



Office of
the Prime Minister

Immediate Release

Press Statement: PM Davis calls for CANTO to Partner in The Bahamas' Renewed Commitment in Transforming lives through Digital Technologies

MIAMI, Florida – During his Keynote Remarks at the CANTO Annual Conference and Trade Exhibition, in Miami, Florida, on July 20, 2022, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance the Hon. Philip Davis said that, in pursuing the shared Caribbean vision of a connected and empowered people, and to transform lives through digital technologies, The Bahamas was renewing its commitment to leading the region's efforts on the global stage.

“We have already, supported by the Caribbean Community, announced our campaign to re-election to the Council of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and now I am pleased to announce that The Government of The Bahamas will be putting forward a candidate for election as the Director of the ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT),” Prime Minister Davis said.

He noted that the BDT was the arm of the ITU that focused on bringing assistance to developing and, he said, it was “well past time that the Caribbean and Small Island Developing States takes its place in ITU, and BDT's leadership”.

“Stephen Bereaux, a Bahamian, former CEO of our telecommunications regulator URCA, and currently the Deputy to the Director of the BDT, is undoubtedly the most qualified person to take on the mantle of BDT Director, having been the close partner of the current Director Doreen Bogdan Martin in achieving arguably the most successful term of leadership for the Bureau, ever,” Prime Minister Davis said. “Stephen has supported the Director and team in delivering an impactful, effective and relevant BDT, responsive to member state needs and achieving levels of success that we have missed in this critical organization for some time.”

“I hope the entire Caribbean will join The Bahamas in promoting and ensuring the success of our Caribbean candidate, Mr. Bereaux, to succeed in the election at ITU's Plenipotentiary Conference, which will take place in Bucharest, Romania, this September,” he added.

Prime Minister Davis noted that, in the first full budget which his administration produced in June, it included incentives and tax reliefs for those investing in ICT.

“We want to elevate the conversation above the basics of reliability,” he said.

“We need to hold onto the big picture of what is best in the national interest, and what is best in the regional interest,” he added. “We need to take the long view.”

Prime Minister Davis stated that there was much “un-tapped potential”, especially among young people.

“They are hungry for change, and actively want to do things differently,” he said. “They have much in common with technologists, who are fond of describing the disruptive nature of what they do.”

Prime Minister Davis said that one of the animating values of his administration lied in the concept of “Economic Justice”.

He related that, back in January 2022, it was reported that, during the pandemic, the wealth of the world’s 10 richest men doubled to \$1.5 trillion. Around the same time, he noted, it was reported that the global poverty rate increased from 7.8 percent to 9.1 percent.

He added that it was estimated that approximately 97 million more people were living on less than \$1.90 a day, because of the pandemic.

“As a matter of principle, our view is that an economy will be more successful if it is fairer,” Prime Minister Davis said. “It is a view which has moved beyond economists and academics, into the wider sphere of public policy and business.”

“I raise it in order to encourage you to join us in this approach when planning your individual roles in the Digital Revolution,” he added. “The ruthless, relentless pursuit of profit may bring short-term gain, but greater, more stable, more enduring profitability is likely to come when Corporate Social Responsibilities are factored in.”

Prime Minister Davis said that he wanted to make a request of the Caribbean CEOs and Executives sitting there that day.

“Together, let’s create a different and better future for the Caribbean,” he said. “Slavish attention to the maximization of profits for shareholders will detract from that better future for the Caribbean.”

To illustrate, Prime Minister Davis pointed out that The Bahamas was an archipelago and there was no business case to build fiber optic cables to many of its farther-flung Family Islands.

“But there was a social case, a security case, and nation building case,” he said. “The Bahamas is better today for that investment made yesterday.”

“Broadband penetration in our region is only 50 percent,” Prime Minister Davis said. “Let us commit to expanding the penetration of broadband in our region as a matter of social priority.

“This will assist in true diversification of our economies as many thousands of new good paying jobs could be created with the deployment of affordable reliable broadband.”

Prime Minister Davis noted that other countries have spent billions to make sure broadband reaches all of their people. His vision, he said, was to see small countries in the region keeping pace.

“My challenge to all of you is: work with us -- work with policy-makers -- to make broadband universal, affordable and reliable for all of our region’s people,” he said. “Impress upon the decision-makers in your companies the urgency of reducing the digital divide.

“In addition, work with us to build real protection from cyber threats.”

Prime Minister Davis pointed out that he opened his remarks by describing how many of the technologies they all took for granted today were once thought far-fetched or impossible.

“We should be inspired daily by the imagination, tenacity and vision that created our present, and know that we have that same capacity to create, to innovate and to revolutionise,” he said.

“A Digital Transformation in the Caribbean, where Knowledge, Ingenuity and Investment produce the best little countries in the world?

“Now that would be Revolutionary.”

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