

Joint Statement by CITELE, REGULATELE, COMTELECA and CTU

Enabling Digital Transformation in the Americas

The Declarants, the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (the “**GS/OAS**”), through the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (the **CITELE**), the Latin American Telecommunications Regulators Forum (the **REGULATELE**), the Regional Telecommunications Technical Commission (the **COMTELECA**), a specialized institution of the Central American Integration System (the **SICA**), and the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (the **CTU**)

noting:

That **CITELE** is an entity attached to the Organization of American States whose mission is to facilitate and promote the integral and sustainable development of interoperable, innovative and reliable telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the Americas, under principles of universality, equity and affordability, represented by its current Executive Secretary, Oscar León;

That **REGULATELE** is a cooperation forum, which provides a framework for reflection, analysis and exchange of information and experiences, which allows addressing telecommunications policy, strategy, market and regulatory issues, represented by its current President, Javier Juárez Mojica;

That **COMTELECA** is an integration organization whose mission is to coordinate and promote telecommunications development in the region, as well as internationally, in order to satisfy the needs of the citizens of the region, by means of a legal framework that makes it possible to harmonize the regulations of each country, manage the telecommunication systems and issue resolutions which are binding for all its members, represented by its current Executive Secretary, Lizania Pérez; Lizania Pérez and its current Chairman of the Board, Marco Antonio Baten.

That the **CTU** is an intergovernmental organization dedicated to facilitating the development of the telecommunication/ICT sector in the Caribbean, as well as providing a forum for the discussion and resolution of technological issues related to the Region; and promoting regionally harmonized positions in national, regional and international forums, represented by its current Secretary-General, Rodney Taylor;

acknowledging that:

- a) This Declaration does not create, by itself, obligations of any nature for CITELE, REGULATELE, COMTELECA, SICA or CTU. The Declarants will consider developing special cooperative relationships in areas of common interest under this Declaration by means of supplemental agreements, memoranda of understanding or through the exchange of letters. The supplementary agreements, memoranda of understanding and letters to be entered into shall be

governed by the regulatory framework to be agreed upon in the respective instrument, without prejudice to the privileges and immunities of the Declarants;

- b) Nothing in this Declaration constitutes an explicit or implicit waiver of the privileges and immunities of the Declarants, the members of its staff, their property and assets, in accordance with the relevant conventions, applicable laws and the general principles and practices of international law;
- c) International regulatory cooperation is an opportunity for countries, and in particular national regulators, to consider the impacts of their regulation beyond their borders, to expand the evidence base for decision-making, to learn from the experience of their peers, and to develop strategies to bridge the gap between the national character of rule-making and the increasingly international dimension of the issues that regulations seek to address;
- d) The current health crisis has radically changed the role and perception of digitalization in our societies and economies, and has accelerated its implementation such that digital technologies are now essential for working, learning, entertainment, socializing, shopping and accessing everything from health services to culture;
- e) The digitalization process has made connectivity one of the main challenges to be solved in the near term, given that in 2020 overall international Internet traffic increased by 48% and peak hour traffic grew by 47%¹, and now more than ever, connecting people will contribute to accelerating global socioeconomic recovery;
- f) The telecommunications/ICT sector has become a vital support of the economy and Governments, and especially regulators, need to work in harmony with all stakeholders in the sector so that regulation serves as an enabler of investment in digital infrastructure that addresses the digital divide, such as the development of the last mile, considers the purchasing power of project beneficiaries, their ability to adopt ICTs as a tool for economic and human development, flexibility in project implementation, and their sustainability in the mid and long term;
- g) The gender divide remains a reality, with still fewer women than men benefiting from Internet use. According to the ITU, globally, men (62%) were more likely to use the Internet than women (57%) in all regions, except the Americas. Considering that equal access to telecommunications/ICTs for women is beneficial to society as a whole, particularly in the context of the information and knowledge society; it is necessary to continue fostering digital skills, education and mentorship for women and girls, so as to advance their participation and leadership in the creation, development and deployment of telecommunications/ICTs.

¹ UIT, *The State of Broadband 2021: People-Centred Approaches for Universal Broadband*, Disponible en: <https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/broadbandcommission/state-of-broadband-2021/>

- h) Digital transformation offers many opportunities to improve productivity, welfare and inclusion in society; to improve governance mechanisms and enable increased access to basic services, such as health, education and financial services, as well as to global markets;

therefore jointly declare their intention to:

1. Promote regulatory frameworks focused on the user needs, with special attention to unserved/underserved areas, vulnerable groups and those with specific needs, indigenous peoples, remote or hard-to-reach populations, persons with disabilities, with the aim of expanding the use, adoption and penetration of telecommunications/ICTs in the region, increasing inclusion and digital literacy in order to allow greater appropriation of these technologies, while recognising that, the protection of users' rights and the quality of services are key to stimulating trust in networks and services, which increases their demand, generating a virtuous circle of growth.
2. Promote and support regulatory actions that encourage public investment, private investment and public-private partnerships, seeking to improve the quality and diversity of telecommunication/ICT services with emphasis on remote or underserved areas in order to meet the need for everyone to be connected anywhere and at any time, to increase the availability and efficiency of work, education and health activities, as well as to increase the availability and efficiency of telecommunication/ICT services. The availability of reliable and affordable broadband plays a major role in addressing disparities in access and adoption.
3. Develop a harmonized telecommunication/ICT environment through the implementation of intelligent regulation, based on collaboration between regulatory bodies and industry, in order to promote the development of interoperable telecommunications/ICT services in the region, including infrastructure, services, equipment and devices; and to promote the generation of mechanisms, initiatives, incentives and regulation to serve remote, unattended areas. This will include infrastructure, services, equipment and devices.
4. Encourage greater cooperation and multisectoral coordination among the different actors in order to promote greater technological dynamism and create a regulatory environment that fosters innovation and investment, analyzing the entire technological offer as well as the needs of each country.
5. Implement actions and activities that promote the creation of digital skills and professional training for women and girls that stimulate their empowerment in the telecommunications/ICT sector, including their participation in senior management positions in telecommunications/ICT administrations, regulators and government, as well as in intergovernmental organizations and the private sector;
6. Establish solid and strategic links to strengthen cooperation among participants based on a shared vision of the benefits of regional cooperation in telecommunications/ICT regulation in order to coordinate actions to unleash the potential of Digital Transformation in the Region.

7. Promote greater synergies to jointly explore opportunities for dialogue and cooperation in order to foster the creation of capabilities, experiences and support for the benefit of the Members of the participants.

In Bucharest, Romania, on September 2022.

Rodney Taylor
Secretary-General
Caribbean Telecommunications Union

Marco Antonio Baten
Chairman of the Board
Regional Telecommunications Technical
Commission

Oscar León
Executive Secretary
Inter-American Telecommunication Commission

Javier Juárez Mojica
President
Latin American Telecommunications Regulators
Forum