

Opening Ceremony Address
34th Annual General Meeting
4th February 2018, Hyatt Regency Hotel
Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago
Teresa Wankin, Secretary General, CANTO

Salutations:

Good Evening Everyone

Through Adversity, Comes Strength!

It is with great pleasure I welcome you all to this Annual General Meeting. We are celebrating the many accomplishments of the past year, in addition to Thirty-four years of service to the Regional ICT eco system.

This meeting is being co-hosted by the Telecommunication Services of Trinidad and Tobago, and we are extremely proud to be here at the home of the CANTO Secretariat. Over the next two days, you will experience a program, which reflects the rich cultural mosaic of Trinidad and Tobago.

While reflecting on the year 2017, the word **STRENGTH** is uppermost in my mind. The flexibility of the association, our member organisations, secretariat staff, and the people of the Caribbean region,

cohesively personifies the resilience and fortitude, to bounce back despite apparent adversity after every storm.

Two phrases “Caribbean People are **Strong**” and Caribbean People are **Resilient**”, stated by the Dominican Prime Minister, Mr. Roosevelt Skerritt, after the destruction caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria, echo in my mind quite often. As a result, I ask myself the question - **After a devastation like this!! - what happens?**

In CANTO, after the storm, the collaboration begins, and the fortitude and reliability of our people become very evident. I am hereby placing on record, our heartfelt gratitude to the Chair of our Disaster Risk Management Committee, Mrs. Heather Wallen Bryan; the Committee Coordinator, Mrs. Gail Edwards; and the General Manager of Cable and Wireless, Barbados, Mr. Jason Sylvester; for spearheading CANTO’s initiative to mobilize resources for the assessment phase. I am also extending our gratitude to Trip Wireless for donating educational packs for the children, in affected countries.

As an Association with members located in the ferocious hurricane belt, we are always conscious of the danger of storms, and its impact on the economy. I am therefore, extremely pleased to announce the launch of Sonar – a mobile application that uses technology to strengthen preparedness, manage disasters and contribute to reduction in the loss of life. What is special about Sonar, is, the fact that it is **Caribbean Made**

- developed by our very own youths, at our very own CANTO hackathon. I am confident that what you will see here tomorrow morning will be pleasing to all – I urge you to download the app and give us your feedback so that the full potential of this dynamic application can be realized.

The success of the Sonar Mobile Application, highlights the benefits of collaboration and interdependence with all stakeholders. CANTO continues to seek out and embrace partnerships. Our most recent Memorandum of Understanding with CARILEC, sets out a framework for cooperation, between the two entities, to facilitate growth and development of the ICT and electric sectors in the region.

As we convene this AGM, we have an interesting schedule before us. The theme – “*Guiding Digital Adoption to Lead the Global Market*”, ensures that we stay focused on the major force that is reshaping the world. This digital disruption brings with it, opportunities which will alter the way we manage our homes, businesses, and by extension disasters - ultimately leading to economic prosperity in the region. The conference sessions cover several aspects of the digital revolution and deals with - disaster preparedness, awareness and management; cloud technology; data centres and cybersecurity, to name a few.

The mini exhibition highlights the products and services needed to ensure your businesses are successful. I urge you to visit the tables and engage the service providers on their latest offerings.

CANTO continues to navigate an era where the telecommunications industry is changing with unrelenting force. As the industry association representing both carriers and service providers, our role continues to evolve around the changes in our membership.

I look forward, with almost child-like excitement, in anticipation of the many opportunities that 2018 will bring. I am confident that the dream our founders had for CANTO, thirty-four years ago, is as alive today, as when it was first conceptualized as the engine for **ICT development in the region.**

On behalf of my entire team at the CANTO Secretariat, I thank you our members, our Board of Directors, our Sponsors, Exhibitors and all other stakeholders for your support in 2017. I look forward to working with you in 2018.

Please, connect with us; - share your ideas, projects and vision for the region. We are committed to working with all stakeholders to shape a digital economy for our citizens so that we can compete **with strength and fortitude in the Global Markets**

I thank you.