4th Regional Central Bank Communications Conference

Remarks by

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Governor, Eastern Caribbean Central Bank

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4th Regional Central Bank Communications Conference
Wednesday, 9 September 2026 | Sir Cecil Jacobs Auditorium, ECCB

Theme:
"***Engage, Listen, Adapt – Reshaping Central Bank Communication for Public Trust***"

Salutations:
ECCB management colleagues
Heads of Communications from regional central banks
Other delegates
Mr. Marek Petruš, Conference Consultant and Moderator
Keynote Speakers
Panellists
Facilitators
Colleagues

Good morning.

Introduction

On behalf of our management and staff, I am delighted to welcome each of you to the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) and the ECCB Campus for the 4th Regional Central Bank Communications Conference.

We are pleased to have representatives of all the eleven regional central banks including the Bank of Guyana and the Centrale Bank van Suriname joining virtually.

We also welcome and are grateful for our international and academic contributors from the European Central Bank, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, De Nederlandsche Bank, the International Monetary Fund and The University of the West Indies' Caribbean School of Media and Communication (CARIMAC). Thank you for committing to sharing your experience and expertise with us, this week.

I commend our organising committee led by Ms. Shermalon Kirby, ECCB Director of Corporate Relations, the Corporate Governance Unit led by Mrs. Teresa Smith and especially Ms. Acklyn Blaize and other Departments which have helped put together this engaging programme.

Before I continue, I also wish to recognise the founding mother of this Conference, Ms. Nancy Guttenberg van der Wal, Head of Corporate Communications at the Central Bank of Curaçao and Sint Maarten. I also acknowledge the leadership of Richard Doornbosch, former President of the Central Bank of Curaçao and Sint Maarten. It was Richard who brought the idea for this Conference to the Committee of CARICOM Central Bank Governors. **And we bought in.**

Colleagues, what is the number one asset of any central bank?

Trust.

Our previous communications conferences emphasised trust, collaboration, and innovation as essential to the future of central bank communications.

This year's theme, **"Engage, Listen, Adapt – Reshaping Central Bank Communication for Public Trust,"** builds on that foundation by placing engagement, listening, and adaptation at the heart of how we earn and sustain public trust.

Considering the theme, I wish to offer three key messages.

1. **ENGAGE TO BUILD AND SUSTAIN TRUST**

Public trust is not built by policy alone. It is built and sustained by clear, transparent, timely, and two-way communication—and by credible action.

Central bank communication can no longer be viewed principally as the transmission of information to markets, economists and the media.

We must also reach the wider public.

We must hear the public. And we must respond to the public.

As Andy Haldane, former Chief Economist of the Bank of England, observed, central banks face two interconnected deficits: a **deficit in public understanding** and a **deficit in public trust**. Limited understanding can weaken trust, while limited trust makes understanding harder to build.

Communication is complete only when people understand what central banks do, why it matters to their lives, and trust that we are acting in the public interest.

The "3 E's"—Explanation, Engagement and Education—offer a practical framework for organising our work in communications.

The Central Bank of Barbados offers a good regional example through **CBB 101**, which explains in accessible language what the Bank does, why the BDS$2-to-US$1 exchange-rate peg matters, and how international reserves support that stability.

That is more than financial education. **It is policy support.**

I also wish to mention Bank of Jamaica's awarding winning programme "Centrally Speaking" and ECCB's award winning programme, ECCB Connects.

Colleagues, given the centrality of trust to the effectiveness of central banks, the criticality of communications cannot be overstated. Your work is much more than good public relations.

Your role is profound because it goes to the heart of our mission—and to the preservation of the credibility and confidence required to discharge our important mandates.

2. LISTEN TO BUILD PARTNERSHIPS

What is listening?

My wife of nearly 30 years has long educated me on this essential life skill. Simply put, **listening is wanting to hear**.

But genuine listening rests on several important assumptions and attributes.

First, **listening assumes that others have value**—colleagues, critics and members of the public—and that we can benefit from their views and insights.

Second, listening demands **humility**: the recognition that we do not have all the answers and that our work can be enriched by the input of others.

Third, listening requires **caring**.

It is said "*that people do not care how much you know until they know how much you care*".

Active listening communicates care.

Here at the ECCB, one of our affirmations is:

"We are competent and caring."

Fourth, listening requires a **growth mindset**—one that embraces the idea that **feedback is a gift**.

If you find this idea intriguing, I highly recommend the book *Thanks for the Feedback* by Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen, which our Senior Leadership Team read last year.

Finally, listening speaks to our **responsibility as public servants**.

The public is not merely an audience.

The public is a partner in building understanding, trust, and collective action.

After all, we work in the public interest. Therefore, we have a responsibility to **understand the people we serve—not simply to communicate to them.**

And may I say, this is not a job for politicians alone.

It is also our responsibility as central bankers.

If we are to build and sustain public trust, we must listen to the public, understand their concerns, and create meaningful opportunities for dialogue and engagement.

At the ECCB, we put this principle into practice through public consultations, stakeholder engagements, roadshows, and outreach programmes.

Public input has helped inform our new Strategic Plan, **The Big Push: Collective Action for Shared Prosperity in the ECCU**; the redesign of the EC currency; and the establishment of the Office of Financial Conduct (OFC).

Colleagues, we should never wait for a crisis to begin listening.

As Patrick Honohan, former Governor of the Central Bank of Ireland, observed in his 2024 book, *The Central Bank as Crisis Manager*, if the public sees central bank leadership for the first time when a crisis hits, they may conclude that the suddenly visible leadership is responsible for the crisis.

So: **Visibility cannot begin with a crisis. Trust must precede crisis.**

The pandemic reminded us of this.

During that period, the ECCB worked closely with licensed financial institutions (LFIs) on measures such as loan moratoria and public communication, while our **ECCB Digital Dialogues** provided an important channel for engagement and reassurance of the wider public.

These actions drew on trust—and, importantly, reinforced it.

Colleagues, the lesson is clear:

The best time to build the reservoir of trust is before the crisis.

Build it through openness.

Build it through credible action.

Build it through clear explanation.

And build it through genuine listening.

The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) makes this challenge—and opportunity—even more important.

AI can help us personalise communication, simplify complex economic information, reach wider audiences, and respond more quickly.

But it can also amplify misinformation and create convincing false content, including deepfakes.

We therefore must use AI responsibly—with appropriate safeguards, human judgement, and accountability.

Technology must strengthen—not undermine—the credibility and trustworthiness of our communication.

So, as we embrace technology, let us never lose sight of the human being on the other side of the message.

3. COLLABORATE AND ADAPT TO INCREASE IMPACT

No central bank, large or small, has all the answers. And none of us operates in isolation.

For small states and small central banks such as ours, collaboration is not a luxury. It is a force multiplier.

The challenges we face—from economic uncertainty and financial innovation to misinformation and artificial intelligence—are increasingly cross-border and require collective responses.

Collaboration allows us to share experience, learn from what has worked—and what has not worked—and adapt proven approaches to our own circumstances.

That is why this Conference matters. It is more than a communications conference. **It is an opportunity to strengthen a regional community of practice**—a community where we share knowledge, challenge assumptions, test novel approaches, and help each other become better communicators.

At the ECCB, our Strategic Communications Framework is built around four principles. **Communication** should be **transparent, trustworthy, timely, and two-way.**

In that regard, we must continually ask whether our communication is working.

Did people engage?

Did understanding increase?

Did behaviour change?

Did communication contribute to meaningful action?

These questions—and what we learn from the answers—are particularly important as we implement the ECCB's 2026–2031 Strategic Plan: **The Big Push: Collective Action for Shared Prosperity in the ECCU.**

Our ambition to double the size of the ECCU economy is not only an economic and development undertaking.

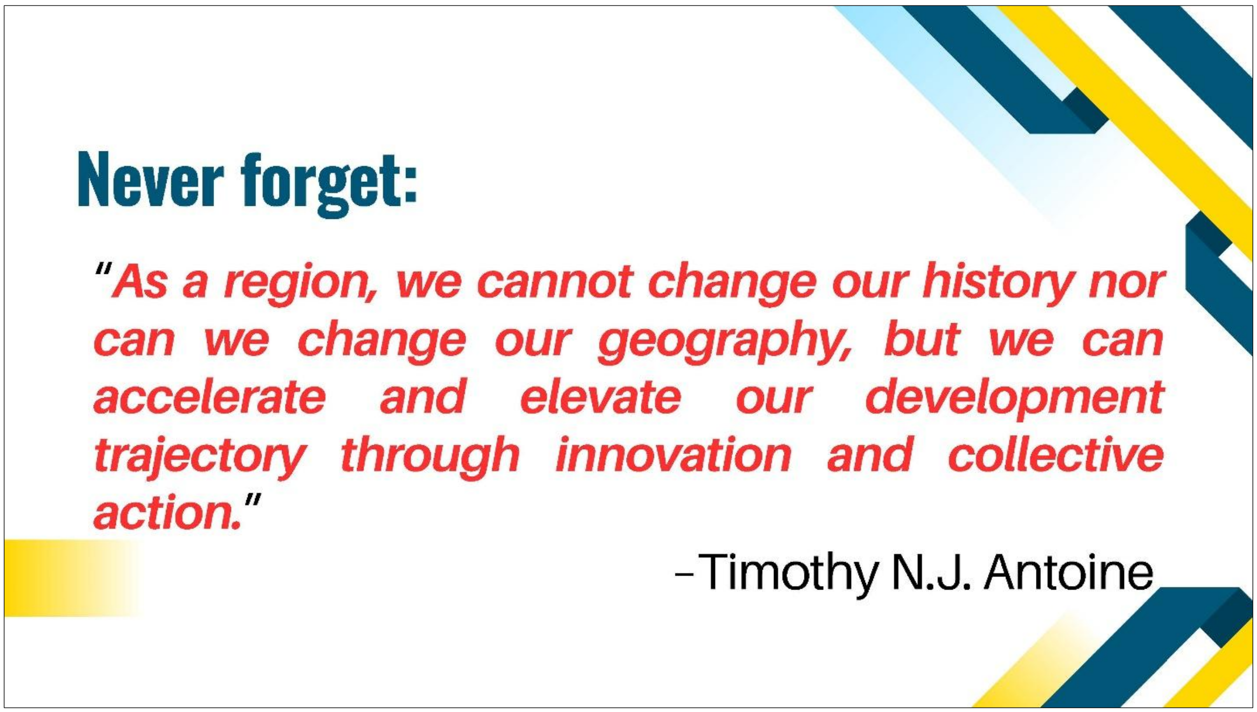
It is also a major communication and engagement undertaking.

Policy and investment alone cannot deliver the required transformation.

People must understand what **The Big Push** seeks to achieve, why it matters to their lives and livelihoods, and the part they can play.

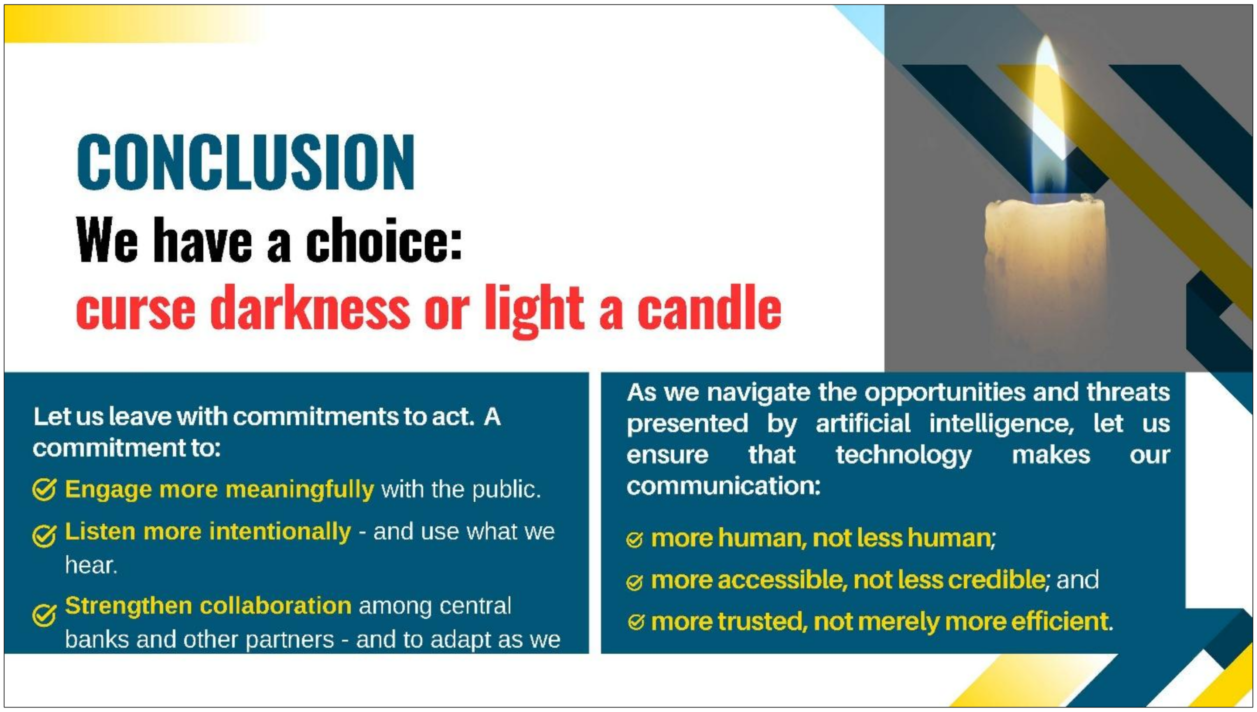
Communication is therefore not peripheral to development. It is an essential **means of mobilising participation, partnership, and collective action.**

Never forget:



"***As a region, we cannot change our history nor can we change our geography, but we can and should accelerate and elevate our development trajectory through innovation and collective action***" – Timothy N.J. Antoine

CONCLUSION



Colleagues, every day, we have a choice: **curse darkness or light a candle.**

So, my call to action is straightforward: let us leave this Conference with more than ideas and pleasant memories.

Let us leave with commitments to act.

A commitment to engage more meaningfully with the public.

A commitment to listen more intentionally—and use what we hear.

A commitment to strengthen collaboration among central banks and other partners —and to adapt as we learn.

And as we navigate the opportunities and threats presented by artificial intelligence, let us ensure that technology makes our communication:

more human, not less human;

more accessible, not less credible;

and more trusted, not merely more efficient.

Ultimately:

Public trust is earned through the combination of credible action and credible communication.

So, over the next three days:

Let us engage with purpose.

Let us listen with humility.

Let us adapt with courage.

And let us collaborate for action and impact.

If we do that, we will not simply communicate better.

We will build stronger institutions.

We will strengthen public trust.

And we will better serve the people of our beloved region.

I wish you three productive days of thoughtful conversation, professional renewal, and stronger regional collaboration.

Once again, it is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to the 4th Regional Central Bank Communications Conference.

And now, colleagues—let's engage, listen and adapt — and, yes, have some fun!

I thank you.

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