

THE 7th OPEN ACCESS CONFERENCES 2009.

**“Harnessing the rapid growth of fibre infrastructure for Social
Economic Development.”**

Protocol

Secretary General AAU,

Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of Ghana and Patron of the Conference,

Other Vice-Chancellors here present

Vice-President Valley View University

Invited Guests

The Organising Committee of Open Access (OAC) 2009

Participants of OAC-2009

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am reliably informed that it was in 2003 that, endorsed by the UN ICT Task Force, and sponsored by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), an initiative was taken to start the Annual International Conference series on Open Access.

In Africa, the conference has since then been organized in Mozambique (2005), Tanzania 2007 and last year 2008, in Malawi. It has also been brought to my notice that in East Africa where the conference has been hosted a number of times, it has helped strengthen their ICT base.

The Government of Ghana is therefore delighted that it should so soon again be held in an African country and for that matter in a country in West Africa. It particularly brings a lot of hope to us in Ghana that we will be hosting the

conference this year and with the appropriate theme, **“Harnessing the rapid growth of fibre infrastructure for Social Economic Development.”**

Why do I say this? In the last two years or so, Ghana has invested heavily in fibre infrastructure in the country and covered the length and breadth of the country, though there is more to be done particularly in the Northern part of Ghana, where the fibre is up to Tamale. Coupled with this is the sudden growth of fibre outlay on the West Coast. There is SAT 3 which has been existence for sometime now and is currently being upgraded to the terabit level. In addition to this are three more new under sea fibre infrastructure cables being deployed along the West Coast. Namely, the WACS, MainOne and Glow. Indeed the Minister for Communication was privileged to witness the landing of the Globacom fibre in Accra last month.

The Government of Ghana will take advantage of the fibre infrastructure being made available to improve the broadband penetration in the country which is presently very low. Currently Government is studying a Broadband Strategy for Ghana which the ICT community has been discussing for quite some time now.

I am also happy to note that there is a lot emphasis being put into Research Education Network and that yesterday you deliberated on a West African Research Education Network (WACREN). The Government will study the outcome of your deliberations and respond to it appropriately.

Surely the building blocks for such a Regional Research Education Network and the National Research Education Networks (NRENs) is something we

are all can be excited about. My attention has also been drawn to the Ghana Research Education Network (GARNET) which is very young and needs a lot of support to grow. Government is interested in GARNET and would like GARNET to engage us to further discuss what sort of support it needs immediately so that together, we can help build a healthy and vibrant National Research Education Network.

Government's interest in Open Access is not purely academic one of the promises made in the manifesto of the current Government was to drive Ghana's Education system and other sectors through the accelerated deployment of cutting edge ICT. Now that we are in Government, we are collaborating with partners and stakeholders to ensure affordable computer access and broadband Internet connectivity to our schools at the many levels. Against this backdrop, Government is hearted by the increasing fibre redundancy in the country and sees that development as prerequisite to reductions to the cost of bandwidth. Given the ongoing downward trend worldwide in reduced ICT related cost, affordable bandwidth will mean increased access and usage of ICT by Ghanaians both in the Education sector and other areas of the country.

I note again that the theme of this conference “***Harnessing the rapid growth of fibre infrastructure for Social Economic Development.***”. True to this theme then, it is in Ghana's and indeed in Africa's interest that the issue of cost is addressed urgently to help Africa increase the momentum in harnessing the growth of fibre infrastructure for accelerated social and economic development.

Ladies and Gentlemen, to help Africa succeed a sustained social and economic development, we must strive attain a mastery of two challenges, continuous learning and continuous improvement. If one cannot continuously learn in order to continuous improve, then one will stagnate, lose ones edge and ultimately become irrelevant. At the very core of continuous learning and continuous development and improvement is the research discipline. In this context, we must see Research and Education Networks as a vital component as Africa's ICT engine of growth.

Ladies and Gentlemen, your work in developing Research and Education Network therefore a critical success factor for Africa's growth and African Governments must support your efforts unreservedly and with enthusiasm. Please do not spare any effort in seeking and nurturing effective collaboration between yourselves and your growing community of stakeholders. The knowledge pools that you create will only be as valuable as the access that African institutions and people have to that pool. Lets make "Open" truly Open.

Open Access you say from your own concept paper means and I quote: "The right to get access to communication resources on reasonably transparent cost-related conditions. It also should mean that anyone can buy resources at one level and provide and/or enjoy services at any higher level."

This is a very interesting and I hope that the conclusions of your conference will inspire the Telecommunication companies in Ghana to practice open access, since the primary objective of this conference, you say will be to identify and share experiences on affordable and cost effective ICT

technologies around the globe. It is however very disappointing that none of the Telecommunication Companies in Ghana, invited to participate in this conference bothered to respond. (*And I stand corrected if there are any here.*) Nevertheless, I hope they will pay attention to some of the conclusions of the conference.

I wish you a very fruitful conference and I await in high anticipation to see the final communiqué of the conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my singular duty and delight therefore to declare the conference open.

And I thank you for your attention.