

Remarks of FCC Commissioner Olivia Trusty
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Good morning. Qué lo qué everyone!

It is a pleasure to join you here in Punta Cana for CANTO's 41st Annual Conference and Trade Exhibition. Thank you to CANTO for the invitation and for bringing together so many leaders from across the Caribbean, the Americas, and beyond who are shaping the future of communications.

This is a beautiful place and there could not be a more fitting location to have this conversation. For centuries, the Caribbean has been a crossroads of global commerce. The ships that crossed these waters carried goods, ideas, cultures, and people between continents. They connected economies long before anyone imagined fiber-optic cables, satellites orbiting overhead, or wireless networks spanning the globe.

Today, the technologies have changed, but the mission remains remarkably similar. Communications networks are the new trade routes. Instead of carrying cargo, they carry information. Instead of connecting ports, they connect people, businesses, governments, hospitals, schools, and entrepreneurs.

And just as maritime trade helped shape the economic destiny of this region, digital connectivity is helping shape its future. That future is what I'd like to discuss today and, in particular, the enormous economic opportunity that follows when countries create the conditions for innovation to flourish.

One of the most fascinating things about communications policy is that every generation believes the next technology will fundamentally disrupt the existing marketplace. And to be fair, they're usually right. But what history also teaches us is that disruption is often followed by something more significant: expansion. Let me give you an example many of us remember well.

About fifteen years ago, WhatsApp, the instant messaging application, began growing around the world. For consumers, it was a simple and inexpensive way to stay connected with family and

friends. For communications providers and policymakers, however, it represented something far more complicated. Across many countries, SMS messaging had become an important source of revenue that helped support continued investment in communications networks. Governments also wondered what widespread adoption of internet-based messaging might mean for existing regulatory and revenue models. If consumers migrate away from traditional text messaging, would investment slow? Would operators have fewer resources to build next-generation networks? Would an innovative new application undermine the very infrastructure on which it depended?

Those concerns were understandable. Indeed, throughout history, every transformative communications technology has arrived with a measure of uncertainty attached to it. There were legitimate concerns about how a new technology might reshape established markets.

But here history took a different path. Consumers didn't communicate less. In fact, they communicated dramatically more. The smartphone economy exploded. Demand for mobile broadband skyrocketed. Consumers upgraded devices more frequently. Operators invested billions in faster wireless networks. And, entirely new industries emerged around mobile applications, digital advertising and cloud computing, as well as streaming services, online commerce, and digital payments. Innovation did indeed disrupt existing business models. But it also created entirely new ones. The communications marketplace became larger, more dynamic, and more valuable than anyone could have imagined.

And WhatsApp was hardly the first technology to raise concerns. Before internet calling became commonplace, many believed Voice over IP would fundamentally undermine the traditional telephone business. But what emerged was lower-cost communications, which expanded access to the unconnected, increased demand for broadband, and accelerated investment in IP-based networks.

When streaming video entered the market some questioned whether broadband networks could handle the explosive growth in traffic. Yet consumer demand for streaming became one of the strongest incentives for providers to invest in faster fiber networks, upgraded wireless infrastructure, and more resilient internet architecture.

And the rise of cloud computing raised a different concern. If computing power moved away from local devices and into massive data centers, would businesses lose control over their information? The reality is they did not. And instead, cloud services dramatically reduced the cost of innovation, allowing startups and small businesses to access computing resources that previously only the largest enterprises could afford.

Today, artificial intelligence is generating many of the same debates. We are asking important questions about its impact on work, privacy, security, and competition.

And so again, every major technological shift creates some uncertainty. Every one raises important policy questions. But history consistently reminds us that innovation rarely shrinks the economic pie. More often than not, it expands it.

Today, we find ourselves facing another one of those moments of market disruption. Only this time, the opportunity is even broader. It is not driven by one application or one technology. But, rather several powerful innovations are arriving at the same time.

Satellite broadband is expanding connectivity to places where traditional terrestrial networks remain difficult or uneconomical to deploy. That is particularly meaningful for island nations, remote communities, maritime industries, and disaster recovery. Satellite connectivity is not replacing fiber. It is complementing fiber. It is helping to extend the reach of digital opportunity to everyone, everywhere.

At the same time, much of the world's digital infrastructure is invisible. Beneath the ocean's surface lies a vast network of fiber-optic cables that carry the overwhelming majority of international internet traffic. Every email, financial transaction, video conference, and cloud application depends on these digital sea lanes. For the Caribbean, that makes secure and resilient undersea cable infrastructure both a telecommunications priority and a strategic economic asset.

Companies deciding where to invest increasingly evaluate digital infrastructure alongside transportation, their workforce needs, and energy. Data centers, financial institutions, technology companies and more all depend upon robust international connectivity. The stronger those connections become, the more attractive countries become for investment.

Wireless technology is evolving as well. 5G continues expanding around the world with researchers and engineers already laying the foundation for 6G. These next-generation networks will enable capabilities that extend far beyond faster smartphones.

And another revolution is taking place: the evolution of Wi-Fi. As consumers bring more connected devices into their homes, businesses, hotels, airports, and convention centers, demand for fast, reliable wireless connectivity continues to grow.

Next-generation Wi-Fi, particularly through access to the full 6GHz band, has the potential to deliver the capacity needed for high-definition video, immersive applications, cloud computing, and the growing number of connected devices that define modern life. That opportunity is especially relevant for the Caribbean.

Every year, millions of visitors from the United States and around the world arrive expecting the same seamless wireless experience they enjoy at home. Whether they are working remotely from the Hard Rock Hotel in Punta Cuna, participating in a video conference, streaming entertainment, or sharing their travel experiences online, robust Wi-Fi has become an essential part of the visitor experience.

Together, advances in satellite broadband, undersea cables, licensed wireless networks, and next-generation Wi-Fi are creating a digital foundation for connected ports, precision agriculture and smart manufacturing, as well as advanced healthcare, autonomous transportation, and artificial intelligence integrated directly into communications networks. These technologies will support industries that are only beginning to emerge today.

Looking ahead, perhaps the greatest opportunity over the next decade will not come from the networks themselves but from what innovators build on top of them. Communications networks have become platforms for entirely new businesses and public services.

We're already seeing this across the Caribbean. In [Jamaica](#), entrepreneurs have created digital tourism platforms that help visitors discover local businesses and experiences while allowing more tourism dollars to reach local communities.

In [Trinidad and Tobago](#), fintech companies are expanding digital payments and making it easier for consumers and small businesses to participate in the digital economy.

In [Barbados](#), locally developed applications are improving everything from digital payments to the delivery of government services.

These innovations all have something in common. None of them would be possible without reliable broadband, resilient international connectivity, modern wireless networks, and robust Wi-Fi. Communications infrastructure provides the foundation, but the application layer is where entrepreneurs create new jobs, attract investment, and build companies that can compete not just locally, but globally.

The next great communications success story in the Caribbean may not be the next undersea cable or satellite constellation. It may be the next Caribbean startup whose customers happen to be all over the world.

In 2026, new businesses don't need to relocate to Silicon Valley or New York to build globally competitive companies. They simply need world-class connectivity. Digital infrastructure allows local innovation to reach global markets. That may prove to be one of the most important economic developments of the next decade.

Now every technological advance may bring some difficult policy choices. Regulators are responsible for protecting consumers, encouraging investment, and promoting competition. They are also responsible for safeguarding national security and ensuring that communications networks remain resilient. Those responsibilities do not disappear simply because technology evolves; in many ways they become more important.

But looking again at history, it suggests that regulation works best when it establishes clear rules while preserving room for innovation. Every country represented here will make different choices based on their own markets, geography, and priorities. But there are a few principles that I believe apply universally.

Good regulation should provide certainty. It should encourage investment. It should protect consumers. And it should avoid assuming we already know what tomorrow's breakthrough innovation will look like.

If policymakers had attempted to predict every application the smartphone would enable, we would have failed. No one anticipated ride-sharing apps, digital banking, food delivery platforms, or generative artificial intelligence becoming part of everyday life.

In other words, innovation often arrives in ways we do not expect. And for that reason, it's why regulatory humility matters. Our job is not to predict every successful technology. Our job is to create an environment where innovators have the confidence to build. Because when innovators succeed, consumers benefit, businesses grow, jobs are created and entire economies become stronger.

One lesson I have taken away from my time at the FCC is that the reach of communications policy extends into nearly every part of our economy and our daily lives. The decisions we make about connectivity can shape how a student learns, how a doctor reaches a patient, how a small business finds customers, and how communities respond in an emergency. They can strengthen industries as varied as agriculture, tourism, financial services, and energy, while also advancing public safety and national security.

Nearly every sector of the modern economy now depends upon digital infrastructure. Connectivity has become foundational infrastructure, much like electricity, highways, airports, and ports. And because of that, every investment in communications creates opportunities well beyond the communications sector itself.

That brings me back to where I began. For generations, the Caribbean has connected the world. Today, the means of connection have changed. The ships remain. But now they are joined by fiber-optic cables beneath the sea, satellites overhead, wireless networks across islands, and innovators building applications that can serve customers around the globe.

The countries that embrace these technologies, encourage investment, and create space for innovation will not only build better communications networks. They will build stronger economies. More resilient societies. And greater opportunities for their citizens.

I am optimistic about what lies ahead, not only for the United States, but for the Caribbean and for every country represented here. Because history has shown us something remarkable.

If we continue creating the conditions for innovation to flourish, we will continue to create opportunities for people to connect to ideas, to markets, and to one another. And when that happens communities will thrive, businesses will grow, and new possibilities become a reality, creating a virtuous cycle of opportunity, investment, and prosperity for generations to come.

Here in the Dominican Republic, there is an expression that captures that spirit perfectly: “Pa’lante.” Keep moving forward.

That is exactly what this moment calls for. We should embrace technological disruption, harness it for economic and societal benefit, and keep moving forward—together.

If we do, I believe the Caribbean and this entire hemisphere can become an even greater hub for innovation, opportunity, and growth.

Pa’lante.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to address you today.