

**Connect Americas Summit  
Panamá City, Panama  
17-19 July 2012**

**Opening Ceremony  
Wednesday 18 July 2012**

**Opening remarks and Presidential Award by  
Dr Hamadoun I Touré  
Secretary-General  
International Telecommunication Union**

Your Excellency Ricardo Martinelli, President of the Republic Panama,  
Your Excellency Laura Chinchilla Miranda, President of the Republic of Costa Rica,  
Honourable Marta Linares de Martinelli First Lady of the Republic of Panama,  
Honourable Margarita Cedeño de Fernández, First Lady and Vice President elect of the Dominican Republic,  
Your Excellency Samuel Armando Reyes Rendón, Presidential Designate Vice President of the Republic of Honduras,  
Your Excellency Víctor Nazim Gordon Burke, Minister of Finance, Planning, Economy, Energy & Cooperatives, Representative of the Prime Minister of Grenada,  
Your Excellency Carolyn Seepersad-Bahcan, Minister of Public Administration, Representative of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago  
Honourable Zelmar Rodríguez Crespo, General Administrator of the National Authority of Public Services of Panama,  
Your Excellencies National and Foreign Ministers of State, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, and National Authorities of the Republic of Panama,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentleman,

- It is a tremendous honour and a great pleasure to welcome you to the fourth event in our ITU Connect the World series, the ITU *Connect Americas* Summit.
- We are greatly honoured by the presence of leaders from across the region who have come here to Panama City to attend this summit.

- Let me therefore thank the Government of the Republic of Panama which is hosting this Summit, and in particular His Excellency Ricardo Martinelli, the President of Panama, who has honoured us here today with his presence.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- We are gathered here today to build on the tremendous successes already achieved at the ITU Connect Africa Summit in 2007; the ITU Connect CIS Summit in 2009; and the ITU Connect Arab Summit earlier this year.
- In terms of information and communication technologies, the Americas region is one of the world's most dynamic markets.
- Mobile cellular telephony in particular has already proved spectacularly successful, with mobile penetration across the region as a whole now at over 100%.
- In this regard, Panama itself has been the most successful country in the region, with mobile penetration growing from 16% a decade ago to an extraordinary 204% by the beginning of this year – meaning that there are more than two mobile phone subscriptions for every man, woman and child in this fine country.
- And yet there is still much to do.
- Because while cellular penetration is particularly high in this region, and Internet penetration is above average, there are still many millions of people who lack access to ICTs, which in the 21st century have become a necessary foundation for overall social and economic development.
- We need to find ways to get these unconnected people connected, and this is the real function of this Summit – to replicate the mobile miracle for broadband access.
- This summit will help to develop strategies to drive broadband deployment forward, right across the Americas region, and will be key in mobilizing the human, financial and technical resources needed to promote universal digital inclusion.
- Key to this process will be the rapid spread of mobile broadband technologies – and I think we will see the same pattern here in Latin America and the Caribbean as we have seen in North America, where mobile broadband penetration has grown in the space of just a few short years from under 10% to over 65%.
- The Director of ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau, Brahima Sanou, refers to the benefits of this phenomenon as 'M-powering', with a capital 'M' – and I believe he is absolutely right.
- Mobile applications will continue to improve the delivery of key basic services such as health and education, as well as delivering massive benefits across virtually every other social and economic sector.

Distinguished guests,

- This Summit is all about bringing together partners and donors looking to participate in the implementation of new Americas-focused ICT projects that will help accelerate deployment of high-speed networks, applications and services.
- This summit is also about synergizing national initiatives already in place.
- "Argentina Conectada"; "Broadband Canada"; Colombia's "Vive Digital"; "Ecuador Digital"; "E-powering Jamaica"; Panama's "Internet para Todos"; and the USA's "Connecting

America” are just a few examples of such national initiatives.

- We should also note the national broadband plans of Brazil, Costa Rica and Peru; the ICT Strategic Plans of Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Bolivia, Grenada, Montserrat, Paraguay, St Vincent, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago and Venezuela; as well as the Dominican Republic’s connectivity plan for rural areas and Mexico’s “Actions to Strengthen Broadband and ICTs”.
- As you can see, there is so much wealth of knowledge from all these national initiatives taking place in this region.
- We need to learn from one another, share experiences, best practices, success stories, and even failures and mistakes – so that no one makes a mistake already made or reinvents something done already for lack of information in this information society.
- Instead, we need to share knowledge, so to enter the knowledge society – together, with confidence.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- We have billions of dollars worth of investment opportunities on the table, and over the next two days I am looking forward to a number of important ‘connectivity commitments’ from government, industry and the academic community.
- Through this work, we will actively play a part in improving access to cutting-edge ICTs for everyone, right across the Americas region.
- And I am certain that as a result of this good work we will see existing companies in the region expand their reach into global markets.
- Perhaps most importantly, however, we will see a whole host of brand new ICT companies springing up – enterprises built on the power of youth, and the wealth of our one, true, inexhaustible resource: which is of course human brainpower!

Thank you.

[SPANISH TEXT]

Excelencias,

Distinguidos invitados,

Damas y caballeros:

- Me cabe ahora el honor de pronunciar algunas palabras en español para presentar al Excelentísimo Sr. Ricardo Martinelli, Presidente de Panamá.
- Señor Presidente, ha mostrado usted un interés firme y personal por el desarrollo de las TIC en Panamá, y ha liderado en particular la iniciativa nacional "Internet para todos", que ofrecerá un acceso gratuito a Internet a todos los ciudadanos de Panamá.
- Ya están funcionando más de mil sitios en treinta y tres ciudades y poblaciones de todo Panamá, y la UIT aplaude esta iniciativa y su dedicación personal para llevarla a cabo.
- Se trata de un magnífico ejemplo de la manera en que una política y unas condiciones de mercado adecuadas pueden aunarse en beneficio de todos
- y no creo que sea una coincidencia que en su carrera personal, Señor Presidente, tenga usted experiencia del sector público y el privado.
- Permítame en consecuencia invitarle a subir al podio para recibir este trofeo y este

certificado en honor de la labor que ha realizado – y afirmarle una vez más lo complacidos que nos sentimos hoy por poder agradecer los logros que ha obtenido.

**Señor Presidente**