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Six Regional Utility Regulators Sign Historic MOU

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 4, 2023

The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) in Kingston, Jamaica, the Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority (ECTEL) in Castries, Saint Lucia and representatives of four (4) National Telecommunications Regulatory Commissions (NTRCs) in the ECTEL Member States, signed a historic Information Sharing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at a virtual signing ceremony on Tuesday, October 3, 2023.

The NTRCs represented were from the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The signing of the MOU signals the start of the partnership between the entities through the OUR's Information Centre (OURIC), a special library which contains industry-specific and regulatory information and resources on matters pertinent to the mandate of the OUR and relevant to ECTEL and the NTRCs in the execution of their responsibilities. The MOU sets out the framework for sharing information and resources between the signatories. It also provides guidance on the sharing, use and handling of information and resources and establishes the procedures and requirements of the information and resource-sharing partnership.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, OUR's Director-General, Ansord Hewitt, noted that this project was initiated by the OUR three years ago, firstly, with the augmentation of OURIC resources to facilitate the partnership and then discussions began in earnest with regional regulators two years ago. He said, "Today, we have representatives from six (6) countries on this virtual platform ready to sign: Saint Lucia, Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, and, of course, Jamaica. It is testimony to our shared philosophy that we in the region are better together. It also accords with my own thinking that while our regional leaders continue to work at the macro and state levels to foster regional integration, we can at the institutional level, take practical steps such as we are doing today, to deepen cooperation and by so doing make our own incremental contribution."

In welcoming the move, Cheryl Hector Fontenelle, acting Managing Director of ECTEL, the regulatory advisory body to the NTRCs, said, "We look at this MOU as a framework for sharing of information and resources and view it as an opportunity for us to strengthen the ongoing collaboration among ECTEL, OUR and the NTRCs. The idea of collaboration is embodied in our Electronic Communications Bill (EC Bill) legislation here in the Eastern Caribbean, which has enshrined the fact that ECTEL and the NTRCs should share information with similar organisations where necessary. It is against the background that we can do more together than on our own. The MOU signing, therefore, signifies this commitment."

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Speaking on behalf of the NTRCs, CEO of NTRC, St. Kitts and Nevis, Ervin Williams, lauded the initiative, noting that the OUR is an excellent resource for expert guidance and regulatory support for other Caribbean regulators. He pointed out that ECTEL and the NTRCs will be able partners in this agreement, especially given the diverse perspectives on the treatment of regulatory matters across the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States.

Under the MOU, the entities will share resources through electronic document/content delivery and, where applicable, the OUR will provide access to its Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) to make requests and reservations for resources and deliver content electronically to the requesting Party. The signatories agree to include the other Parties in any outgoing electronic mail to the public on regulatory matters, among other things.

About OUR and OURIC

The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) was established by an Act of Parliament in 1995 to regulate the operations of utility providers in the electricity, water and sewerage, transportation, and telecommunication sectors in Jamaica. It officially opened its doors on January 6, 1997. The OUR is ISO 9001:2015 certified and has been recognised internationally for its pioneering role in the regional development of independent utility regulation. OURIC is a one-of-a-kind library providing regulatory and other such relevant information utilising online catalogues, research databases, ebooks, etc. It is open to members of the public.

About ECTEL

The Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority (ECTEL) was established on May 4, 2000, by a Treaty signed in St. George's, Grenada, by the Governments of five Eastern Caribbean States – the Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and amended by Protocol Amendment dated 5th December 2019.

ECTEL is the regional regulatory body advising the National Telecommunications Regulatory Commissions (NTRCs) on matters relating to electronic communications regulation, universal service, licensing and spectrum management.

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