reid, Interim Chief Executive Officer, Cable & Wireless Communications.

In addition, several regional organisations such as the Economic Commission of Latin America and the Caribbean; the Caribbean Telecoms Union; the International Telecoms Union and the GSMA are also represented.

Once again, it's my great honour and a privilege to chair this prestigious event. This is my second year as Chairman and I have to say I am looking forward to meeting many of you over the next few days.

Working Committees

I would say as an organisation, we have focused on deliverables for our members. When we look at our working committees there is a lot that is being delivered.

Our **Regulatory Committee**, chaired by Melesia Sutherland from Cable & Wireless, is a good example of this. In a relatively short space of time, a Code of Practice for Safeguarding the Open Internet has been produced and launched. This Code provides a framework for operators across the Caribbean Region to collectively address the issue of Net Neutrality. I must also thank my Board of Directors for uniting in a common position on the Code of Practice. This shows that operators, small, medium or large can work together on key areas to create an opportunity for industry led regulation.

This Code of Practice for safeguarding the Open Internet balances the needs and freedoms of end users and content providers with the requirement of Operators to run their networks and their corresponding freedom to innovate and develop new services and business models.

CANTO and its members support the concept of the open internet and the general principle that legal content, applications and services should not be blocked. We have a signing ceremony by operators tomorrow demonstrating that Operators will safeguard the Open Internet.

This Code of Practice is an alternate way of doing things. Its industry led regulation rather than introducing new regulation. It is a significant moment in the history of CANTO.

The **'New Technology'** Working Committee has produced a draft paper entitled **'Trending Pure Internet'**, which will soon be published on our CANTO website.

The **CSR Committee** is working on an exciting pilot project in Trinidad and Tobago on the CANTO product take-back and recycling programme. This project is focused on 2 key goals:

- 1) To ensure the environmentally sound collection and storage of selected e-wastes from our CANTO ICT stakeholders in Trinidad and Tobago
- 2) To ensure the environmentally sound treatment and disposal of these e-wastes in accordance with international best practices.

Sometimes connecting the dots as Regulator, Operator, Policymaker or Supplier can require quite a bit of juggling, compromising and perhaps even haggling. But, I am sure there is one issue that we, being Caribbean nationals, can ALL agree on; and this is – our response to a national disaster is critical. As we speak, the hurricane season is upon us and just about all of us can be hit by a hurricane, flood or an earthquake.

Disaster Preparedness

One of my personal goals going forward is to encourage deeper focus on disaster preparedness. We need to strengthen our relationship with our national disaster preparedness agencies.

To this end, I recommend that we join forces with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to sharpen our disaster preparedness skills and effectiveness. ECLAC has been exploring how disaster planning and management within the Caribbean telecoms sector can be enhanced by employing better coordination between telecoms service providers and national disaster offices.

In October 2015, ECLAC partnered with CANTO on a joint initiative with the CANTO Disaster Recovery Working Committee. The project sought to evaluate disaster planning and response processes and to develop methodologies for assessing damage and loss assessments for the telecom sector in the region. In light of this, we embarked on an information gathering exercise to evaluate the region's telecoms infrastructure in the context of disaster preparedness.

CANTO Members: by contributing to disaster planning activities and improving our coordination with the CANTO Secretariat and National Disaster Management Offices, we can better respond **when**, not **if**, a disaster strikes.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As Chairman of CANTO I'm very passionate about our disaster preparedness committee. We are fortunate that we have an excellent chair, Heather Wallen-Bryan from Cable & Wireless, who has really re-invigorated this working committee. Since we want to strengthen our focus in this area, we have introduced a special project awareness session tomorrow afternoon on strengthening cooperation between telecoms operators and national disaster offices in Caribbean countries. I invite as many of you as possible to make it a point to attend this session.

This passion has grown out of personal experiences that I had when I lived in Antigua between 1994 and 2006. During that time, we experienced five hurricanes. The strongest one was Hurricane Luis in 1995 which sat over Antigua and Barbuda for 36 hours with winds over 140 miles per hour. We were devastated and recovery took many months.

Fellow members of CANTO

Let's all commit to strengthening our ties with the Disaster Preparedness National Offices; CANTO will continue to work with ECLAC to achieve this goal.

At this point I must say to my Bahamian friend Leon Williams who is also Vice-chair of CANTO that I have now returned home to Antigua and even with the hurricanes Antigua still has 365 beautiful beaches – one for every day of the year.

I could not resist the commercial – and we still have the 5 S's Sun, Sea, Sand, Security and Sailing.

Hackathon

Last year we hosted a very successful Hackathon and in 2016 we will have our second one. Hackathon is CANTO's regional software design and developer competition. This is our way of luring talent to the surface. Again, it is being held in conjunction with Domus Semo Sancus headed by one of our former CANTO Board directors E Jay Saunders along with PIEDATA. E Jay, your creativity, innovation and support to the CANTO conference is incredible. PIEDATA, you are fantastic – thanks so much for being part of CANTO. We are proud to be associated with such young, innovative Caribbean talent.

The Hackathon competition seeks to bring together some of the best teams of software developers and designers from the Caribbean region, with the aim of solving challenging but real world problems.

Ladies and Gentlemen

CANTO continues to experience transformation. You have seen a number of changes at CANTO including increased working committees that are more focused on deliverables.

One of our regrettable changes is the resignation of Mrs Gail Moss Solomon from Digicel. She can therefore no longer serve on the Board of CANTO. In the short time in which she served, she was very participative and instrumental in determining policy at the Board level. Her contribution is very much appreciated and we wish her all the best. I am pleased, however, to announce that Gail has been replaced by another Lady. Our New Board member is Corinne Philip from Digicel.

I am very happy to report that the men on the CANTO Board are still outnumbered!

Board recognition

My Directors have consistently demonstrated their commitment and support. I would like to recognise my Board members who have been instrumental in achieving a number of goals over the past 18 months. Would the following Board members please stand. We have Leon Williams, Vice Chair from BTC; Helma Etnel our Treasurer from Telem; Opel Neil from Cable and Wireless Communications; Melesia Sutherland from Cable and Wireless; Charles Carter from TSTT, Lyrio Gomez from UTS, Rochelle Cameron from Cable and Wireless, and our New Board member Corrine Philip from Digicel.

Secretary General

I am pleased to announce that we have a new Secretary General, after six months of acting, Teresa Wankin was confirmed in the position. Teresa, please stand... Let us welcome Teresa. We wish you God's speed and blessings as you take on the role of Secretary General – congratulations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I say 'thank you' to all of our sponsors and exhibitors and in particular special thanks to the CANTO Secretariat staff who continue to work very hard on the planning and organisation of this event.

Mark Twain wrote: *"twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor, catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."*

Let's explore, dream, discover over the next few days at this conference and exhibition.

I wish you all a productive and enjoyable CANTO 2016.

Thank you and God Bless,

Julian Wilkins

CANTO Chairman