

2017 AGM

Secretary General's Message 33 Annual General Meeting, 29th January, 2017, **Curacao**

Good Evening Everyone!

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this year's Annual General Meeting. We are celebrating not only the past year's accomplishments, but also 33 years of service to the Regional Information and Communication Technologies eco-system.

Thank you for joining in our celebrations. Your support and presence here is an indication of the confidence you have entrusted in us and your commitment to ensuring that we stay on course.

I am proud to say that Curacao is one of the most welcoming places to CANTO. It is the home of United Telecommunications Services (UTS), and the Bureau of Telecommunications and Post (BTP). UTS is one of the founding members of CANTO and has hosted the most conferences of the association to date. UTS also has a seat on the Board of Directors of CANTO. I want to take this opportunity to thank Director Gomez and his team for the support in staging this event. The Bureau of Telecommunications and Post is one of the first Regulators to join CANTO and it is on the invitation of these two organizations, we are here today. This is also the first time we have a member teaming up with a regulator to host the AGM and underscores that when it comes to collaborating on matters of common concern, our members always put the region first.

It is so important for us to have these opportunities to connect with our members. Connecting with our members enables us to provide a platform that gives the telecoms industry a voice on the issues facing the region. Together, with the stakeholders, that voice becomes stronger and we have a wonderful opportunity to change the lives of citizens in the region. This collaboration has enjoyed great success in 2016 – the Code of Practice among operators reinforces the industry's willingness to work with regulators and policy makers by adhering to good business practice while safeguarding the open internet.

The membership through the working committees of the Board have collaborated to produce the following white papers for use by all stakeholders:

- Over the Top (OTTs) operators and its impact on Caribbean operators
- Universal Service Fund
- Towards a Pure Internet

Our strength lies in our relationships with our stakeholders and we continue to improve on the service we provide. CANTO continues to be the number one authority for shaping Information and Communication Technologies in the region, addressing the issues that impact regional growth and development with constant dialogue between all the stakeholders.

We continue to increase our visibility and influence at all levels, nationally, regionally and internationally, we work closely with policy makers, regulators and civil society to understand and respond to the concerns of the industry.

Each of you, upon registration would have received an annual report with our theme and logo for the year. At first glance it looks like a human face and a tree with roots. But a closer look at the logo encourages us to reimagine ICT and its possibilities for enabling national growth and development using our collective wisdom. It encourages us to embrace change with creativity and strategic thinking. The Annual Report also gives a detailed account of our Activities in 2016.

In your bags, you will also find a call for partners for one of our recently launched projects “*Towards a Smart Region*”. The invitation is for you to join us as we embark on a regional roadshow to promote awareness and build partnerships that will support and guide stakeholders at the national and regional levels.

CANTO is ready for the future. We will continue to expand our boundaries to bring new members and technologies in the region. We will continue to connect the products and services of our stakeholders to meet the needs of the region. From houses to cities, nations to region, we will rethink, remix and reimagine ICT as a tool for national growth and development.

On behalf of my Team at the CANTO Secretariat, I would like to thank you our members, our hard working and dedicated Board of Directors, our Sponsors, Exhibitors and all other stakeholders for your support in 2016; as I look forward to working with you in 2017.