

**GREETINGS FROM
MR KHALID HASSANALI
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
ON THE OCCASION OF WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION AND
INFORMATION SOCIETY DAY**

During the International Telecommunications Union's (ITU) World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva last November, the issue of the Digital Divide and the most effective means of addressing this issue took centre stage. Digital Divide is the term used to describe the gap between those people and communities who can access and make effective use of telecommunications and broadcasting services and those who cannot.

So significant was this issue that it was taken into consideration in the WSIS Plan of Action objectives that include the following:

- To put the potential of knowledge and Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) at the service of development;
- To promote the use of information and knowledge for the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration; and
- To address new challenges of the Information Society, at the national, regional and international levels.

The overarching aim is to connect the world's people through ICTs – creating a technology driven global community.

In Trinidad and Tobago the move towards becoming a technology driven society has been on the national agenda since 2004 and it is understood that the widespread use of ICTs would result in rapid development of important economic sectors.

The approach for realizing this objective is outlined in the ICT Strategy plan of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Specific to the creation of a technology driven society, the plan outlines a number of initiatives including the following:

1. Establishment of the on-line Governmental Portal www.ttconnect.gov.tt through which members of the public can easily access information on government services.
2. Liberalization of the telecommunications market to full competition. The Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago was established by the Telecommunications Act 2001 and mandated to liberalize and regularize this country's telecommunications and broadcasting sectors. Since becoming

operational on July 1st 2004 the Authority has achieved a number successes towards national connectivity including:

- Invited interested parties to participate in a competitive process for the provision of public Broadband Wireless Access (BWA) services in the Lower 700 MHz, 12 GHz and 28 GHz Bands
- In accordance with the Spectrum Plan for the Accommodation of Broadband Wireless Access Services a number of bands have been made available in the 2.4GHZ and 5GHZ areas for public or private use of Broadband Wireless Technologies.
- Liberalization of the mobile telephone industry providing the national community access to mobile telephone service from multiple service providers.
- Concessions have been granted to additional companies to provide fixed line telephone services.
- Members of the national community can now enjoy the offerings of 36 radio stations, six free to air television stations and seven subscription television providers, (six wired cable and one satellite).

While the liberalization in the telecommunications sector has served to reduce prices, there are still some members of the public who, due to varying circumstances, are either unable to, or have great difficulty accessing ICT services. The Government's ICT Strategy outlines the move towards establishing a Community Connection Programme. When this programme is fully established members of the national community will be afforded access to a wide range of ICT services at specific locations throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Additionally, one of the Authority's specific responsibilities outlined in the Telecommunications Act 2001, is to promote universal service throughout Trinidad and Tobago to ensure that all citizens have access to available and affordable telecommunications and broadcasting services. In this regard the Authority has initiated the development of a Universality Implementation Plan for the local telecommunications and broadcasting sectors.

The plan will be informed by data collected from a soon to be conducted survey administered to determine the extent of this country's digital divide.

If Trinidad and Tobago is to join the global move towards becoming a technology driven society, it is imperative that such initiatives be pursued to facilitate connectivity within all strata of society within the shortest possible time. More importantly, it is necessary that enabling platforms be provided for succeeding generations to access these technologies with relative ease.

Thus the theme “*Connecting the Young: the opportunities of ICT*” for World Telecommunication and Information Society Day could not be more apt.

The Authority will continue to pursue its mandate regarding the liberalization and regularization of the country’s telecommunications and broadcasting sectors toward providing opportunity for access to a range of ICT services by the full spectra of our society regardless of socioeconomic status or age.