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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

CBU HOLDS 51ST ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY VIRTUALLY – CALLS FOR BROADCAST LICENSE FEE SUSPENSION

Bridgetown, Barbados. August 20, 2020. Broadcasters and other media practitioners from across the Caribbean this week reported significant challenges to their continued viable operations, brought on by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) which has been impacting them negatively for almost six months.

The media organisations that are members of the Caribbean Broadcasting Union, (CBU) told the 51st Annual General Assembly (AGA) of the Union that most of them have seen their revenues depressed as advertising slumped, even as their expenses increased, as they provided more welfare support for their workers and introduced basic health screening and sanitisation measures to combat spread of the virus.

One regulator who is an associate member of the Union reported that a sign of the times was that broadcasters have not been able to pay their spectrum and licence fees so far this year. This led the meeting in a resolution to urge regulators and policymakers to waive their charges especially in the pandemic period.

The media practitioners called for their important work being done to inform and educate the public about the effects of the virus, to be recognized and relieved by waiving license and regulatory fees for the period of the pandemic. (See attached Resolution)

The CBU members at the meeting represented Anguilla, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, San Andres – Colombia, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

They noted that their member from the Bahamas was unable to attend as it became the first broadcaster in the region to be shuttered for sanitisation after a staff member tested positive a week ago.

The members also discussed the need for additional media training opportunities using technology options which precluded travelling at this time of a pandemic.

The General Assembly noted the developments globally where some countries are now moving to secure equitable compensation from large global technology giants (like Google) that use news and information from broadcasters and publishers to generate super-profits. The AGA noted that the companies, also called hyperscalers, operate in the region, utilizing the content of broadcasters and newspapers, pay little or nothing for its usage of the content and attract billions in advertising, even as they avoid paying royalties, rights fees or local taxes in the region. The General Assembly passed a resolution calling on regional governments and policymakers to take legislative action to change this situation and support local media.

The meeting also approved Trinidad and Tobago as the venue for their 2021 General Assembly.

In elections at the meeting David Ellis of Starcom Network in Barbados, Emiliana Bernard-Stephenson from Teleislas in San Andres, Colombia, Richard Purcell of One Caribbean Media in Trinidad and Tobago, Keith Campbell from The Public Broadcasting Corporation of Jamaica and Chris Jarrett from Radio Turks and Caicos in the Turks and Caicos Islands were elected to the Board of Directors. They joined Gary Allen (President) of the RJRGLEANER Communications Group in Jamaica, Amalia Mai (Vice President) of Great Belize Productions, Channel 5 in Belize, Kayleaser Deveaux-Isaacs of the Broadcasting Corporation of the Bahamas in Bahamas and Sushilla Jadoonanan of DirecTV in Trinidad and Tobago.

-end-

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RESOLUTION # 1 COVID 19 Release for Media

WHEREAS media organisations in general and those in the Caribbean Broadcasting Union (CBU) in particular have, due to the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) been negatively affected by a significant reduction in business, which has affected their viability;

AND WHEREAS, in spite of this impact indigenous media in the region have played a tremendous public service role during this pandemic;

AND WHEREAS governments and regulators, like media cannot predict when things will be returned to normal;

BE IT RESOLVED that members of the CBU in their 51st Annual General Assembly (AGA) appeal to media policymakers and regulators across the region to suspend the charging and collection of licence and regulatory fees for the next twelve months, in recognition of the significant additional public service being provided at no charge to the government and public health agencies.

August 20, 2020



RESOLUTION # 2 - LAWS NEEDED FOR HYPERSCALERS

WHEREAS members of the Caribbean Broadcasting Union (CBU) meeting in their 51st Annual General Assembly on Wednesday noted the continued changes in the global media environment;

AND WHEREAS members of the Union in their State of the Media report highlighted over and over again examples of decline in their advertising business;

AND WHEREAS there has been the exponential growth of high tech global entities making it their core business to access and use traditional media's content and information through the internet, without fair and sometimes no compensation at all;

AND WHEREAS these so called "hyper-scalers" are accessing and utilizing the material without permission from broadcasters and publishers, including and specifically our content in the Caribbean;

AND WHEREAS these "hyper-scalers" are not based in the region and do not pay consumption or corporate or any other taxes in our countries;

BE IT RESOLVED that the members of the CBU in our 51st AGA call on governments and policymakers in the region to take immediate legislative action to mandate such entities to provide equitable compensation to content producers, including media content producers;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the CBU calls on legislators to take steps to follow other governments elsewhere and especially the approach of Australian authorities that have created measures to secure payments from these "hyperscalers" and make a fair contribution, like other locally based businesses to the tax coffers of our countries.

August 20, 2020