

Preparatory Meeting to the Connect Americas Summit,

Mexico, 20 April 2012

Opening address by Mr Yury Grin

on behalf of

Mr Brahima Sanou, Director, BDT

I am much honored to address the representatives of Administrations, Regional Organizations, Telecom Industry and Service Providers, Academic Institutions, Development Agencies, UN Agencies, distinguished colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Launched in 2005 to help mobilize partners and resources needed to harness at the regional level the power of ICTs in such a way as to maximise their contribution to the achievement of sustainable economic and social development, the Connect the World initiative has already provided the framework for three regional Summits: in Africa in 2007, the Commonwealth of Independent States in 2009 and the Arab States in March this year. The Summit in Panama for the Americas is just three months ahead of us.

Political leaders will be in attendance in order to ensure that there is a consensus on strategy at the highest level. And in order to bring their strategic vision to life, major investors from the public and private sectors as well as from the regional and international agencies will participate too. Indeed, it is this bringing together of all the key stakeholders for a short but

intense period of reflection and discussion directed towards concrete action that is the essence of these Connect Summits.

The overall themes to be addressed at the Summit are drawn from the conclusions of the most recent World Telecommunication Development Conference, which was held in Hyderabad in 2010. These themes are:

- Emergency communications: disaster preparedness including early warning, disaster response/relief, and rehabilitation of telecommunication networks.
- The smooth transition from analogue to digital broadcasting.
- Broadband access and uptake in urban and rural areas.
- Reduction of Internet access costs.
- Human capacity building on ICTs, with emphasis on persons with disabilities and people living in rural and deprived urban areas.

I can report that a first preparatory meeting at the subregional level for this Connect Americas Summit was held in Trinidad and Tobago on 22-23 March. The outcomes of this meeting were:

1. A better understanding by Caribbean partners of the Connect the Americas summit;
2. A regional recommitment to participate and support the work of the ITU and stakeholders;

3. A commitment to submit an updated and consolidated single Caribbean position paper inclusive of new goals and target dates;
4. A commitment to consolidate similar projects and to make single project submissions based on the agreed themes – this is to maximize efficiency given the size of the market and the limited resources;
5. An agreement to vigorously market the Summit to potential investors, including the various regional chambers of commerce, major manufacturers etc;
6. An understanding of the benefits of using the CTA portal¹ to enhance awareness of the situation in the Caribbean, and in particular the business opportunities; and finally,
7. It was agreed to hold another preparatory meeting in advance of the Panama summit.

I should add that another subregion conformed by Member States of COMTELCA, has been working tirelessly since the beginning of the year to present common priorities and initiatives. One of their preparatory meetings took place just last week in Panama. As a result, these countries were able to craft their priorities in specific projects – based on the Regional Initiatives I have just mentioned. These project contributions, along with all other contributions that ITU has been receiving,

¹ <http://www.cta.int/>

will be presented to the Summit and will open an excellent opportunity for potential partners, interested in investing in this region.

COMTELCA Member States reaffirmed their commitment to pair and support the work of ITU and also to make their best effort in order to encompass other relevant stakeholders giving the tremendous market opportunity that will brand the Connect Americas Summit. COMTELCA Member States were able to reach a common understanding regarding the challenges, objectives and expected goals of the Summit and they are convinced that this Summit is **THE** opportunity for American countries to identify the means of meeting their needs with matching resources for telecom development.

Finally, I would like to highlight the two first priorities defined by COMTELCA. Broadband and Mesoamerican highway. Based on the infrastructure and the current status both provide the opportunity to make broadband a reality and connect the Americas, **literally**.

I want to share with you all the impressive number of 24 countries attending this week's meetings here in Mexico – for us, it is a clear sign of this region's interest and commitment to join efforts with the ITU towards a successful Summit.

My colleagues, as well as representatives of regional organizations, our partners in the organization of the Summit,

will share with you relevant information about the Summit, its preparatory process and the expected outcomes.

Participants attending here today will also acknowledge on two important assessments being developed by ITU and will be enlightened regarding project contributions – important instruments that will help all stakeholders involved and interested in playing an active role for the continuing development of telecommunication and ICTs in the Americas Region.

I have every confidence that this meeting will be very productive.

Thank you.