



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago  
Ministry of Public Administration

Welcoming Remarks

Mrs Joan Mendez  
Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Public Administration

Opening Ceremony of the 2019 World Telecommunication and  
Information Society Day Workshop  
May 29, 2019

Good morning,

It is my honour to bring welcoming remarks on behalf of the Ministry of Public Administration during this the opening ceremony of 2019 World Telecommunications and Information Society Day (WTISD) Workshop. Trinidad and Tobago stands proudly with its fellow Member States of the International Telecommunication Union in celebrating WTISD, an observance which marks the founding of the ITU, seeks to raise awareness on the value that technology can bring to societies, and strives to devise means to bridge the digital divide.

As the Ministry with responsibility for championing National Information Communication Technology Development, MPA is constantly striving to leverage the transformational potential of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) to overcome the socio-economic disparities that exist within our country and to propel the advancement of our citizens. Therefore, MPA was very enthusiastic to collaborate with the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT) on this notable event that seeks to commemorate this special day. Moreover, this year holds extra significance, given it is the 50th anniversary of WTISD and the selected theme of “Bridging the Standardisation Gap” brings from the background into sharp focus the importance of standards in realizing our digital development goals.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am, admittedly, not an ICT standards expert, but this lack of technical expertise does not negate me from recognizing the benefits that harmonized standards in technology can bring. Standards have had a particularly useful role in coordinating the use of technology and advancing economic development. At its essence, ICT Standards:

- allow for the development of high performing products globally,
- provide for the compatibility of new technologies
- facilitate innovation and growth in the ICT industry; and
- safeguard consumer choice and facilitate universal access

It is for these reasons that digital development technocrats and strategists alike should heed to call to action by the ITU to bridge the standardization gap.

Fortunately, in Trinidad and Tobago, we can attest to a long collaborative history in the area of ICT Standards development. In this regard, it would be remiss of me if I did not highlight the

commendable work of the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago and the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards. Upon the promulgation of the Telecommunications Act in 2001 and the subsequent liberalization of our telecommunications industry, TATT has been fulfilling its statutory mandate as the country's regulator for the telecommunications and broadcasting sector. As part of this function, the development and implementation of technical and industry standards play a critical role in the Authority's overall regulatory framework. Moreover, the harmonization of these standards with public policy and technical regulations produce a modern and efficient approach to regulation.

Additionally, the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS) has also had a long history of standards development as the country's National Standards body. This function includes ICT standards development from 2005 to 2010 that sought to support the liberalization of our telecommunications sector, as well as the roll-out of our first National ICT Plan – *fastforward*.

Today, I am happy to report that we have since progressed to implementing our 3<sup>rd</sup> National ICT Plan, the ICT Blueprint, which covers the period 2018 to 2022. Approved by Cabinet in August 2018, the ICT Blueprint serves as the digital enabler of the wider National Development Strategy, Vision 2030 and advances a vision for Trinidad and Tobago characterised by “Empowered People, Competitive Businesses, (and) Transformational Government through ICT”.

Just as was done in the implementation of our first National ICT Plan, we will continue to do in the successful implementation of our third - the Ministry of Public Administration will continue to collaborate with its partners to develop standards that enable the realization of the ICT Blueprint.

As such, with the expertise of the TTBS, we are coordinating the development of national standards to address cyber-security, cloud technology and the Internet of Things. Under the able stewardship of the Telecommunications Authority, progress continues to be made in development of standards for the regulation of the telecommunications and broadcasting sector. Finally, MPA in collaboration with TATT, TTBS, the University of the West Indies and the

International Telecommunications Union is piloting a regime for conformity and interoperability (C&I) testing that will ultimately serve to benefit the entire Caribbean.

Ladies and gentlemen, Trinidad and Tobago is making strides in its effort to narrow the standardisation gap in the implementation of our National ICT Plan which ultimately supports our national development agenda encapsulated by Vision 2030. For the Ministry of Public Administration, addressing the standardization gap serves to bridge the technological access and innovative capacity required for our citizens to make meaningful contributions to the information society and economy. In short, while often unheralded, standards have a central role enabling sustainable development locally and globally.

As such, before I take my leave, I must once again thank the Authority for hosting this important workshop and I look forward to the fruitful discussion that will, undoubtedly, ensue.

Thank you.