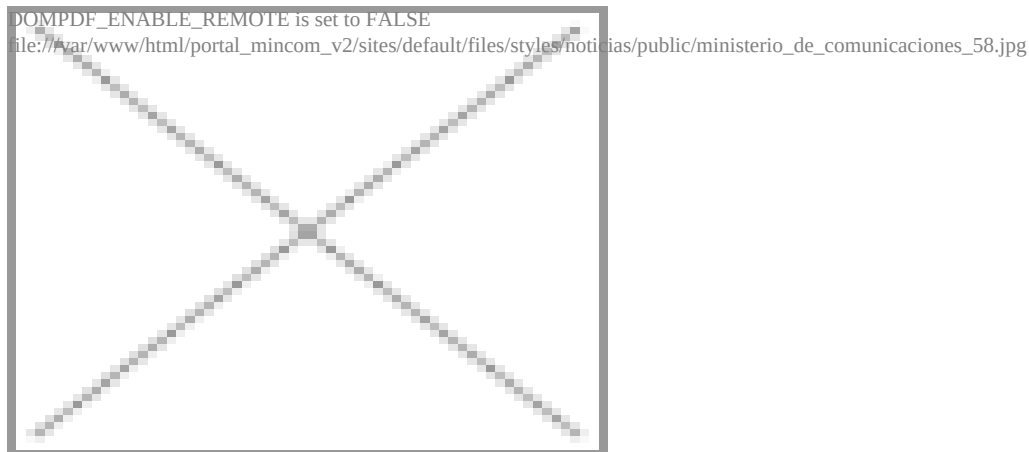




Source:

Institutional Communication Office

Cuba is the venue for the regional event Accessible Americas. During the opening ceremony, the First Deputy Minister of Communications of Cuba, Wilfredo González Vidal, said:

"On behalf of the Ministry of Communications of the Republic of Cuba, we cordially welcome you and express our great pleasure to count on your presence at the official inauguration of "Accessible Americas," an event that will take place in this magnificent and beautiful beach resort in the city of Varadero.

"We celebrate today the inauguration of the 10th anniversary of Accessible America, the International Telecommunication Union's main regional platform focused on the issue of ICT accessibility as a means to ensure digital inclusion and empowerment of all people, regardless of age, gender, ability or geographic location.

"Technology has advanced rapidly in recent years, providing us with countless opportunities to connect, learn and grow. However, it has also brought with it challenges that we must urgently address.

"ICT accessibility is one of them. As more people access the Internet, we must ensure that everyone can do so without barriers. Unfortunately, many people with disabilities face significant barriers to digital inclusion, which can prevent them from fully participating in work, education and social activities.

"In addition, while much progress has been made in the fight for gender equity, profound inequalities still exist in the digital realm. Women and girls face online threats and violence, as well as a technology access gap.

"There are also language barriers in the access to ICT. The Internet today is far from being 'multilingual.' While more than 7,000 languages are spoken worldwide, only a fraction of them are used on the Internet. Overcoming these barriers requires a joint effort by governments, businesses and other organizations to ensure that digital technologies are accessible to all."

Cuba's First Deputy Minister of Communications added:

"The realization of this event not only closes 10 years of extraordinary efforts for the inclusive use of technologies in the region, it also highlights the expressed will of the State and the Government of Cuba in favor of the inclusion and equality for women and people with disabilities.

"The Constitution of the Republic of Cuba, approved in 2019, not only establishes equal rights to all persons, including women and those with disabilities, but also establishes the obligation of the State, society and families to protect, promote and ensure the full exercise of the rights of persons with disabilities.

"Cuba has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to digital inclusion, implementing significant measures to ensure that people with disabilities not only have access to technologies, but also fully benefit from their transformative possibilities.

"The focus on training and awareness cannot be overlooked. Our country has implemented educational programs that seek to bridge the gap and improve the digital literacy of people with disabilities.

"This initiative not only provides them with essential skills, but also encourages their active participation in the digital society. The role of the Computer and Electronics Youth Clubs, who with the initiative called 'Joven Club, an inclusive look,' work with children with special educational needs, to whom they teach the use of technologies in order to favor their integral development and full insertion in our society, is noteworthy.

"In terms of gender, in 2021 the Council of Ministers approved the National Program for the Advancement of Women, put into effect through a Presidential Decree, which expands the decisive impact that all the laws and measures in favor of women implemented by the Cuban Government since the triumph of the Revolution have had.

"One of the actions carried out every year -in the month of April- is to celebrate the International Day of Girls in ICT. This year and for the sixth time, Cuba celebrated this day throughout the country under the slogan "Digital skills for life", with the purpose, in addition to motivating the development of digital skills, to raise awareness about the responsible and safe use of ICTs.

"On the other hand, specific programs are implemented to bring telecommunications services to rural areas, offering Internet access and mobile services, as well as the presence of specialized community centers distributed in all municipalities of the country, which allow the realization of digital literacy processes and educational activities with the use of technologies.

"All of the above favors social cohesion around rural communities and their economic development. Dear delegates: These issues were addressed with concern by many heads of state and government at the G77 and China Summit, held in Havana, Cuba, last September, which had as its central theme: "Current Development Challenges: The Role of Science, Technology and Innovation".

"The Final Declaration of this Summit recognized the opportunity offered by science, technology and innovation for the full enjoyment of all human rights by all people, including the right to development. It also called for advancing digital inclusion, as well as achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, while reaffirming the vision of building an inclusive, people-centered and development-oriented information society, and called on the international community and relevant bodies of the United Nations system to take urgent action to reduce digital divides and inequalities in data generation, infrastructure and accessibility."

Wilfredo Gonzalez Vidal in his remarks said:

"In fostering digital inclusion, it is inspiring to see how technologies become a bridge that brings people of diverse abilities together.

"In a rapidly evolving digital world, embracing digital inclusion is not just about access, but also about equity and social justice.

"I must say that accessibility is not just about technology, but also about fostering an inclusive culture, so we must promote respect and empathy for all people, regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or

ability.

The First Deputy Minister of Communications of Cuba concluded by thanking the International Telecommunication Union for the confidence placed in Cuba for the second time, by granting us the honor of organizing this important event. In addition, he wished everyone a pleasant stay in Cuba and Varadero, and appreciation for their participation in Accessible America 2023, with the assurance that the results of the event will be an important contribution on how we can build an inclusive, secure and equitable digital environment.

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