

**INTRODUCTORY SPEECH
AT THE ANNUAL BOARD MEETING
OF
THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COUNCILS AND SIMILAR INSTITUTIONS**

**DIGITAL GOVERNMENT TRANSFORMATION TOWARDS A
SMART NATION**

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Ladies and Gentlemen, Good morning!

1. It is a great pleasure and a privilege to welcome you to Curaçao for your Board meeting. I am sure this meeting will give you enough food for thought to consider the many social and economic aspects that are related to the digital revolution.
2. The digital economy and society are already here. It is only a matter of time, because the economy and society of the developed and many developing countries is already greatly digitized, and those countries that are not will have a hard time participating in the world economy in the future.
3. As the digital revolution fueled by rapid technologic innovation is spreading all around us, the traditional business model of the government as a key player in our societies is also being affected. Hence, technological innovation and the development of the Internet of Things will not only disrupt traditional business models and markets but may also have a positive or negative effect on a country's future economic and social position.
4. Consequently, in order to create a viable society for the future, we must continue to develop our technological infrastructure to remain relevant in the world of tomorrow. As a small island developing nation, with little natural resources, we had limited possibilities in the past to develop a stable economy. However, in the coming era, our lack of natural resources will not be a reason to explain our under-development, because data has become the new oil.

5. The development of a Smart Nation assumes an increasing effectiveness, speed and quality of the services offered to citizens with less use of public resources. This is a win-win situation for both government, businesses and citizens, because it comes with a reduction in the operational costs of the Government, while on the other hand the effectiveness, speed and quality of public services is dramatically increased.

6. The implementation of a Smart Nation concept assumes effective deployment of a technological infrastructure, including the Internet of Things (IoT), which will provide economically efficient access to public services such as transportation, parking, education, utilities and public lighting, surveillance and maintenance of public areas, health services, as well as other public services. This may trigger all sorts of benefits for the government and the public at large, among which:
 - more efficient traffic flows and parking management;
 - improved management and protection of public buildings and areas;
 - improved energy efficiency, e.g. reduced costs of public lighting;
 - better management of public utilities and waste removal;
 - better access to education at lower cost;
 - improved public safety related emergency services;
 - more effective policing and protection of citizens and
 - more effective health services.

7. As I said before, all these benefits will be realized more efficiently with less government expenditures, by increasingly applying advanced technologies, such as artificial intelligence, cyber-physical systems and robotics.
8. In addition, the collection of large amounts of data can be used to increase the efficiency and transparency of government operations, the protection of the privacy as well as the security of citizens, and for other policy making to the benefit of these citizens.
9. In many ways, a Smart Nation is an ambitious policy objective because it fundamentally alters the society in which we live today. But, if we want our society to remain socially vibrant and economically competitive, we must enter the era of tech-enabled government solutions and services. Despite its many challenges for our societies, I think in the years to come we will all learn to embrace the Smart Nation concept more and more, because of its benefits for our citizens.
10. I hope your meeting and workshop will offer a very useful platform for you to continue to acquire the necessary information and knowledge about the concepts, ideas, risks and threats that may be relevant for your consideration as valuable councils of government in social matters.

I wish you all an interesting and fruitful stay in Curaçao,

Thank you!