



# **B**ERNADETTE **LEWIS**

Secretary-General, Commonwealth  
Telecommunications Organisation

Trailblazer for Women in  
Technology Leadership



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# WELCOME

## A New Chapter for the CTU Network of Women

Francola John – Coordinator CTU-NoW and CTU  
Focal Point for ITU Network of Women



# Introduction

Across the Caribbean, women continue to shape the region's digital future – leading policy conversations, driving innovation and strengthening national capacity. As digital transformation accelerates, so too does the need for coordinated leadership, inclusive representation and evidence-based advocacy.

It is within this context that the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) Network of Women (CTU-NoW) enters an exciting new chapter, marked by a leadership transition, renewed strategic focus and expanded regional partnerships. With the appointment of Dr. Maria Myers-Hamilton as Chair, the network is poised to deepen its impact across Member States and to strengthen the voice of Caribbean women in national, regional and global ICT decision-making spaces.

## A New Chair, A Renewed Vision

Dr. Myers-Hamilton assumes leadership with a clear mandate: to guide the strategic direction of CTU-NoW while the Secretariat provides full operational and administrative support. This structure ensures that leadership remains focused on advocacy, partnerships and results, while day-to-day coordination continues to be managed by the CTU Secretariat.

The transition signals not only continuity, but momentum. It reinforces CTU-NoW's commitment to practical action, measurable outcomes and stronger collaboration among its 21 Member States.

## Mandate and Structure: Built for Impact

CTU-NoW was established to advance **gender mainstreaming, equity and parity within national ICT agendas** throughout the Caribbean. Its work is reported annually to Ministers during ICT Week, ensuring policy alignment at the highest levels.

The governance framework includes:

- Chair and Vice-Chair leadership
- A panel of regional advisors
- National Focal Points from Member States
- Points of Contact from private sector, academia and civil society
- Youth representation

This inclusive, multi-stakeholder approach ensures that diverse voices inform the region's digital agenda.

## The 2026 Strategic Focus

Looking ahead, the network's Action Plan will centre on three priority pillars:

### 1. Policy Development

Supporting governments to embed gender considerations directly into national ICT policies and regulatory frameworks.

### 2. Representation

Increasing women's participation in delegations and decision-making spaces at global fora,

particularly within the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations system and other multilateral processes.

### 3. Capacity Building

Delivering targeted training and leadership programmes in partnership with organisations such as the United States Telecommunications Training Institute, the EU-LAC Digital Alliance and the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission.

Together, these pillars create a practical pathway from policy to participation to performance.

#### Data-Driven Advocacy

A flagship initiative is the proposed regional study on women's participation in the ICT sector.

Rather than relying on anecdotal evidence, the network aims to generate empirical data across:

- Technical roles
- Leadership positions
- International representation

The findings will guide targeted interventions and provide governments with the evidence needed to craft responsive, inclusive policies.

#### Celebrating Regional Voices

The network's publication, *In the k-NoW*, continues to spotlight Caribbean women who are advancing digital transformation across the region. This issue we celebrate Ms. Bernadette Lewis, Secretary-General, Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO)

*"As we navigate a rapidly evolving digital landscape, the importance of inclusive governance cannot be overstated. The CTU Network of Women (CTU-NoW), under the stewardship of our new Chairperson, Dr. Maria Myers-Hamilton and dedicated women across our Member States, continues to champion equity and innovation in the Caribbean's ICT sector. With the revised Terms of Reference as our guide, we are taking definitive steps to ensure women's voices shape the future of digital transformation—locally, regionally and internationally. Together, we are building a more connected, resilient and equitable digital Caribbean for all."*

underscoring the importance of sharing stories that inspire and inform.

By celebrating achievement, the network reinforces a powerful message: women are not simply beneficiaries of digital change, they are architects of it.

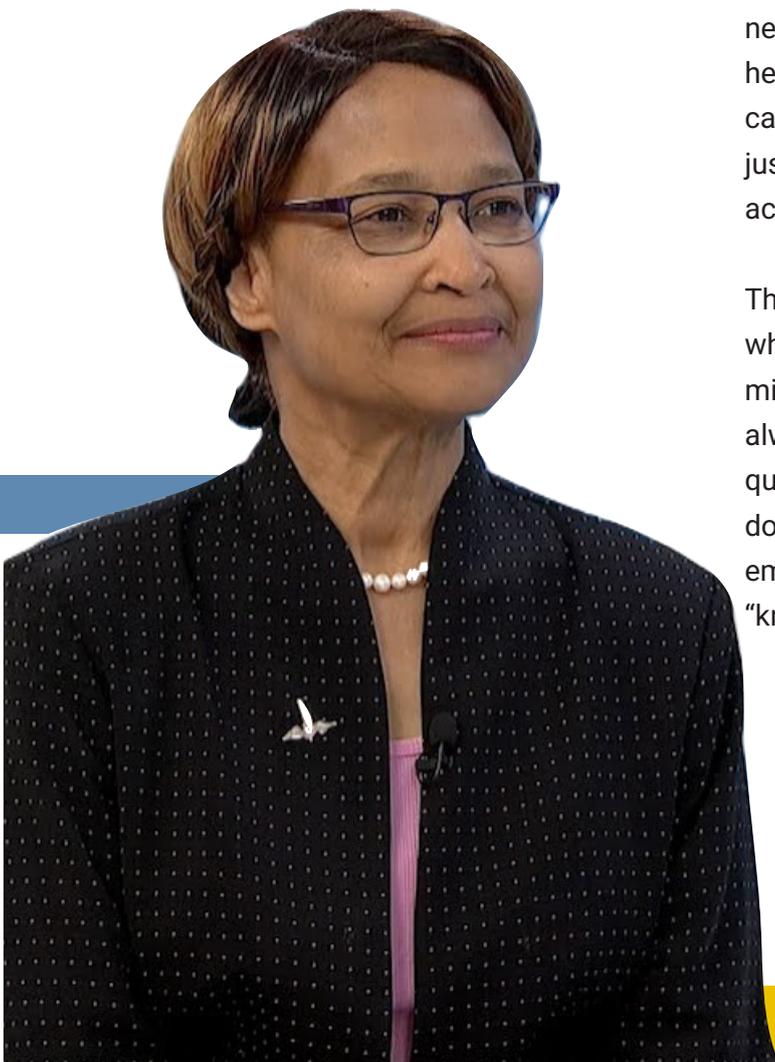
#### Looking Ahead

As CTU-NoW advances into its next phase, the path forward is clear: stronger policies, greater representation and meaningful capacity development.

With renewed leadership, committed partners and an expanding community of advocates, the network stands ready to ensure that the Caribbean's digital future is not only connected, but inclusive.

# LEWIS STILL BLAZING ICT TRAIL

Ms Bernadette Lewis, Secretary-General,  
Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation



Bernadette Lewis long ago accepted that as a woman she comes under a greater level of scrutiny than her male counterparts. That has never daunted her. If anything, it has shown her clearly that she needed to stick to her educational moorings and family teachings and just show the world what she is capable of achieving.

That foundation has guided her path as she wholeheartedly embraced that even with the microscopic lens on her, her responsibility is always to showcase her ability and deliver quality and then let the critics decide. She has done that by honing her skills in her field and embracing the important personal mantra of “know your craft”.

Year after year, organisation after organisation and high-level meeting after the next she continues to carve out a legacy in a sphere she walked into decades ago, quite fortuitously, as a young, curious, bright and eager Trinidadian scholar of the Sciences.

Today, say her name in almost any regional circle and immediately information communication technology jumps into view. For the past few decades SG Lewis has had a front row seat to the progression of the Caribbean and in some ways, the world, in the critical and pervasive sphere of technological development. It seeped into her bones as a new graduate, who was hired by the Trinidad and Tobago Telephone Company which was at the top scouting young talent and she was keen to learn.

Young Bernadette was lucky to have grown up in a family where the three boys and three girls were all socialised and encouraged to excel. There was no distinction between the males and females. Everybody had to learn to cook and the yard work was for all the children not just the boys and when it came to fixing machinery, their father demonstrated the tools of the trade to all of them.

There were no gender-specific roles,” SG Lewis recalled. “I think it is important that we socialise our children in that way” she said as she acknowledged the importance of grooming the region’s female talent to deliver and to do so with confidence.

A brief conversation with SG Lewis and you are quickly impressed by the depth of her knowledge, the fluency of interaction and the passion seeping through her voice. That’s all the evidence you need that ICT and its staggering legacy have been touched by a woman determined to make her mark and influence the development agenda of her Caribbean home states and the international community.

Her repertoire is vast and she speaks to each iteration with authority. SG Lewis recalls the earlier telephone switching technology when the then popular landlines network was woven together by an intricate series of wired transmission lines that converged in strategically-placed brick and mortar buildings or exchanges which all then connected to a central “switch” in some vast room of wires and cabinets, somewhere.

Decades later and now sitting at the helm of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation as its first female Secretary General, Lewis can relate with authority to the arrival of 5G and LTE technology that keeps the world in touch and talking and the mindboggling transformation of the Internet which does it all and more. She has been an eyewitness to it all, a student of its different phases and an advocate for the inclusion and development of those regions who have relied on her voice in the many rooms where she has sat.



“When I started working in the industry in Trinidad and Tobago and in many of the countries in the Caribbean they still had electro-mechanical telecommunications switches. I’ve been privileged to witness the death of that technology, the birth of analogue switching, the birth of cellular, the birth of digital. I’ve seen the whole transition. I’ve witnessed it, I’ve been deeply involved in it right up to the present when we are talking about artificial intelligence and the virtual possibilities.

“It has been a tremendous transformation especially when you think that the telecommunications technology from the days of the telegraph remained fairly constant until the 1980s, 1990s when there was this phenomenal explosion of technological innovation that has brought us to the point where information and communications technologies have been democratised.”

Telephones in homes are no longer the “big deal” of the 1970s and 1980s of a young and curious Bernadette whose other firsts include first woman in her local telephone company’s engineering department and the first woman to head the Trinidad-based Caribbean Telecommunications Union.

“The changes have come so quickly, it is dizzying,” she added. “And we can expect more innovations.”

The pace of technological innovations continues to increase and now there is AI to “magnify” and “intensify” the thought process. She however acknowledges that the Caribbean region is still playing catch-up in ICT development and must pick up the pace or risk being left further behind.

“Even from the point of view of the CTO, we have to accelerate. We cannot continue at the same pace because we are already behind and if the rest of world is just blazing ahead and we continue at the same pace, there is no hope of catching up. That’s why you would always hear me talk of ‘accelerating digital transformation’. We have tools to help us do it now. We have Artificial Intelligence but we also have technologies that will enable us to leapfrog.”

In the Caribbean, she notes, the whole market structure has changed, albeit, at a somewhat slower pace. But the liberalisation of the sector in the early 2000s is distant and historical, monopolies have given way to duopolies and what remains is a marketplace that is filled with endless possibilities for advancement.

“From that point of view there is a tremendous opportunity, with the right investments, for new types of networks to evolve. My caution to legacy providers is that they need to innovate too, to take advantage of the technological advances to update their own networks to compete with what may arise.”

One of the main issues which should now be on the region’s radar surrounds the issue of governing and ensuring every citizen has access to communications networks that are available and fit for their needs. “You also want to be sure that your citizens are protected and are kept safe because things are moving at such a phenomenal pace,” she adds.

SG Lewis stresses that the issues with governance comes with the requirement for an examination of the legal framework which will

propel the industry and ensure that the objectives for universal access and continual development keep pace with the international market's technological leaps and bounds. She acknowledges that in modern society regulations have become more complicated with all sorts of probable impacts on the regulatory functioning of the sector. Geopolitics, for example, is one force which will provide a challenge for the industry.

She predicts that regulators will be challenged because in this age, regulation has become even more complicated because of the modern-day tech landscape. "The geopolitics of the day can impact on how the sector is governed and with the plethora of new technologies a regulator can't be sure he knows who is operating in his jurisdiction," she acknowledges.

SG Lewis notes that the pace of development then means that regulators will have to be able to "future-cast" industry direction to keep laws relevant and in line with technology development. "You have private individuals who seem to have been able to harness more wealth and power than sovereign nations and all of these things are going to impact how the technology evolves and what regulations do. We live in a very dynamic environment. It is not going to slow down and my focus is that I want to see every citizen connected affordably because pricing is a very significant issue."

According to her the question of keeping access to ICT within the financial grasp of the average individual or household in the Caribbean is a key concern and one that the region must keep within its focus, especially given the historical experience with prohibitive pricing structures.



The solution will lie in encouraging the kind of investment in new technology to keep pricing in check.

And yes, collaboration is essential, she adds. It is a question of survival and preservation of cultural identity.

"Our countries are small. We have countries with 5,000 - 6,000 people. If we are going to be able to participate we as the Caribbean we have to cooperate, we have to collaborate," she stresses. This, she adds, was a major tenet during her stint at the helm of the Caribbean Telecommunications Union which came to an end in 2020 after close to two decades. She cited the Collaboration Forum which was established to facilitate common ground for countries of the region, along with their governments, to tackle the approach to ICT in unison.

This should also embrace a high level-regional regulatory framework to put Caribbean collaborators on the same road, headed in the same direction.

“If you don’t have that cooperation and collaboration what we end up with is scattershot approaches that don’t take us forward. We have to build on what others have done and work to make sure that the synergies and relationships between the work that we are doing and that is how we make progress.”

Unfortunately, Lewis notes, if policies and projects shift with every change of administration in the Caribbean, progress will be stunted. She insists that the greater good of the region must trump national interest for the collaboration to bear fruit and flourish. “We have to work towards the realisation of those aspirations. It is important.”

The strong posture from this Trinidadian national and world citizen who was instrumental in shaping the CTU at a time when it was facing an uncertain future is buffered by her admission that hers was not an easy mission.

“I thought it was a divine calling,” she said with a chuckle.

“From my point of view I saw the whole rise of telecommunications technology, the changes, the innovations as being instrumental to fulfilling biblical prophecies. I wanted to be part of that!”

Driven by her faith she said she was able to accomplish a lot at the CTU over her stint, working alongside a team, many of whom just wanted to give back. “We weren’t financially driven. There were people with tremendous expertise who came on board and gave to the organisation.”

Tackling her role at the larger CTO, Lewis says the challenges are similar but her mandate remains to demonstrate value and ability by steady leadership and incisive actions.

“Just show what can be done. Get it done and make a difference,” she stresses.

Looking to the future, the SG admits there is a lot more left to do. With in excess of 30 member countries within her purview, steering the CTO, the oldest and largest intergovernmental in ICT, is a task for which she has prepared most of her life. She hopes that through her work with the organisation she is able to have a positive, measurable impact on the nations served. Key for her is to foster a culture of implementation that impacts communities positively.

Lewis is happy to report that more women are coming to the fore. The studies have shown, she reminds, that “organisations which have a balance between men and women in leadership positions, do better.”



A portrait of a woman with long, straight hair that is dark brown with a reddish-purple tint. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. She is wearing a white blazer with a large, bold blue floral pattern. Underneath, she has a white top with a dark blue zipper. Her accessories include a thin gold necklace with a small pendant, a large ring on her right hand, a silver bracelet on her left wrist, and a watch on her right wrist. Her hands are clasped in front of her. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

**MS ANWIN MBAH**

# CARIBBEAN WOMEN ACTIVE IN AI DEVELOPMENT

Anwin Mbah is Head of Community, Engagement and Support at Intellibus

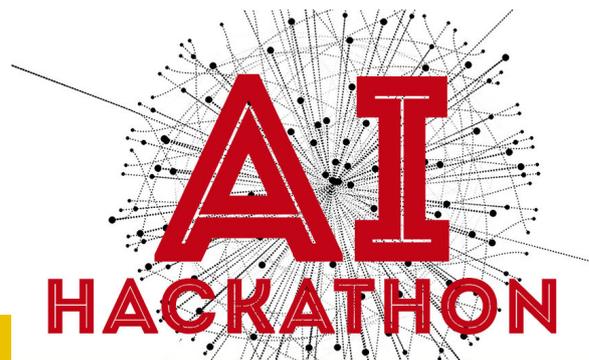
When I presented at the CTU-NoW Leadership Seminar during ICT Week 2025, one statistic hung over the room: globally, women comprise less than 25 per cent of the AI workforce.

***Last October's National AI Hackathon proved Caribbean women are building AI solutions. Now, we must ensure that they lead the systems, not just participate in them.***

The question wasn't whether the Caribbean could build an AI economy. Economic models already showed that 50,000 AI "anchor roles" could generate 500,000 jobs across the region. The question was whether women would be locked out before the systems were even built.

"We have a narrow window," Pro Vice-Chancellor Sandra Maynard told attendees. "We can build this economy inclusively from the start, or we'll spend the next decade fighting for seats at tables men designed."

Three weeks later, Jamaica's National AI Hackathon put that commitment to the test.



## The October Reality Check

When 1,400 individuals registered for the hackathon, 700 showed up, forming 208 teams and submitting 136 AI solutions in 24 hours. The organising model proved itself. WhatsApp coordination, a network of 150+ ambassadors generating 400+ referrals, and mobile roadshows activated talent across rural and urban communities alike. The economic impact was immediate: 50 million Jamaican dollars injected into the economy through the event alone.

But the registration data revealed the work still ahead. Approximately 340 women participated, representing 23 per cent, mirroring the global AI gender gap we'd committed to disrupting.

More concerning, women held fewer than 15 per cent of coaching and judging positions. These are the roles that shape standards, provide mentorship, and validate who belongs.

Yet within those numbers something was shifting.

## What women can do when given the chance

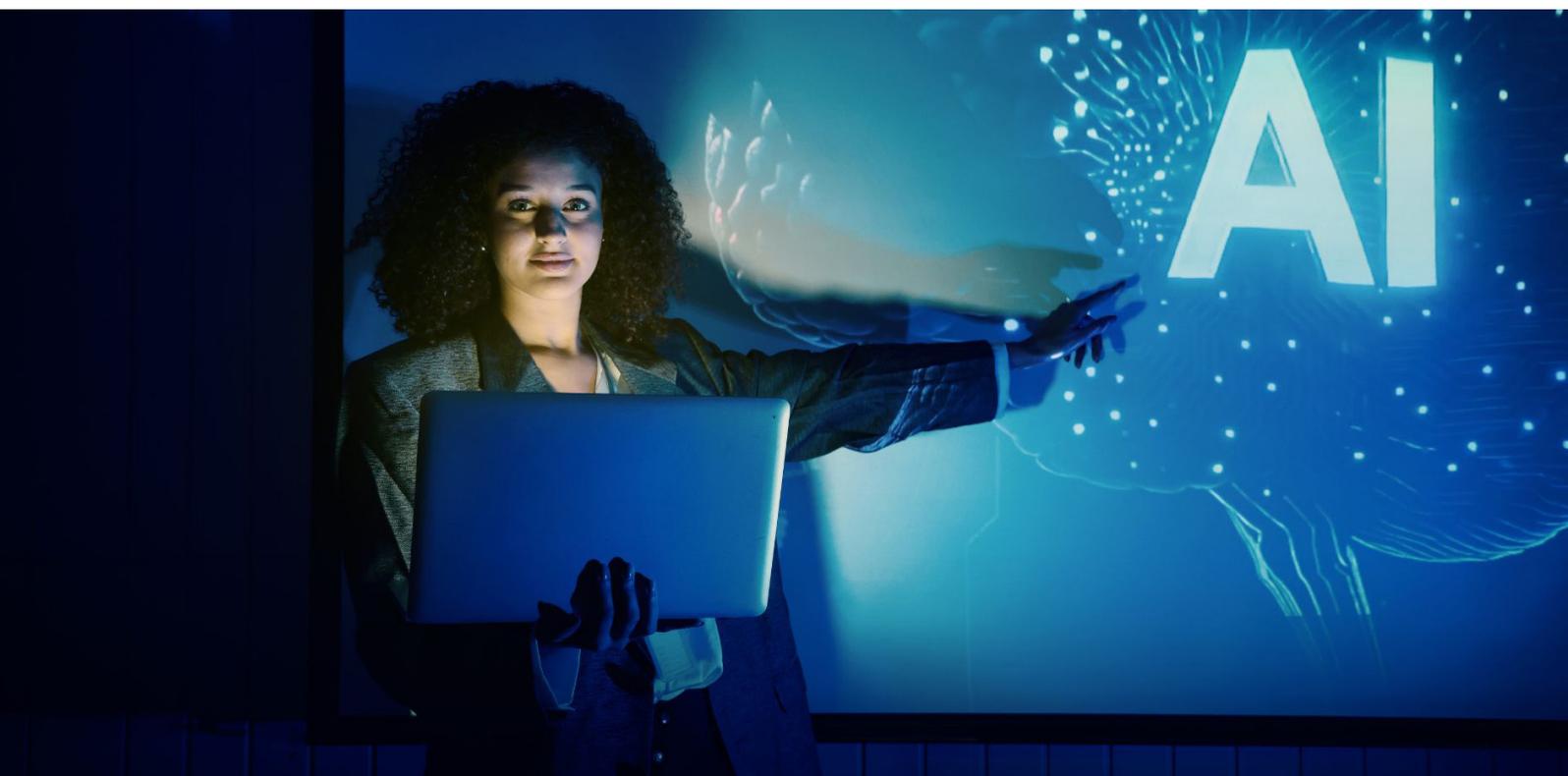
The first-place winning team? Two women, one man, building AI-powered crop disease detection for Caribbean agriculture. Women weren't just present. They were leading solutions in agriculture, education, public safety, and healthcare.

The talent exists. The will exists. What's missing is structural support.

This is where policy meets reality. The AI Job Creation Resolution, presented by World Digital Governance at ICT Week and adopted by CTU member states, addresses this gap through its Universal Skills Employment (USE) Pathway:

- Genius Quotient: Measuring capability, not credentials alone
- Human Intelligence Surplus: Making skills visible through regional registries
- Universal Skill-Based Income: Equal pay for equal skill, everywhere

For women whose education was interrupted by caregiving or economic constraints, this shifts the conversation from “where did you study” to “what can you do”.





## The Honest Accounting

The hackathon's power came from what it revealed: both promise and gaps.

Yes, women are building AI solutions. Yes, the organising model works. Yes, the economic case is proven. But we're not there yet.

Twenty-three per cent participation isn't failure. It's a baseline. The winning team's gender balance (67 per cent women) shows what's possible when women are empowered to lead, not just participate.

The gap between vision and reality is now our roadmap.

# Baseline to breakthrough

For our next hackathon on March 14-15, 2026, we're setting an explicit target: 40 per cent female participation, up from 23 per cent. This will be achieved, not with rhetoric, but through:

- Targeted recruitment to women's networks and educational institutions
- Visible women coaches and judges (role models matter)
- Amplifying women-led solutions from October as proof of what's possible
- Leveraging the USE Pathway to ensure skills translate to careers

The AI Academy, launching in 2026, will face the same test: will it achieve 40 per cent female enrollment in its first cohort, or repeat the 23 per cent pattern?

These aren't symbolic gestures. They're performance metrics tied to our commitment that when Caribbean women lead in AI, the systems are fairer and the growth broader.

## *Be a part of this*

For women reading this, in the Caribbean and beyond, the work isn't theoretical.

The resolution provides policy infrastructure. The hackathons provide proof of demand. But none of it matters without you.

If you're a young woman considering tech: the next hackathon is March 14-15, 2026.

Registration opens soon. You don't need a computer science degree. You need curiosity and commitment.

If you're a woman already in tech: we need you as coaches, judges, and mentors. Your visibility changes what young women believe is possible. If you're a leader in your organisation: advocate for the USE Pathway in your country. Push for portable credentials, transparent pay structures and mutual recognition across borders.

The Caribbean is piloting something rare: building an AI economy with inclusion as infrastructure, not afterthought. If we can't do it now (when systems are still being designed) then when?

The October hackathon proved women will build when given infrastructure and support. The first-place team (led by two women) proved women don't just participate, they win.

Now comes the harder work: ensuring that when the Caribbean writes its AI future, women hold the pen.

***Because when Caribbean women lead in AI, the future follows.***

*Anwin Mbah is Head of Community, Engagement and Support at Intellibus, which hosts Jamaica's National AI Hackathon series. She presented at the CTU-NoW Leadership Seminar on gender-inclusive AI development in the Caribbean.*

*The next National AI Hackathon takes place March 14-15, 2026. Follow Intellibus on Instagram and TikTok for more information.*



 Intellibus

# hackathon

**BUILD. INNOVATE. WIN.**

Students, Tech enthusiasts,  
and coders-Build a Real-Time Experience.

March **14-15** 2026

PRIZES:

**US\$15,000+**

SCHOLARSHIP  
OPPORTUNITIES

JOB & NETWORKING  
OPPORTUNITIES

**SAVE THE DATE**

# WHY “DIGITAL = GREEN” IS A MYTH

How Caribbean countries can achieve a smarter transformation

Ms Michele Marius



*Digital transformation, the integration of digital technology into all areas of a business or government, is often championed by a powerful, compelling justification: that it will deliver environmental sustainability. Although some digital solutions may have some green potential, this article argues that the environmental justification for digital transformation, as currently pursued, is not sound on its own because it dangerously ignores the sheer environmental footprint of the digital infrastructure itself.*

*While Caribbean countries must continue to digitally transform their societies, they must also be more environmentally responsible. Clear national and regional policies, along with strategies that encourage the deeper and more comprehensive integration of environmental sustainability principles and practices across all sectors, are critical. However, countries must also remain accountable by monitoring and tracking their performance against important environmental indicators and implementing the requisite remediation, as appropriate, in order to foster more environmentally-aware and responsive societies.*

Digital transformation is often touted as a driver of efficiency, innovation, and environmental sustainability. Across the Caribbean, governments and institutions increasingly promote digitalisation as a means to “go green” - suggesting that moving services online, embracing cloud technologies, and enabling remote work will reduce the carbon footprint, save energy, and minimise resource waste.

While digital transformation can indeed contribute to sustainability goals, the environmental justification for it is not always as sound as it appears. In fact, if left unexamined, digital transformation may create new environmental pressures even as it addresses old ones. To ensure that the region’s digital evolution is both sustainable and equitable, Caribbean policymakers must move beyond rhetoric and entrench genuine environmental responsibility into their digital strategies.

## The environmental justification: an oversimplified narrative

First, the energy consumption of the data infrastructure cannot be overlooked. Data centres – the backbone of digital transformation – are massive energy consumers. A small data centre, such as a server closet, can use between 10 kW and 50 kW, or roughly 1,200 kWh to 36,000 kWh per month, whilst a medium-sized data centre typically consumes between 500 kW and 2 MW, or approximately 720,000 kWh to 8,760,000 kWh annually. Further, artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, and streaming services require considerably more electricity to power

and cool servers, which can not only increase a data centre’s overall consumption, but also a country’s carbon footprint.

Although it can be argued that Caribbean countries are accessing data centres outside the region, and so the energy and environmental impact outlined is not in the region, that posture is myopic and irresponsible. While most of the popular data centre providers do not have facilities in the region, by using them—wherever they are located—we are contributing to the problem. Hence, although the Caribbean region might not be among the largest clients or the most intensive users of those overseas data centres, it is nonetheless incumbent on us, as individual countries and collectively as a region, to do our part to lower our contribution to carbon emissions and to improve the overall health of the planet.

Secondly, digitalisation has accelerated device turnover. Smartphones, laptops, routers, and network equipment have relatively short lifespans, which contribute to growing volumes of electronic (e-)waste. Virtually all Caribbean countries have limited e-waste recycling infrastructure to repurpose discarded digital equipment and ensure safe processing and disposal, which also requires energy. As a result, countries tend to depend on imports and lack the capacity to manage e-waste disposal sustainably.

Thirdly, it must be acknowledged that the global supply chains that feed digital transformation rely heavily on resource extraction – from rare earth minerals to metals – which is often linked to environmental degradation and social exploitation.

Although the Caribbean region is not a source of the rare metals and minerals used in digital devices, as owners and users of those devices, it can be argued that we are complicit in the exploitation that is occurring. As a result, it may be difficult to justify our continued digital transformation efforts and our position that going digital will lead to a greener planet.

Finally, though paradoxical, efficiency gains can drive increased consumption. This phenomenon became very evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when, for example, it was no longer permissible to travel to meetings. Online meetings and events not only became the norm, but they were also more plentiful. However, that convenience can result in an overuse of streaming and data-heavy services, and ultimately digital overconsumption.

## Realising Sustainable Digital Transformation in the Caribbean

The Caribbean region has a unique opportunity to design a sustainable digital future: one that balances economic growth and its continued digital evolution with environmental stewardship. Policymakers can achieve this by integrating sustainability directly into digital policy, infrastructure, and innovation frameworks, as outlined in the following strategies:

1. Implementing green digital policies. Green ICT policies and national digital sustainability strategies should be integrated into environmental, social, and economic considerations rather than treating them as separate agenda items.

Such a posture would be a seismic shift from the status quo and would signal an enhanced approach to digital infrastructure deployment and the broader digital transformation effort.

Green digital infrastructure policies in particular ought to promote renewable energy integration into data centres and ICT infrastructure, and could include incentives to drive the use of solar, wind or alternative forms of energy by local data hosting providers. Additionally, energy-efficient design policies and standards could be adopted to include mandatory energy audits for major ICT installations.

2. Emphasise a circular economy and e-waste management. In the first instance, a national e-waste collection and recycling network should be established, which feeds into regional e-waste collection and recycling networks to pool expertise, benefit from economies of scale and achieve greater impact. Further, consistent with the practice globally of fostering circular economies across a broad range of sectors, Caribbean countries should support the development of repair and refurbishment ecosystems, particularly for mobile and computing devices, as part of local entrepreneurship initiatives.

3. Establish green telecommunication ICT standards. Caribbean countries ought to adopt green ICT standards and prioritise equipment certified for low energy use and recyclability. The successful implementation of these standards would require multi-stakeholder participation from, among others, the national standards bureau, ICT and electricity regulators, academia and the private sector. When finally adopted and in effect, the impact should be felt across the country: from public sector procurement to the

the importation of digital equipment, in order to realise a greener country.

4. Encourage data localisation and cloud sustainability. Cognisant of the growing emphasis on digital sovereignty across the region, hosting digital services regionally using shared cloud platforms powered by renewable energy should be promoted when feasible. Further, individual Caribbean countries or the region as a whole ought to consider partnering with global cloud providers to align Caribbean data infrastructure with international carbon neutrality commitments, such as achieving a net-zero emissions target.

5. Incorporate education and entrepreneurship. In addition to the effort made to increase the public's awareness and understanding of digital sustainability, digital sustainability literacy should also be integrated into the school curricula. This topic could be part of a larger digital literacy programme that covers sustainability, along with understanding and critically evaluating the environmental and social challenges being faced locally and internationally and how to contribute to solutions.

Further, entrepreneurs can be encouraged to support the green digital posture of the country through the products they bring to market. For example, green tech entrepreneurship programmes can be established to incentivise startups and local innovators to develop clean, energy- or resource-efficient solutions, or solutions that address environmental sustainability challenges in society.

6. Ensure measurement and accountability. Most Caribbean countries have not been actively tracking their carbon footprint, greenhouse gas emissions, or other important environment-related metrics. However, if countries are serious about being more environmentally responsible, goals, targets and systems to measure and track performance—to foster accountability and data-informed decisions—must be established. Important environmental indicators within the context of digital transformation or a digital economy include, but are not limited to, carbon footprint, energy consumption, energy intensity, e-waste generation and recovery rates, and water and air pollutants.

Additionally, regular audits should be conducted to again emphasise the importance of being environmentally responsible. For example, audits of the environmental footprint of national digital transformation projects should be conducted. This data would in turn feed into the national or country-level metrics that are being tracked.

Finally, it must be highlighted that for all of the recommended strategies, though discussed within the context of individual countries, there is scope to magnify the impact regionally, via groupings such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) or the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). However, to benefit from synergies that might be evident or the impact of better economies of scale, policy harmonisation or alignment to facilitate collaboration is vital and must be fostered.

# Building a Caribbean Model of Sustainable Digital Transformation

In summary, digital transformation in the Caribbean region must be framed not just as an economic necessity but as an opportunity to redefine sustainability in a small-island developing country and resource-constrained context. Neither can we continue to justify our passive posture on environmental responsibility as a problem caused by others “over there”. More importantly, we cannot rely on the flawed assumption that “digital equals green(er),” as there are several environmental costs in going digital.

Instead, regional leaders can pioneer a more nuanced model: one that harnesses technology for inclusive growth and the digital transformation of our countries, whilst also seeking to mitigate the environmental impact and fostering collective responsibility and accountability. A truly sustainable digital future for the Caribbean region will require policy coherence, regional cooperation, and a shared vision that technology should serve both the people and the planet.



# CTU-NOW YOUTH VOICES

*By Ms Blenda Silva*



This year I celebrate eight years with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations' specialised agency for digital technologies. I joined the ITU at age 26 and have grown into a substantive role in supporting the Union's environment and youth efforts in the Americas region.

I see my journey as a compelling example of what young women from the Americas can achieve in the digital development space when provided with adequate tools, support and trust.

Working at the ITU has given me the privilege of collaborating with many inspiring role models in technology, including Mrs. Doreen Bogdan-Martin, the ITU's current Secretary-General and the first woman to lead the agency in its 160-year history. Their example of digital leadership reinforced my own passion for advancing women and girls in technology - a commitment that remains a constant in my career.

The ITU is dedicated to incorporating youth perspectives into global digital strategies. A great example of how ITU incorporated my perspective as a young female professional was the ITU #GirlsInICT campaign on TikTok that I co-designed during the COVID-19 pandemic. This campaign had the objective to reach wider and younger audiences for the celebration of ITU's flagship International Girls in ICT Day in 2020, which promotes information and communication technologies to young women and girls and encourages them to pursue careers in the field. The #GirlsInICT hashtag campaign on TikTok is still active, with over 16,000 user posts and millions of views, adding strength and visibility to the powerful global community of women in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics).

The ITU's commitment to the next generation is further reflected in major initiatives such as: the 2022 and 2025 ITU Global Youth Summits, the creation of the ITU Secretary General's Youth Advisory Board and ITU Generation Connect.



As the Americas Lead for the Generation Connect initiative since its creation in 2021, I have contributed to Generation Connect's objective in engaging global youth and encouraging their participation as equal partners alongside the leaders of today's digital change. I am profoundly grateful for the privilege to meet and work with brilliant young digital leaders from different backgrounds as they volunteer to contribute to the work of the ITU from several countries in the region.

The Caribbean members and alumni, in particular, continue to set an excellent example of the impact and reach of this initiative. In fact, Caribbean members from the first cohort of Generation Connect Americas (GC-AMS) went on to co-found,

in 2022, the CTU Caribbean ICT Youth Network (CIYN). In addition to the countless ITU events, projects, activities and consultations the GC-AMS Caribbean members have engaged in over the years, today the region's influence is stronger than ever. Over 50 per cent of Generation Connect Americas is composed of members from the Caribbean region (of the 26 members, 14 are from Caribbean countries). ITU Americas looks forward to continuing to work with the Caribbean Telecommunication Union to provide future ICT leaders from the region with key participation and capacity-building opportunities.

Looking at the road ahead for ITU Americas youth initiatives, our focus is now on the "Priorities for Youth in the Digital World" programme, highlighting how emerging technologies and Artificial Intelligence can empower youth to drive ICT development. The first successful edition was held in Santiago, Chile, in 2024. This initiative targets policymakers, industry leaders and youth to raise awareness and create a platform for experience exchange on digital skills, digital inclusion and digital jobs for youth. These efforts are in line with the ITU Regional Initiatives for the Americas 2026-2029 for innovation and digital inclusion. I invite like-minded partners from both the public and private sector to join us in promoting young digital talent in the Caribbean.

Thanks to CTU's kind invitation to participate in the CTU ICT Week 2025 hosted by Jamaica, I had the joy of delivering a keynote address at the 3rd Caribbean ICT Youth Network meeting held on 30th September (which also happened to be my birthday!). I shared how academia is exploring whether generative Artificial Intelligence could become a new general-purpose technology (GPT), as it meets several



requirements to be considered a widely transformative technology for society and the economy.

I truly believe young digital talent is a critical asset for the emerging technology transformation in the Americas and I have seen first-hand how Caribbean youth, both women and men, have the capabilities and talent to lead the way.

As a female young digital leader, I celebrate the efforts of the ITU and the CTU towards youth empowerment in the digital space and towards the development of female leaders in ICTs. To reach its full potential, the youth and women of our region need tools, support and trust to contribute to our nations' digital ecosystems.

We must work together to create platforms for intergenerational dialogue and collaboration so that youth, especially young women, can voice their ideas and propose new approaches for an inclusive and sustainable digital future. I encourage all young women in the Caribbean, and throughout the Americas, to keep pushing forward and taking up space in a digital world that needs us now more than ever!

Count on my support to continue championing young digital talent in the Americas.

***Blenda Silva is Programme Administrator with the International Telecommunication Union Americas Region***

# REWRITING THE NARRATIVE

Dr. Terri-Karelle Johnson and the purposeful power of reinvention

In a world increasingly defined by rigid labels and professional boxes, Dr. Terri-Karelle Johnson has made a compelling case for purpose over prescription and for crafting a career, legacy, and impact on her terms.

Crowned **Miss Jamaica World in 2005**, Terri-Karelle could have easily settled into the fixed archetype of pageant royalty. Instead, she transformed that platform into a launchpad for a life of **service, substance, and storytelling** that continues to reverberate globally from boardrooms to broadcasting stages, grassroots campaigns to global conferences.

Trained originally in veterinary medicine, Dr. Johnson's academic beginnings are emblematic of her multidimensional path. The shift from scalpel to microphone was not one of abandonment, but of alignment, a bold step into the unknown with clarity of voice and conviction of purpose. That courage to pivot has become

her professional ethos, making her one of the Caribbean's most admired public figures and a sought-after **event host, moderator, keynote speaker, and media personality** internationally.

Today, Terri-Karelle stands at the confluence of **media, leadership, and social impact**, fusing authenticity with action. Whether guiding high-level discussions at international summits or facilitating branding workshops for emerging entrepreneurs, she brings to every stage her signature blend of **eloquence, empathy, and energy**. Her TEDx talk and bestselling book "My Brand Compass", have both cemented her as a thought leader in personal branding — not the curated, aesthetic kind — but a deeper, values-driven process of self-discovery and alignment. Her frameworks empower audiences to ask not just "What do I do?" but more importantly, "Who am I becoming?" and "How do I impact those around me?"



**DR. TERRI-KARELLE JOHNSON**

Dr. Johnson has become a cultural bridge, **rooted in the Caribbean but fluent in the global dialect of purpose and progress.** She was selected as one of the **Most Influential People of African Descent (MIPAD) Class of 2023 – Global Top 100 for Media and Culture.**

Her impact, however, is not confined to podiums. As the **Founder of the Open Door Jamaica Foundation,** Terri-Karelle has made disability advocacy and community resilience a central pillar of her life's work. The foundation provides support to children and young adults with physical disabilities, through wheelchair donations, mobility resources, and public advocacy. In the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa, her foundation was among the first on the ground mobilising care packages and partnering with stakeholders to ensure **no one was left behind,** especially those often invisible in national disaster response: **persons with disabilities and the elderly.** In this work, as in all others, she leads not with pity, but with proximity; not as a saviour, but as a **servant-leader,** one who listens, partners, and amplifies rather than overshadows. **Her advocacy is not performative. It is embedded. Personal. Purposeful.**

What makes Terri-Karelle's story especially resonant for women in ICT and beyond is that it **champions multidimensionality.** In an industry often dominated by technical titles and siloed identities, she reminds us that **digital fluency must be matched with emotional intelligence,** and that leadership in the 21st century demands **humanity just as much as it demands innovation.**



She also reminds us that reinvention is not a detour, but sometimes the most direct route to destiny. That expertise can be earned in multiple arenas. That visibility, when paired with values, can create lasting change.

Her journey challenges every woman to redefine what influence looks like, feels like, and serves. It is not always loud. It is not always linear. But when it is anchored in purpose, **its impact echoes far beyond the spotlight.**

In a world hungry for representation that reflects both excellence and authenticity, Dr. Terri-Karelle Johnson continues to show up as she is, where she is, with what she has and in doing so, invites others to do the same.

And that, perhaps, is her most profound contribution: reminding us all that success is not a costume we put on, but a story we choose to live courageously, consistently, and in full colour.



# CAPACITY BUILDING CORNER

International Telecommunication  
Union (ITU) Academy FREE Online  
ICT Courses 2026

#	Name of Programme	Modality	Programme Category	Course Description
1	Wireless infrastructure deployment and governance	Online self-paced	Wireless infrastructure deployment and governance	Skills for sustainable connectivity and local infrastructure governance.
2	Monitoring & Evaluation of Early Warning for All	Online self-paced	Monitoring & Evaluation of Early Warning for All	Monitoring and evaluation of early warning systems for disasters.
3	Global satellite regulation essentials	Online self-paced	Global satellite regulation essentials	ITU regulatory framework for satellite orbit and spectrum management.
4	Inclusive Digital Transformation for the SDGs & SAMOA Pathway in SIDs	Online self-paced	Inclusive Digital Transformation	Digital transformation strategies supporting sustainable development.
5	Gender Analysis and Digital Inclusion	Online self-paced	Gender Analysis and Digital Inclusion	Integrating gender equality into digital sector initiatives.
6	Introduction to Developing National Emergency Telecommunication Plans	Online self-paced	National Emergency Telecommunication Plans	Guide to planning national emergency telecom frameworks.
7	Practical Disaster Response: Table Top Simulation Exercises	Online self-paced	Disaster Response Simulation Exercises	Developing and running disaster simulation exercises.

#	Name of Programme	Modality	Programme Category	Course Description
9	Spectrum monitoring techniques and methods	Online instructor-led	Spectrum Management	Monitoring tools, enforcement techniques and best practices for spectrum management authorities.
10	Quantum communications and post-quantum cybersecurity: the next frontier	Online instructor-led	Cybersecurity	Foundations of quantum-safe communications and next-generation cybersecurity approaches.
11	AI in practice: building ethical, inclusive, and sustainable futures	Online instructor-led	Artificial Intelligence	Practical and policy-focused course on ethical, inclusive and sustainable AI implementation.
12	Emerging technologies and human rights online	Online instructor-led	Digital Inclusion	Examines impacts of emerging technologies on human rights, inclusion and accessibility online.
14	Spectrum assignment policies for 5G & beyond	Online instructor-led	Spectrum Management	Policy approaches and assignment mechanisms to enable 5G and future wireless technologies.
15	CSIRT/SOC establishment and modernisation	Online instructor-led	Cybersecurity	Guidance on establishing and strengthening national CSIRTs and security operations centres.
16	ICT policy planning for good governance	Online instructor-led	ICT/Telecom Regulation	Policy and regulatory planning frameworks for effective ICT governance and public policy design.

# C CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MARCH – APRIL 2026

1	GSMA Mobile World Congress (MWC)	2nd - 5th March	Spain
2	ICANN 85 (Community Forum)	7th - 12th March	Mumbai, India
3	IX Regular Meeting of the Assembly of CITEL	16th - 19th March	Costa Rica
4	Digital Caribbean Annual Conference - Hosted by CDA	19th - 20th March	Curacao
5	54th Executive Council Meeting (EC54)	25th March	Virtual
6	CTU 1st ITU PP26 Preparatory Meeting	27th March	Virtual
7	CTU ICT Ministerial Caucus - Q2	31st March	Virtual
8	CTU 2026 2nd International ICT Forecast and Industry Watch Meeting	31st March	Virtual
9	OAS CITEL 47th Meeting of PCC. II Radio-communications	6th - 10th April	Dominica
10	CTU 1st Caribbean Preparatory Meeting for WTPF 2026	10th April	Virtual
11	OAS CITEL 48th Meeting of PCC. I Telecommunications & ICT	20th - 24th April	Panama
12	ARIN 57	19th - 22nd April	USA
13	CTU International Girls in ICT Day Webinar	23rd April	Virtual
14	CTU One Digital Caribbean Scorecard Technical Workshop	29th - 30th April	Trinidad and Tobago



# ECTEL BYTES

## Discover the stories shaping connectivity in the Eastern Caribbean

From how the Universal Service Fund is driving connectivity across ECTEL's Contracting States, to cyber security, quality of service, and spectrum management – ECTEL Bytes brings you engaging conversations on the issues that matter.

We also spotlight youth in ICT and explore how digital technologies can empower older persons. ECTEL Bytes also provides a platform for like-minded regional organisations to highlight their work and promote upcoming events.

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 **Fourth Wednesday of every month**

 **2:00 PM AST**



**HOST:**

**KARETTA CROOKS CHARLES**

ECTEL's Communications & Media Relations Manager

### PAST GUESTS



**Rodney Taylor**  
(CTU)



**Sandra Jones**  
(NTRC)



**Tariq Mohammed**  
(ITU Consultant)

### CATCH UP ANYTIME!

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[www.ectel.int/category/ectel-bytes](http://www.ectel.int/category/ectel-bytes)

Follow us on social media or visit [www.ectel.int](http://www.ectel.int) for the latest ECTEL Bytes updates.

In the k-Now Newsletter

The official publication of  
the CTU Network of Women  
(CTU-NOW)

# Advertise with us!

Amplify your brand across the Caribbean ICT Landscape!

## Who we are

The Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) invites you to place your brand at the forefront of regional and international conversations on women in ICT Distributed across twenty (20) CTU Member States and shared with global ICT stakeholders.

Each issue reaches a high-level readership of government ministries, telecommunication regulators, private sector leaders, academic institutions and international development agencies.

## Why Choose Us?

- Targeted Reach - Connect directly with ICT decision-makers, policy influencers and innovators.
- Brand Association - Align your organisation with a powerful movement promoting gender equity and digital advancement
- Quarterly Exposure - Keep your brand visible all year long across a growing audience

## Advertising Options

- Full-page and half-page ads
- Sponsored features and thought leadership articles
- Premium placements and content highlights

**Let your brand be seen where it matters most. Join us advancing digital inclusion and celebrating the women driving the Caribbean's ICT future.**

**To get started:**

**Contact: Mr. Rodney Lewis, Business Development Specialist**

**Email: [rodney.lewis@ctu.int](mailto:rodney.lewis@ctu.int) | Mobile: 1-246-232-9145**

## Don't miss an issue of this industry packed publication. Subscribe today!

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### VISION OF CTU NETWORK OF WOMEN

To lead the charge in creating a strong community of Caribbean Women in ICT to drive profound and impactful transformation across the region. We envision women being equally represented and actively shaping the industry's future.

### MISSION OF THE CTU NETWORK OF WOMEN

Our mission is to cultivate a supportive and collaborative community that empowers and advances Caribbean Women in ICT and STEM. Through networking, mentoring and professional development opportunities, we strive to promote gender equality, equity and parity by amplifying women's voices, and driving positive change in the industry.

### OBJECTIVES OF In The k-NoW

The Caribbean has a staggering record of influential women leaders in telecommunications, yet there is no channel for the sharing of experiences, mentoring and encouraging women across the region to take on leadership roles in the longitudinal processes associated with ITU's statutory meetings and study groups. ITU's Network of Women is available to fill this gap. At the same time, CTU In the k-NoW provides information on key supporting resources with a Caribbean focus.

Women are a key CTU Stakeholder group. We engage them through In the k-NoW to share updates, inform on activities, data, announcements and successes of Women in ICT in our Member States and the wider Caribbean Community.



**CTU Focal Point for ITU's Network of Women.**

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