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Invitado Especial



CRT2014 CONSOLIDATED ITSELF AS THE GREATEST VENUE FOR PUBLIC-PRIVATE DIALOG ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS

With the second edition that took place in Panama, the Regional Telecommunications Congress showed, due to its calling and level on the subjects addressed, that it is the most relevant place to gather governments, regulators, companies, academia and international institutions around public policies on digital development in Latin America.

More than 350 public and private telecommunications' players in Latin America debated in the same venue on the challenges faced by the region for closing the digital gap. This is the success reached by the Regional Telecommunications Congress, 2014, event that **due to its call and level of the subjects addressed, consolidated itself as the most relevant place to gather governments, regulators, companies, academia and international institutions around the sector's public policies.**

This high level meeting promoted for the second year by the Ibero-American Association of Research Centers and Telecommunication Companies (AHCIE T), the Mobile Operators Association GSMA Latin America, CAF (Latin American Development Bank), with the cooperation of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the Internet Addresses Registry for Latin America and the Caribbean (LACNIC), Internet Society (Isoc) and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), was hosted again by the Government of Panama, represented by the National Authority of Public Services of Panama (ASEP).

Zelmar Rodríguez Crespo, General Administrator of the National Authority of Public Services (ASEP), highlighted that Panama was again the host of the most important regional event on telecommunications and that it contributed with a space that allows exchanging experiences and a direct dialog between all the stakeholders interested in telecommunications in Latin America. He highlighted that the Central American country has the highest penetration of mobile phones in Latin America, equal to 170 devices per 100 inhabitants, for a total of 6.5 million active cell phones in the region.

Amongst the best interventions of the country was the contributions by important authorities of the region such as the Sub Secretary of Communications of Mexico, José Ignacio Peralta; the Vice Minister of Communications of Peru, Raúl Pérez Reyes Espejo; the Vice Minister of Science and Technology of Costa Rica, Allan Ruiz, and the Sub Secretary of Industry, Energy and Mining, Edgardo Ortuño, and from DINATEL, Sergio De Cola, both from Uruguay.

In addition, this new version of the CRT2014 was complemented by a series of workshops and conferences in which the different experts analyzed the challenges of the regulatory contingency, the expansion of the regional infrastructure regional for interconnecting Latin America, Internet governance, among other subjects, where the presentations by Sonia Agnese from OVUM, Sebastián Cabello from GSMA, Fernando Rojas from CEPAL, Judith Mariscal from CIDE, Filipe Baptista from ARCTEL, Pablo Bello from AHCIE T, Mariana Rodriguez from Convergencia Latina, Raúl Katz and Mauricio Agudelo from CAF, Aloysio Bleyer from Telefónica, César Díaz from LACNIC, Manuel Vexler from Huawei, José Ayala from Ericsson, Adrean Rothkopf from Millicom Group, José Juan Haro from Telefónica, Ernesto Majó from LACNIC, Rodrigo de la Parra from ICANN, Sebastián Bellagamba from ISOC, Andrés Maz from CISCO, Osvaldo Novoa from ANTEL.



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Within the conclusions issued by the different panels organized for the Congress, there was a consensus on the fact that the priority was reducing the existing digital gap, promoting the public-private dialog, the juridical certainty that will promote the development and assignment of the radio-electric spectrum, as well as investment, the infrastructure display and the sustainable development of telecommunication companies as key pieces for the digital development.

Sebastián Cabello, Director of GSMA Latin America, reminded everyone that there are more than 696 million mobile connections and 322 million users in the region. In turn, mobile wideband, with 257 million connections will be the one that will allow connecting all Latin Americans to Internet.

"For the social-economic benefits generated by the mobile industry to be sustainable, it is necessary to go to a consensual sphere in the creation of public policies. With regards to the operators, the focus is on giving more tools to users and maximizing investments in new networks and services. With regards to the public sector, a regulation based on incentives that understands the future challenges of the sector is necessary", explained Cabello.

In turn, the Secretary General of the Ibero-American Association of Research Centers and Telecommunication Companies (AHCIET), Pablo Bello, put an emphasis on going deeper into the public policies and establishing a work agenda to promote the public-private dialog to attend the priority in the region, which are the inhabitants who are not connected into the wideband.

"Despite the important advancements of the last few years, half of Latin Americans do not use Internet. Two of every three homes are not connected yet and the main challenge in the region is connecting them, a task we should sort out in conjunction with governments, regulators and companies. To manage closing the digital gap, it is necessary to increase investments, as we need an investment of US\$ 400 billion in the next six years to reach the connectivity levels of the developed countries"

The Secretary General of AHCIET, recognized the advancements in connectivity Latin America has made in the last few years, but there is still work to be done for the digital development to reach the entire continent: "We have lived an unprecedented technological revolution with penetration rates of wireless networks exceeding 100%, where 1 of every 3 homes of the region is connected to wideband and prices of telecommunication services have significantly dropped 25% in real terms since 2010. Connection speeds are increasing and have more than doubled in the last four years up to an average of 3 Mbps. A good work has been made, but we should redouble efforts to close the digital gap".

Along these lines, the representatives and panel members that attended the Congress showed their concern for the speed of the industry in the last few years, mainly due to the politicization of the regulatory processes or the regulatory uncertainty in assigning the radio-electric spectrum.

In accordance with the study carried out by AHCIET and Convergencia Research to promote investments in the region, it is necessary to strengthen three axles: regulatory and juridical certainty, public-private dialog and cooperation and a moderate and simplified tax system.

Antonio Juan Sosa, Corporate Infrastructure Vice President of CAF, Latin American Development Bank, pointed out the need of investing in wideband infrastructure and installing more Internet interconnection points (IXP) to reduce the cost of transporting data. "Interconnection points of the region are not yet



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enough for the amount of Internet data projected for the next years. It is necessary to work on expanding a more robust network that allows supporting the exponential growth in Internet traffic and that will be translated, for example, into a cost reduction for end-users".

Challenges and conclusions drafted during the Congress imposed a harsh agenda that should be promoted through a joint work gathering the efforts of all the sectors engaged in making the Latin American digital ecosystem grow.

Organizers thanked participants for the efforts made in making of this summit a high level one. Based on a vigorous agenda, an open dialog in which the multiple *stakeholders* debated and came to common grounds with the purpose of bringing Latin America to a full insertion into the Information and Knowledge Society.

In turn, our special appreciation to the hosts represented by the National Authority of Public Services of Panama (ASEP) and all the co-organizers, such as the CAF (Latin American Development Bank), the Ibero-American Association of Research Centers and Telecommunications Companies (AHCIET) and the Association of Mobile Operators GSMA Latin America, with the cooperation by the International Telecommunications Union (UIT), the Internet Addresses Registry for Latin America and the Caribbean (LACNIC), the Internet Society (Isoc) and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN).