**Speech by Jorge Luis Perdomo Di-Lella, Minister of Communications of Cuba, at the Opening Ceremony of the 36th Annual General Meeting of the Caribbean Association of National Telecommunication Organizations (CANTO)**

Distinguished ministers, CANTO executives, members of this prestigious organization and guests who accompany us:

It is a pleasure and an honor, on behalf of the government of the Republic of Cuba, to welcome you to the tourist city of Varadero, whose beaches are a sample of the natural beauties that the Caribbean nations share.

On behalf of Cuba, I thank CANTO for having selected our country to hold its thirty-sixth Annual General Assembly in the year in which the Association celebrates the 35th anniversary of its foundation.

Much has happened in our countries and in our sector since in 1985 eight telecommunications operators decided to establish a partnership with the idea that together they could face the challenges of the development of telecommunications in the Caribbean with greater success.

Today the technological and regulatory challenges of the sector may be different, but the idea that only united can we face them successfully remains fully valid.

A reflection of the enormous role that information and communications technologies have in contemporary society can be found in the tight agenda of this meeting.

In just three days, important issues of global scope will be discussed, such as Digital Transformation and the role and development of telecommunications companies in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, among others.

But we will also discuss topics that are of particular importance to our region.

First, risk management and natural disaster recovery initiatives will be addressed, a matter of particular relevance for telecommunications infrastructures due to the repeated occurrence of hurricanes and earthquakes in the Caribbean.

Also particularly interesting is the examination that will be made of the link between Entertainment and the Internet, since our rich Caribbean culture can be an inexhaustible source of content and therefore income for our countries.

And finally I want to mention another very important issue that will be discussed, regarding how to encourage connectivity through the capacity of existing submarine cables in the Caribbean, a very relevant issue, since the reality is that the countries of our region have a Better connectivity with North America and Europe than between us.

In all these discussions, you will have the constructive participation of the corresponding Cuban institutions, in particular of the Cuban Telecommunications Company ETECSA, a member of CANTO.

Precisely, the Executive President of ETECSA will give you, in the first session tomorrow, an overview of the progress and prospects of development of the telecommunications in Cuba, which is carried out as part of the process of computerization of Cuban society.

Our country is updating its economic model, with the aim of achieving a more efficient and sustainable production system, where Telecommunications and Information and Communication Technologies are a strategic sector that contributes to meet the growing needs of information and services, raise the well-being of the population, and support the economic and social development of the country.

I wish to ratify the will of the Cuban State to continue strengthening and developing the massive access and use of Telecommunications and Information Technologies, in correspondence with our economic possibilities, always with a humanistic vision, in order to connect to knowledge under the principle of sharing and not excluding, so that it contributes to the conservation of our cultural identity.

Despite the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States government against Cuba, progress has been made in our country in the sector, increasing the investments in technological infrastructure. In 2019 it was surpassed the number of 6 million subscribers of cellular telephony and a similar number of Internet users, where more than half of them access through 3G and 4G mobile phone technology.

Dear friends:

There are many and very complex challenges. To face them successfully requires putting into practice the motto of this meeting: adapt, enable, innovate. And I am sure that we will succeed, united, among all, as we have done in these 35 years of CANTO.

It only remains for me to wish you a happy stay in our country and successes in all the debates that will take place as part of the program.

Once again, welcome to Cuba.

Thank you very much