



**Speaking Notes: Welcome Address  
2008 Caribbean Internet Forum:  
*Mobile Internet for Development*  
October 29-31, 2008, Port of Spain**

**The Hon. Kennedy Swaratsingh  
Minister of Public Administration  
Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago**

Mrs. Bernadette Lewis,  
Secretary General  
Caribbean Telecommunications Union;  
Presenters and Participants of the 2008 Caribbean Internet Forum;  
Distinguished members of the media;  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is with great pleasure that I have the honour to share a few thoughts with you this morning as we kick off the Sixth Annual Caribbean Internet Forum in Port of Spain.

The subject on this year's Forum, *Mobile Internet for Development*, speaks to the very heart of the ongoing process of technological convergence that has seen a highly technical telecommunications sector transformed into the wide-ranging Information and Communication Technology revolution that is rapidly transforming the way we all live and conduct business.

I would therefore like to thank the CTU [and the Caribbean Internet Forum] for its continuing role as a regional leader in the area of ICT, and for focusing our attention on an emerging suite of technologies and applications that are critical to the Caribbean Region's ICT For Development (ICT4D) thrust.

The subject of Mobile Internet is especially topical for Trinidad and Tobago. Our vision is to achieve Developed Country Status by the year 2020. In this regard we view the Internet as one of the key enablers for the achievement of Vision 2020:

- as a vehicle for e-Business, and for economic growth and diversification;
- as a primary delivery mechanism through which citizens can access Government Information and Services; and
- as a tool that networks citizens and helps us to protect, preserve, and promote Trinidad and Tobago's unique cultural identity.

I would also like to raise the possibility that Mobile Internet solutions may well feature prominently in Government's plans to turn Port of Spain into a Digital City next year, when Trinidad and Tobago hosts the Fifth Summit of the Americas and Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in April and November 2009 respectively.

An Expression of Interest has gone out for the provision of broadband access to delegates, media, staff, and visitors during these two major international conferences in the areas around Port of Spain and also for Piarco Airport. My Government considers the provision of world class

connectivity for these events to be one of its obligations as a good host, but equally important is that this will also serve as a preview of the expected standard that will be available to all citizens under Vision 2020.

For Trinidad and Tobago, the issue of Mobile Internet is closely aligned with *fastforward*, our National ICT Strategy. *fastforward* was developed by the Trinidad and Tobago Government in partnership with the Private Sector and Civil Society.

- The first phase of *fastforward*, lasting from 2003-2008, focuses primarily on connectivity;
- The second phase (or “refresh”) of *fastforward* will last from 2009-2013, during which period the emphasis will be on usage and uptake.

Under *fastforward* the Trinidad and Tobago Telecommunications Sector was opened to full competition in 2005. As a direct result of the deregulation process, the Trinidad and Tobago mobile landscape is characterized by:

- a sharp decline in the cost of telephone calls (both mobile and from land lines);
- widespread adoption and usage of mobile technology by citizens, including a mobile penetration rate that is well in excess of 100%; and
- most areas of Trinidad and Tobago now have reliable mobile service.

Closely aligned with the rapid growth of the mobile telephony sector is the development of Trinidad and Tobago’s National Broadband Strategy, which seeks to foster:

- Robust regulatory environment
- Optimal domestic routing (*IXP*)
- Augmentation of international bandwidth capacity
- Competitive domestic hosting environment (*hosting clusters, Payment Service Provider, Certificate Authority*)
- Development of domestic e-Content

Trinidad and Tobago adopts a policy of strict technological neutrality with regard to the specific technologies that are adopted under *fastforward* to support the implementation of Vision 2020. Further, the Trinidad and Tobago Government is committed to a multi-track approach to citizen service delivery that has been branded *ttconnect* and includes:

- *ttconnect Online* – the e-Government Portal to access information and services via the Internet
  - all appropriate Information on Government currently online;
  - some Services currently available e.g. applications for Government Housing, Company name searches, applications for Government Scholarships
  - other services to follow in 2009 e.g. filing of Income Tax and VAT for businesses, applications for birth certificates, income tax numbers,
- *ttconnect Service Centres* – common counters where services can be accessed in person (birth certificate applications, public service jobs, on- the- job training and housing applications
  - Two pilot Centres are currently in operation with three more carded to open shortly
- In the Pipeline:
  - *ttconnect Hotline* – a toll-free call service; and
  - *ttconnect* self-service Kiosks which will be located in high traffic areas, eg. Malls, supermarkets etc. The first pilot kiosk will be launched in mid-November at the e-Business Symposium, with 3-4 additional pilot kiosks to follow shortly thereafter

Nevertheless, it is clear that Mobile Internet is likely to play a significant and growing role in the usage and update of ICTs as outlined in the Trinidad and Tobago National Broadband Strategy.

In this regard, it is worth noting that some of the specific applications that Trinidad and Tobago is considering under its e-Government agenda include the use of SMS text messaging to:

- notify citizens of appointments with government agencies or the outcome of applications for government services;
- for the promotion of e-Commerce (e.g. as one mechanism to match potential vendors and clients under *EnterpriseNeTT*, the Trinidad and Tobago B2B e-marketplace); and
- as a mechanism to allow Government to enter into a true dialogue with citizens – e.g. by completing surveys via mobile phone (i.e. the development of e-democracy: stakeholder engagement via mobile phone)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the Caribbean moves at full speed towards Developed Country Status, mobile telephony, in particular the Mobile Internet, will provide exciting opportunities for citizens to reap the full benefits of new and emerging technologies.

The citizens of Trinidad and Tobago have embraced mobile technology, to the point where a majority own (and use) more than one mobile phone, and I know that other countries in the Caribbean have experienced a similar explosion in their mobile uptake.

This offers a unique opportunity for the Governments of the region to use mobile technology as a vehicle to make public services more accessible to citizens, and to increase citizen participation in the work of the Government, to the benefit of all.

I would therefore like to conclude by congratulating the CTU [and the Caribbean Internet Forum] for convening a session on such a provocative and innovative topic. I am confident that the deliberations of the next three days will be of immense value to policy makers and ICT professionals throughout the Caribbean, and I look forward with great anticipation to hearing more about the outcome of your deliberations.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you.