
Cuba: Building a cybersociety

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How to use technology to create a better society? How to educate toward its best use? How to make citizens the center of a computerized society?

These and other topics will be discussed during Cibernsiedad 2017, an event organized by the Union of Computer Scientists of Cuba (UIC), set to take place October 16-20 in Varadero's Hotel Meliá Marina.

The UIC emerged just over a year ago, to bring together Cuban information technologies and communications professionals. Its academic, scientific and cultural objectives include fostering the active and effective participation of these professionals in the country's development.

To learn more about the intentions of the event, Granma International spoke with DScTech Ailyn Febles Estrada, president of the UIC.

As she noted, the idea to host an international event emerged as the organization was looking toward 2030 and considering how much the lives of Cubans could change through the use of technology. "A work system was organized. We decided to create events all over the country that will contribute, every two years, to this space for international socialization. And in this way be able to bring technological trends to the areas where they can impact society," Febles explained.

Building the concept of a cybersociety is part of the UIC's efforts to technologically assist the country. The project has two main intentions: to contribute to the fulfillment of the National Economic and Social Development Plan through 2030, and to the Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030.

TECHNOLOGICAL TRENDS TO BE PRESENTED

The event's thematic areas aim to link technological trends to strategic development axes. Discussions will center on cloud computing, big data, artificial intelligence, the Internet of things, augmented reality and other concepts, linked to sectors such as government, industry, infrastructure, human development and others.

Thus the event will see debates on areas of impact and technology, with the hosting of various scientific sessions including national and international presentations.

"So far, we have three national lectures planned. Information and communications technologies in industry, which will update us on these issues, and will be organized by the Ministry of Industries.

"A lecture by the Minister of Higher Education, José Ramón Saborido, on the use of technologies in education, and another by the Ministry of Communications on the computerization policy and its impact on the 2030 Development Goals and the country's Economic Plan," Febles explained.

"The event will also see scientific sessions and a solutions fair in which the prize for the Best Innovative Solution will be awarded. Submissions can be sent directly to the competition or can also be chosen from those who present at the fair.

"It will be held over two days, and intends to exhibit proposals for finished applications that are being used in the country as part of its computerization," Febles added.

The first Meeting of Professional and Computer Sciences Associations has also been convened. In this space, Cuban organizations such as the UIC, the Society of Informatics and Computing, the Society of Medical Informatics, and others will participate.

"We have also convened similar organizations in Latin America. The Association of Technicians and Computer Scientists of Spain has already confirmed its participation, and the attendance of the Association of Computer Scientists of Argentina, of Uruguay and of Mexico is expected," the UIC president noted.

The first civil society technologies forum is another planned activity. Through a range of panels, roundtable discussions, and other spaces for debate, topics of interest that include all the actors in society will be approached.

"Academia, industry, the government, non-state workers, will all be called upon to address an issue, exchange ideas and seek solutions," Febles stated.

The event will also see lectures, a programming competition, as well as different contests and activities.

"We want the venue and the atmosphere of the event to reflect the participants and the sector professionals who will be sharing these days with us," Febles highlighted.

A CYBERSOCIETY

Ailyn Febles assured that technologies are transversal and essential.

"They will guarantee the speed of the application of all the measures that have just been approved in the 2030 Development Plan, and will allow for the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals. They will also provide transparency in the fulfillment of these goals," she stressed.

"With different technologies we can have a government that is closer to the people, more transparent. Have more information. Each citizen can become an active and transforming entity in his or her community, or work space. It is also very important that everyone learn to use technology correctly.

"Cibersociedad wants to convey that a good society knows how to use technology. In it, the human being is at the center and must benefit from services, information, content: everything that is useful to become an economic element that is useful to that society," Febles explained.

Since its founding, the Cuban Union of Computer Scientists has visited places in the country where solutions may be applied, whether tried and tested or experimentally implemented on a small scale. It doesn't matter who has come up with the solution, be it a non-state worker, a large software development company or any other person or

entity dedicated to producing technologies. Thus the UIC has been able to document, display and teach everything that is being done in the country with relation to its computerization.

Therefore, conveying the idea that technologies are neither good nor bad, but that they exist and we must be able to use them well, will be one of the objectives pursued in this, the organization's first international event.

LET'S DREAM AND ACT

Ensuring a commitment to valuing everything that is being done in Cuba with regards to the use of technologies, and creating a culture in relation to their best use, by and for human beings, is essential to achieving a prosperous and sustainable country.

Cibersociedad 2017 has a range of goals. "The first is to convene within the country anyone who has implemented a solution. The second is to seek out everything that is being done in computer sciences, what is being scientifically worked on, everything that can be a result that stands out in terms of technology.

"We seek to generate an exchange between foreign and national specialists, and to achieve collective learning. On the other hand, we want to strengthen the mission that the Cuban Union of Computer Scientists has proposed. We seek to be a platform that integrates in our events, activities and scenarios, the non-state sector, academia, industry and anyone who wants to join us to discuss issues that may be useful to the country's development," the UIC president stressed.

Under the slogan "Let's Dream and Act," the Cuban Union of Computer Scientists is ready to host its first international event. Ensuring broad participation will represent an achievement for such a young organization. However, the event's real success, according to its organizers, will depend on every participant having learned something.
