

ICANN 43 – San Jose, Costa Rica, March 12, 2012

Speech delivered by the President of the Republic of Costa Rica, Mrs. Laura Chinchilla Miranda.

Good morning, Minister of Science and Technology, Alejandro Cruz; Gabriel Macaya, President of the National Academy of Sciences; Dr. Stephen Crocker, Chairman of the ICANN board; Mr. Rod Beckstrom, ICANN President and CEO; Mr. Raul Echeberria, LACNIC CEO; Mr. Hartmut Glaser, LACNIC's director; and Guy de la Terramond, the founding father of the Internet in our country, thank you for your initiative and your persistence.

Dear friends, to those of you here today and to those of you connected in cyberspace, please feel warmly welcomed to ICANN's 43rd public meeting that takes place in this exceptional country that is Costa Rica.

This land of peace, freedom, and exuberant nature in Central America feels grateful for being chosen for this important event.

We have been longing for this for quite a long time because there is a symbolism between what ICANN represents and promotes and the values enshrined by my people.

You are one of the communities that best understands the significance of knowledge to human progress, and it is thanks to this knowledge that is always evolving that we have witnessed one of the most important revolutions in humanity. That is, the digital revolution.

In my country, we, early on, understood the value of knowledge, and since then we have been cultivating that. We decreed that education should be public and free of charge, and that has been so since 1869. We were pioneers in Latin America. We did so even before England or the United States of America.

It is thanks to this investment in human capital that today we are the largest technology exporter in the region, and we are far ahead in terms of innovation.

You are the most revolutionary global community because you uphold the values of freedom and democratic access to cyberspace. One of your models is the construction of a bottom-up Internet. My country was also -- or is also the result of a bottom-up process. We were born as a small farming community that successfully contributed to a political, social, and economic democracy.

In 1948, we decided to consolidate the best of our civil values and we became the first nation worldwide that has no armed forces.

Unlike other nations in our environment, we decided to resolve our disputes through the ballot and not with weapons. We decided to invest in books, schools, teachers, but not in weapons, barracks, and soldiers.

This track record means that we are now the most stable and long-standing democracy in Latin America.

You are also, by promoting virtual international meetings, contributing to mitigating the carbon footprint that we human beings leave anytime we move or travel among our nations.

Costa Rica, as the host country of this ICANN meeting, feels this recognition to its profound love of nature.

In 0.3% of the world's territory, we host nearly 5% of the world's biodiversity.

For more than 40 years now -- or more than 40 years ago we decided to preserve this natural richness by devoting about 30% of our territory to special environmental protection programs.

As a result, today we rank fifth in the environmental protection ranks of nations, and we want to become carbon-neutral.

But you are also the most demanding technological community on a global scale. We knew that the designation of Costa Rica as the host country for this meeting was the result of a thorough examination of our digital and technological capabilities, and your trust resulted in our commitment to guaranteeing the best access and traffic of information from this venue where we are today.

As we speak, we have two connections. We have interoceanic connections that lead connections and information through the Caribbean sea and the Pacific Ocean.

Costa Rica is the nation with the highest level of connectivity in the region. We have five accesses to international networks: Maya, Arcos, Global Crossing, the Pan-American Connection, and satellite access.

We promote cloud-based solutions, and we are completing the construction of the second Tier 4 certified datacenter.

In fact, we aspire to become the network access point of the digital economy in Central America and the Caribbean. However, we Costa Ricans are not satisfied with a good worldwide connection. We want to feel connected among ourselves as best we can.

Therefore, a year ago, I posted a challenge to my nation. Together with the social covenant for peace and the social covenant for nature, we should also subscribe a social digital covenant.

This is an agreement that will enable Costa Rican men and women alike to make a quantum leap in our development, turning into an economy based on innovation.

An agreement that, in a few years' time, will enable us to develop a broadband structure -- really broadband structure -- so as to overcome the 50% penetration barrier in our region and become one of the countries with the highest level of connectivity in Latin America.

This agreement, thanks to the collaborative approach that we are promoting, will enable the bridging of the digital gaps by guaranteeing free-of-charge broadband access to the less privileged sectors of our population and to 100% of our education institutions.

It is fair enough to admit that we are not starting from scratch thanks to the strong investment of our country, more than two decades ago. Costa Rica is now enjoying advancements in digital technologies.

The initiatives so far in our country have been recognized by the World Economic Forum by highlighting that Costa Rica is among the ten nations worldwide with the best prepared population in order to use digital technology.

My administration is also using the Internet to transform the way in which the government interacts with companies and citizens alike by simplifying the provision of services and massifying the use of the digital signature.

Costa Rica is fully integrated into the international movement that works towards the achievement of e-government, seeking an improvement in the quality of life, and seeking a more competitive state that will improve the productivity of our companies and attract for interesting investment.

Dear friends, ICANN's 43rd meeting takes place in a special moment in Internet's history. We are reaching a turning point, not only in terms of numbers and addresses but also in terms of Internet governance. From a technological standpoint, we are in the process of starting the transition to the IPv6 protocol. This will resolve the early depletion of I.P. addresses.

Also, IPv6 has inbuilt mobility and security features that are the main transformation that the digital world is undergoing.

Finally, it will enable the migration of analog and digital I.P. technologies such as TV on the Internet and this project will be completed in 2017.

We also see the possibility of enlarging the domain name system allowing for a better individual identification. You have the full support of our country to develop and implement these changes that will impact positively on the development of the digital world.

The core topics that bring us together are political, ethical, and regulatory. We are in the transition towards the 2.0 Web that entails new Internet applications that will enable the sharing of information, will enable interoperability, and user-based design and collaboration.

This evolution will change radically the way in which we communicate, reduce and train and educate our people. The potential for transformation is so huge that as a counterpart, it resulted in a series of attempts to regulate the network among which we have the Stop Online Piracy Act seeking protection of intellectual property by restrictions on the addressing or directions and the Protect Intellectual Property Act seeking to extend some national jurisdictional toward the entire cyberspace.

We are concerned by both of them, and we would like online protection and enforcement of digital trade act alternatives that do not seek restrictions and controls on cyberspace but rather focus on tracking and limiting payments to illegitimate Web sites without limiting the social transformation potential offered by Internet 2.0.

In the field of security, our priority should be to protect children. I'm honored to be the sponsor and the godmother of the program sponsored by the ITU known as Child Online Protection. Thanks to this program, cyberspace risks are identified and children worldwide are protected, awareness is raised, and experiences are shared. Also, effective protection tools are designed.

The legitimate concerns on the field of privacy, security, and protection of intellectual property should not become an excuse to justify trends seeking to exercise highly restrictive controls on cyberspace. We advocate a model that will guarantee privacy and security within universal access schemes or models. We advocate governance that will reinforce the most salient characteristic of the Internet, and that is that the Internet exponentials of growth should address the diverse and multiple nature of people surfing cyberspace; that is, effective surveillance that will not curtail Internet's potential, which is democratic access.

Internet belongs to us all, and we should all participate in the discussion on the rules that should govern the Internet. The design of Internet governance should be based on a multistakeholder approach with -- regardless of our political, corporate, financial power. We can participate in a process of reciprocal trust that will reinforce coordination and organization mechanisms in a democratic way. Internet is the great opportunity that we have in history, so as to not repeat our past errors that led to the creation of international governance institutions that are vertical, closed and bureaucratic.

Internet should not be conceived as a threat but rather as a hope. Internet is the hope of an integrated world without frontiers, a common world without controlling owners, a world of opportunities and equality. This is a utopia that we have been dreaming about that is a world in which each and every one of us are protagonists of a destiny that we have in our hands. Thank you very much.