



Statement by Honorable Charlot Salwai TABIMASMAS(MP)

Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu

on the occasion of the Opening of ITU GSR2019

Warwick, Port Vila, Vanuatu



10 July 2019

ITU – Global Symposium for Regulators 2019, Warwick, Port Vila, Vanuatu

Your Excellencies,
Hon. Ministers of ITU Member States,
Secretary General of ITU, Mr. Houlin Zhao,
Director of Telecommunications Development Bureau, Mrs. Doreen Bogdan-Martin
Elected Officials of the ITU,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen....

1. It is indeed with great and warm pleasure, and honor to WELCOME YOU ALL to our Beautiful Un-Touch Paradise, the land of laughter and friendly Smile! Welcome! BienVenu! Welkam!
2. Ten Years ago, the Government of Vanuatu gave up its Shares with the Incumbent Telecommunications Service Provider to WELCOME market competition into its shores!
3. Ten Years later, the Government on behalf of its Valued Citizens is hosting you all global Experts of the ICT in our beautiful Country!
4. With a population of almost 300,000 across the archipelago, our people live and operate a lifestyle of inclusivity since the time and days of our ancestors. This year's theme "**Inclusive Connectivity**" has blend in very well with our traditional living, upbringing and importantly traditional values through celebrations, sharing of gifts during ceremonial activities and more other types of activities.

Excellencies and Distinguish Delegates!

5. "**Leaving No One Behind**" is one of the 2030 SDG agenda and commitment made by many of the member states of the United Nation, of whom many of you are representing today. A commitment that pushes all members of the International Telecommunications Union, National Government and other key players through ICT to collaborate, and have inclusive dialogues to find effective and workable ways or solutions to address the matter; and is one reason why you are here today.
6. Vanuatu through key players invested a lot of their time and effort to bring Vanuatu to the level, where the citizens are now enjoying an

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improved coverage of both voice and data in all provinces across the country and an excellent geographical coverage of satellite broadband. These improvements could not have happened without the commitment from Telecom Service Providers mandated through the Government Universal Access Policy, which promotes a “Play” or “Pay” approach and other commitment pledged towards the roll out of networks.

7. Additionally, the Computer Laboratory Internet Community Centres built in 22 main areas of Vanuatu, has also immensely contributed to bridging the divide in respective areas and promotes inclusiveness to big events happening in respective islands of Vanuatu.
8. The current trend of connectivity has also contributed to improve, access to relevant and efficient market information to farmers, tourism operators and business operators, students performances, enhance teaching efficiency and teachers' turnover, improve government administration efficiencies especially in the health centres and provincial education offices, and importantly include the rural offices into the e-Government system where all officers employed in rural offices enjoys the same benefit of ICT Access and Services.
9. The quality of service in the past months continue to improve thus, saw increased number of data users each year and especially in social media across the nation.

Excellencies and Distinguish Guests!

10. As we positively progressed forward for a better, smart and connected society, we acknowledge and accept the fact that Vanuatu is prone to be Number 1 in Natural Disaster; the difficulties experienced such as high cost of logistics; technical operations hiccups; digital literacy gaps; inconsistent power supply are some of the common issues faced today by key players especially by the operators not only in Vanuatu but around the Pacific region. Government contribution to the telecommunication sector must be treated the same way as other infrastructures to overcome these difficulties and challenges attributed to the archipelagic nature of the country with all populated islands separated by water
11. The archipelagic nature of the country also signals the need of having backup gateways through satellite links thus our stand for 2.6MHz

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spectrum is for the spectrum range to be shared between Satellite providers and the International Mobile Telecommunications. It is my wish that this Global Symposium of Regulators 2019 bring to your attention the common issues faced by Pacific Island countries in deploying their telecommunication infrastructure over vast ocean which is different from other countries with vast land space.

12. Technically, the existing infrastructure embraces convergence, Internet of Things, over the top Services and other Digital activities. However, the existing Regulatory regime and mechanism may limit such business upgrades and improvements, thus, the need at an executive level to collaborate with all existing sectors and consider the next level of regulatory regime, a regime that will stimulate cross sectorial uptake of ICT services.
13. Artificial Intelligence may be a considerable option to address many of the common challenges and issues we are experiencing today. However, it is an area that the Government must carefully understand its benefits and the side effects it will bring into the country before promoting its use within the country.
14. Although OTT services are beneficial for consumers at all levels, the Government through the Office of the Regulator is taking further steps in addressing the need of having an appropriate mechanism in place to ensure there is always **competition, fairness, justice, and equity** in mobile services across Vanuatu.
15. The proliferation of ICT and the pervasive use of social media in our lives has generated calls for greater people involvement in decisions, and greater accountability on the part of governments; but it also represents an opportunity for us to engage our citizens, residents and businesses in innovative and meaningful ways. Whilst Vanuatu appreciate the greater benefits that social media can bring to us, our policies, regulations and legislations have to be shaped in ways and manners that protect our traditional values and principles.
16. The cost of international and national bandwidth is still an issue that the Government through the Office of the Regulator is looking at options of approaches that is not only beneficial to the consumers and the Retail Service Providers but importantly to the privately invested submarine cable. Thus, the slow internet speed continues to arise.

Excellencies and Distinguish Delegates

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17. As technology is fast evolving, the use of internet is not safe at all times, the pace of Regulatory mechanism and Policy development is slow across the region, we must be mindful on our approach on inclusive connectivity. An approach which will bring, maintain and promote harmony within our respective societies, and that will positively impact human lives.
18. Building Consumer Confidence and trust in the data driven economy is first and foremost the most important duty to perform by all business and service providers. The **INTERNET OF EVERYTHING** is becoming complicated and difficult to understand by the very targeted users of some technological evolution.
19. Considering the importance of internet Governance, particularly focusing on the inclusion of citizens who have very minimal knowledge on the use of data/internet and more so other technological products. It may well please you for me to announce that Vanuatu has established a homegrown platform known as the Vanuatu National Internet Governance Forum Secretariat. A secretariat that will serve as a first hand avenue or channel that the Ni-Vanuatu can use to obtain expert guidance on the governance of internet activities and at the same time be educated on benefits and disadvantages of using technology such as the Internet.
20. The Government Institutions and some private organizations such as the National Bank of Vanuatu, Vanuatu National Provident Fund, the Regulator's Office and more others are promoting use of mobile app. This is to address situations which users find difficulties in finding appropriate information they require; thus, the mobile app technology will take them straight to the required and or needed information.
21. Mobile Roaming across the region and across borders has been an issue in the last five years and is still an issue today. Although, there are OTT services that can be used to substitute the service, the OTT services are still unreliable across majority of the countries that I visited so far. Therefore, this is still a need for the Service Providers and the Regulators including Policy makers collaborate and come up with a solution that is much more appropriate and affordable for the consumers.

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22. May I take this opportunity to thank the ITU secretariat for choosing Vanuatu as the first Pacific Island state to host a Global Symposium of Regulators and their support and commitment put into the organization of the successful GSR2019 symposium.
23. I also acknowledged the support of the Government of Vanuatu through the Office of Regulator, Office of Government Chief Information Officer, and the members of the Task Force for their excellent work.
24. This event couldn't be realized without greater support of all our sponsors and I want to take this opportunity to express our utmost appreciation to them for their generous funding assistance to GSR 2019 symposium.
25. Last but not the least I want to thank you all for taking up your time, and travelled all the way from your far and near countries to this part of the world, and wish you express my deep appreciation to the ITU and the local organizations of this event, and wish you all the best in the next coming hours and days of the meeting.
26. I also invite you to take some time to visit some parts of our unique and beautiful scenery outside Port Vila when you have time and enjoy the Vanuatu hospitality.

Thank you!
