



Honourable Stephenson King
Prime Minister, Minister for Finance (International Financial
Services), Economic Affairs, Economic Planning,
National Development and External Affairs.

9th Anniversary Celebrations of ECTEL
Wednesday, 03 June 2009
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**Speech given by Honourable Stephenson King
Prime Minister, Minister for Finance (International Financial Services),
Economic Affairs, Economic Planning,
National Development and External Affairs, on the occasion of the 9th
Anniversary Celebrations of ECTEL
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Ladies and Gentlemen:

Permit me to commence by congratulating those of you who were there from the inception of this regional institution and have contributed to the recognised success that it has become today. It probably was not an easy task to ensure the realisation of the visions of leaders, with regard to making telecommunications a vital part of sustainable development, a reality within nine short years. You have contributed to the development of a model that is recognised as a major global accomplishment in the field of telecommunications. It is not often that we take the time to acknowledge that together, we have accomplished much, and that together we can build a brighter future for the people of the region.

At the heart of the vision of the leaders of Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 2000, was a means of ensuring the widest possible quality access to telecommunications at an affordable rate by the people of these countries. They wanted their people to share in the freedom to communicate over an efficient and modern telecommunications network. The result is this multi-island telecommunications regulator, the only one of its kind in the

world. Together we have added another successful layer to the deepening of the regional integration movement, which has facilitated the connection of our people, in the same way, that the Eastern Caribbean currency has fostered an economic identity for the people of these small states. Ladies and gentlemen, these small countries are builders of models that are lauded, even envied, globally.

Since 2000, governments, through the regulators, have continued to introduce measures to ensure further gains for consumers and the business sector. In a very short space of time together we have managed to:

- Deregulate the telecoms sector and develop a suitable regulatory environment to ensure new operators are licensed, barriers to market entry are removed, and interconnection between the incumbent and new service providers can be effected;
- Ensure a suitable legislative framework and consistency in the application of laws;
- Ensure workable arrangements for universal access to basic services, particularly to low income segments of the population, and thereby ensure that consumers access the services at affordable prices;
- Administer a two-tiered arrangement, first at the national level, and the second at the regional level to the satisfaction of all concerned;

- Attract significant investments from new entrants, and also from existing service providers in preparing for competition. In fact, for the year 2007/08, there was increased activity in the telecommunications sector in the ECTEL Member States, and investment in the sector was estimated to have increased by 20 per cent to \$177 million;
- Increased employment with the entry of new providers, and
- Ensure that new innovative services are provided to consumers.

There is no doubt that the global economic downturn and restructuring in the sector may prove quite challenging to the sector in 2009. However, it should remain the priority of the entire regulatory system to ensure that the economic environment remains conducive to the expansion of the sector and the introduction of new services through technological innovation.

Today, the telecommunications services sector is becoming one of the essential economic sectors, as it facilitates the growth and development of many other sectors of an economy. In the ECTEL Member States, the contribution of the telecommunications sector was estimated to be 10.8 per cent of GDP for the year ending March 2008. This contribution can grow as new entrants are encouraged and new products are introduced to the market.

There are however some challenges that ECTEL must still confront. Despite its obvious successes, the institution must make itself more visible in the member states. The recently conducted survey of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the member states revealed that there was lack of awareness of the institution and its work. It is only through the building of this awareness that there will be greater partnership with critical sectors. That is the only way that you will maintain the confidence of Governments, the industry players and the public in the regulatory process.

In light of our movement toward OECS economic union, and as we look to the future, the challenge must be to examine institutional innovations and the better organisation of research and development that would ensure that the cooperation that exists among our countries and sectors can be further facilitated and enhanced. You must re-examine your role within this new arrangement.

In light of the economic challenges, you must also devise new ways to work more closely with member states to ensure that human resources not resident within the institution and available nationally can be more fully utilized at the regional level.

Another challenge must be protection of our children and our systems from cyber criminals. The theme for the 2009 World Telecommunications Day was "Protecting Children in Cyberspace". In our 'multi state arrangement' it would mean that more of our children are vulnerable,

especially as access to computer becomes more pervasive. The same can be said about all our ICT systems. One single attack can affect multiple jurisdictions. The legal systems in our countries must therefore be able to prosecute a person located abroad who attacks a computer within our country's borders, as well as a person located within the country's borders who attacks a computer abroad. To curb the incidence of such harmful crimes, we must commit ourselves to the updating of our national laws and allow for adequate enforcement and efficient international cooperation or harmonisation. After all, our entire model was built on approved harmonised laws and regulations in order to establish new liberalised conditions. This is one of the areas in which your presence can be more noticeable in the member states.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I know that the member states are committed to the continued success of this regional arrangement. On behalf of the leaders of the member states, I wish you continued success and look forward to celebrating many anniversaries with you.

I thank you and wish you a happy anniversary.