IN THE K-NOW

Network of Women (NoW) in ICT in the Caribbean

CTU
Shaping Caribbean Communications

▼ IWD 2023

We are ready to celebrate IWD 2023

Under the theme **"DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality"**, the United Nations observance of International Women's Day 2023 on 8th March 2023 will highlight the need for inclusive and transformative technology and digital education.

▼ Caribbean Woman in ICT

Dr. Maria Myers-Hamilton, Managing Director, Spectrum Management Authority, Jamaica, is our featured Caribbean Woman in ICT.

▼ Training Programs and Upcoming Events

Be In the k-NoW of all the regional and international training opportunities, meetings and conferences taking place.

CTU'S COMMITMENT TO NOW4WRC

Permanent Consultative Committee (PCC) II of the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL) kicked off **"Commit for NOW4WRC"** as a regional initiative for ITU's Network of Women for WRC 2023. Commit for NOW4WRC is an effort to have Member states and Sector members make commitments to advance gender equality in their own delegations, at Regional and Sub-Regional Organisations and at the ITU, including WRC2023.

The Caribbean Telecommunications Union's Secretary-General, Rodney Taylor, has submitted and will make a public statement on the CTU's commitment towards this initiative.

Each commitment made will contribute to the goal of the WRC-19 Gender Declaration to advance gender equality, equity and parity in the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Radio Sector.

Commitments, include training for women delegations on the WRC process; funding to support the attendance of women delegates at upcoming meetings and training programs; sponsoring the costs of women to take leadership roles at the ITU, CITEL and sub-regional groups; supporting women in seeking advanced education in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and related areas; along with support for women as spokespeople in national and Sector Member delegations, among others.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
8th March 2023

International Women's Day 2023: Embracing DigitALL for Gender Equality and Equity

International Women's Day is celebrated annually on 8th March and is a day to recognise the achievements of women and to advocate for gender equality. This year's theme is **"DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality and embrace equity."**

In this edition of In the k-NoW, we will explore the ways in which technology and innovation can help promote gender equality and equity, and why this is so important.

The digital revolution has brought about significant changes in our lives and has the potential to bring about significant changes in the lives of women around the world. Digital technology has the power to connect people, to provide access to information and to create new opportunities for economic growth and social progress. However, women are often left behind in the digital world because they face significant barriers to accessing technology and digital skills.

To close this digital divide, it is important to ensure that women have equal access to technology and digital skills. This means providing women with the necessary resources and support to develop these skills and to access technology, training programs and mentorship opportunities. Women must also be encouraged to pursue careers in technology and innovation, and to become leaders in these fields.

In addition to access and skills, women must also be able to participate fully in the digital economy. This means creating an environment that is supportive of women's economic empowerment, including equal pay for equal work, flexible work arrangements and opportunities for career advancement. It is also important to ensure that women have a voice in the development of technology and innovation, and that their perspectives and needs are taken into account.

Finally, it is important to address the ways in which technology and innovation can contribute, ensuring that technology is designed and used in a way that promotes safety and security for all, and that the rights of women and girls are protected online.

In conclusion, International Women's Day 2023 is an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of women and to recognise the important role that technology and innovation can play in promoting gender equality and equity. By ensuring that women have equal access to technology and digital skills and by creating supportive environments for women's economic empowerment and leadership in the digital world; we can help to create a more equal and just society for all.

DIVERSITY AND COLLABORATION ARE CRITICAL COMPONENTS OF INNOVATION

Dr. Maria Myers-Hamilton

Firstly, I would like to thank the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) for allowing me to be a part of such a remarkable initiative – a contributor to the In the k-NoW publication. It is so important to share our thoughts, journey and lessons learnt, as it will allow us to engender hope amongst our young innovators within this space. Being one of the few female regulators in the space of spectrum management, it is important to spend time on self-improvement and mentorship.

The Spectrum Management Authority (SMA) is the regulator in Jamaica commissioned to monitor and regulate radio frequency (RF) as well as provide technical advice to the Government of Jamaica on matters concerning RF.

The SMA team has made significant strides in recent years from changing legislation, improving pricing for RF, successfully auctioning the 700 MHz Band 14 and co-authoring the approved cabinet submission that adopted the ATSC 3.0 digital television broadcasting standard for Jamaica. This ultimately led to achieving key milestones of being not only the first Caribbean nation to switch on a NextGen TV digital signal but also only the **third nation in the world** to achieve this feat. Additionally, we were able to facilitate the launching of two satellite companies: ViaSat in which over 150 schools were connected and Starlink, which facilitated further connectivity in rural areas.

Additionally, we executed the implementation of thirteen remote monitoring locations across the country and opened a second office on the western side of the country to support the international aeronautical and maritime ports. Finally, the SMA launched its e-licensing application that will give our customers the ability to apply, track, pay and communicate with us in real time through our web portal. We are indeed truly grateful.

In my early years in the field of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), I realised that behind most innovation, there are some extraordinary women and men who push the boundaries of what may be deemed impossible; to achieve numerous humanity benefits for the greater good. Over the last two years, we have witnessed an explosion of life-changing technologies emerging – with one fundamental fact being that most of these devices are utilizing RF.

The importance of regulation of the RF spectrum has never been so critical as it is now, especially concerning socio-economic development. Therefore, regional collaboration across islands, as well as global collaboration has never been so necessary, hitherto. This was demonstrated at the last sitting of the CTU Spectrum Management Task Force meeting that was held in Montego Bay, Jamaica. Noticeably, we had the opportunity to have physical face-to-face discussions on the dynamic landscape of wireless communication globally to ensure that we collectively futureproof our Caribbean nation's regulatory framework. The three working days brought our Caribbean cohort into a common space that afforded mutualism and ultimately fostered growth and development within the region.

While the UN Sustainable Development Goal 10 (SDG 10), which seeks to reduce inequality within and among countries, does not directly acknowledge ICTs as a catalyst for achieving any of its ten targets, there is growing evidence that such technologies can contribute to empowerment and reduce inequalities if governments worldwide ensure universal access to digital infrastructure and if digital solutions are co-created with and for marginalised communities.

ICT can be leveraged for personal security, enhancing the competitiveness of small businesses, promoting better access to education and jobs, promoting financial inclusion or accessing basic healthcare information.

Dr. Maria Myers-Hamilton

As Jamaica seeks to position itself as a Caribbean digital society, the government has recognized that the ICT sector will play a vital role in the country's transformation and evolution, as it pursues our **VISION2030** agenda to achieve developed country status.

ICTs are also being aligned to SDG 5 which calls for the increased use of enabling technology to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. In recent years, the Internet has become an important enabler of gender equality by generating unprecedented opportunities for female entrepreneurs to enter global markets for the first time. Programmes through partnerships can help realise the opportunities ICT can offer, by boosting skills, equipping women with digital devices and providing training that helps women to make the most of these digital tools.

Over the years we have sponsored several Girls In ICT initiatives such as the **Caribbean Girls Hackathon and SheLeadsIT** – internships and job opportunities for our young women in the space.

"THE BENEFITS OF ICT ARE NOT AUTOMATIC. MAXIMISING THE TRANSFORMATIONAL IMPACT OF ICT REQUIRES THAT JAMAICA AND OTHER CARIBBEAN STATES ATTEND TO THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF DIGITAL COMPETITIVENESS: INTERNET ACCESS, ONLINE SERVICES, TELECOMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE AND HUMAN CAPACITY"

Dr. Maria Myers-Hamilton

One of the main initiatives of the government is the implementation of a National Broadband Network. This National Broadband Network will essentially expand the existing infrastructure (both public and private shared assets) that is currently covering the Kingston Metropolitan Area to encapsulate the entire island within the next two years. This network will connect public schools, police stations, hospitals, health centres, ports, Parish Councils and other public agencies.

Another important factor that contributes to the digital divide, which is unrelated to network infrastructure or connectivity issues, is digital literacy. Indeed, maximising the transformational potential of digital technologies is equally about having access to the technology as well as knowing how to use it. To this end, efforts to introduce digital innovations in areas such as education and public service delivery frequently face pushback such as cultural resistance and unwillingness to adapt. Furthermore, further challenges that affect digital innovation range from the inability of some users to effectively utilize the various functions of computers / electronic devices; weak typing and internet navigation skills; the inability of some users to process information and communicate effectively; and the inability of some users to authenticate and verify information, among other things. The fundamental challenges that we face concerning digital literacy tend to disproportionately affect older persons, individuals with disabilities and members of the general population with low levels of educational opportunities in these disciplines.

It is therefore evident that increased investments in building capacity among Jamaicans to effectively use digital technologies for routine purposes will be a crucial factor in determining the pace at which the country transitions to a digital society as well as the bridging of the digital divide.

More than ever, our government is committed to the goal of digital transformation that will ensure the readiness of all Jamaicans to maximise the potential benefits of digital technologies while mitigating the risks associated with adoption.

Jointly, the attendees of the most recent CTU Spectrum Management Task Force meeting acknowledged our responsibility as enablers of equitable access to information, i.e., to allow every individual within our region to have the same opportunities. This includes our citizens who struggle with inadequate or unaffordable broadband access. It is my firm belief that, together, we can make a positive change regarding universal access to connectivity within this decade. Radio-communication is a perfect example of how we can achieve success. Our digital outlook relies on the efficient assignment of the radio frequency spectrum and and also on supporting appropriate proposals for resolving agenda items at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)'s upcoming World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC-23) that will pave the way for more innovative ways to connect the world.

About the Author: Dr. Maria Myers-Hamilton is Managing Director of the Spectrum Management Authority (SMA), Jamaica; Commissioner on the Board of Commissioners for the Broadcasting Commission of Jamaica; Vice-Chair, SMTF; Council Member on the Board for the Northern Caribbean University (NCU)

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Global VSAT Forum (GVF), the only global non-profit association of the satellite industry with members from the entire ecosystem is making available to three women candidates, on a first come, first served basis, training through its Space Business Qualified courses (www.spacebq.org). Each selected candidate can select one course in the catalogue to be trained on. In order to obtain the key to the course, they should email Jennifer Manner at jennifer.manner@echostar.com and provide the name of the course they are interested in and their preferred email address. The first three candidates will be selected and receive the key to their selected course. Also visit www.gvf.org for more information.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) will host two virtual training sessions for women new to leadership positions and/or aspiring to leadership as part of its support for the Network of Women for WRC-2023 (NOW4WRC23) Initiative. The training (each 1-hour training session inclusive of a 15-minute Q/A), aims to facilitate awareness and insight in the internal workings of the ITU-R/WRC-23 process.

The first virtual training, "Understanding ITU-R/WRC-23" will be offered on 6th March 2023, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. and will give an inside look at how the ITU-R and WRC-23 process operates.

The second virtual training, **"Understanding ITU-R/WRC-23"** will be offered on 13th March 2023, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. for those who could not attend the first session.

For registration, please email Jennifer Manner at jennifer.manner@echostar.com by 1st March, 2023

Leadership Mentoring From Veena Rawat: Dr. Veena Rawat will offer mentoring for participants interested in taking on leadership roles at the **Conference Preparatory Meeting (CPM)** and WRC 23 in a small setting of 6 participants. This dialogue will be held through monthly one-hour meetings starting in March through October 2023. The meetings in March, April, May June, July, September, and October will be virtual, with in-person discussions at the August meeting fof CITEL. Interested participants should contact **Jennifer Manner at jennifer.manner@echostar.com** and will be selected on a first come, first served basis.

HIGHLIGHTS
FEBRUARY EVENTS

Spectrum Management Task Force

The CTU and The University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona Campus, hosted a meeting of the Caribbean Spectrum Management Task Force at the Iberostar Rose Hall Beach Hotel, Montego Bay, Jamaica from 6th to 8th February 2023.

Regional harmonisation of spectrum management policies and practices as well as relevant capacity building initiatives are being coordinated regionally by the CTU through the work of the Spectrum Management Steering Committee (SMSC) and the multi-stakeholder Spectrum Management Task Force (SMTF).

Effective Legal Frameworks Workshop

The Commonwealth Secretariat's Connectivity Agenda team together with the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) hosted a Workshop on **'Effective Legal Frameworks for Building the Digital Economy'** in Bridgetown, Barbados.

Hon Dale Marshall, Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, Barbados highlighted that countries have moved past e-commerce and evolved towards the digital economy holistically, as digital trade is of growing importance. For the development of legal frameworks necessary to support the digital economy, it is important to look at international best practices but most importantly focus should be placed on what works best for each CTU Member State as we move ahead.

Smart Seas Toolkit Workshop

SMART SEAS TOOLKIT ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP

Under the ITU/CTU/TATT *Smart Seas Toolkit for Disaster Resilience* Project

The Smart Seas Toolkit is aimed at increasing the resilience of Caribbean small-scale fishers through information and communications technologies.

During this workshop, the Smart Seas team presented and solicited feedback on the Project's online toolkit, which comprises resources aimed at increasing the resilience of Caribbean small-scale fishers, with emphasis on the maritime communications enabling environment.

2023

MARCH
EVENTS

8th

UN INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY OBSERVANCE

13th - 17th

World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum 2023
www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2023/en

11th - 16th

ICANN 76 - Cancun, Mexico
www.meetings.icann.org/en/icann76

27th

CTU's 47th Executive Council Meeting, Trinidad and Tobago
www.ctu.int

27th - 28th

CTU/UNECLAC ICT Indicators workshop "Measuring the Digital Society for Digital Inclusion" - Trinidad & Tobago
www.ctu.int

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT
www.ctu.int/events