

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HON. GIDEON QUARCOO, DEPUTY MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS, AT THE WEST AFRICA INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM IN ACCRA, LA PALM ROYL BEACH HOTEL 14TH – 16TH OCTOBER, 2009

**Mr. Chairman,
Honourable Ministers,
The CEO, ARTP
The CEO, AFRINIC
Convener of AFNOG
Distinguished Delegates
Members of the Press
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am happy to be here this morning to officially open the West Africa Internet Governance Forum. Please permit me to take this opportunity to welcome all our friends from the African continent and other countries to Ghana. On behalf of the government and people of Ghana, you are all welcome home to the proverbial warm Ghanaian hospitality.

As we are aware, the issues of the Internet have occupied the centre stage in all aspects of development, and as we all aspire to leverage ICT in all our national development agendas, it is necessary that we examine the key issues remaining that militate against its development in our countries.

The World Summit on the Information Society identified these concerns and mandated the Secretary General of the United Nations to institute the Internet Governance Forum to bring together all stakeholders annually to examine how the use of the Internet can improve the lives of peoples of the world.

I am therefore encouraged by the theme chosen for this forum **“Promoting the Multi-stakeholder Model for further Internet Development in Africa”**. This is most appropriate, taking into consideration the global approach to Internet usage for socio-economic growth.

I wish to commend Africa, as the foremost Internet Registry for Africa for taking the initiative to organize the West Africa Forum in Accra and to give us all the necessary ingredients to enrich our participation in the global forum that will be held in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, later in the year.

To make maximum use of the Internet, it is acknowledged that good Internet Governance is critical for a sustainable development. It is imperative for West African countries to embrace the spirit behind the IGF, which is based on a multi stakeholder approach to address critical issues facing Africa in terms of Access.

We need to strengthen the Internet Industry that has always been the driver of development all over the world. Critical Internet resources, Security, Openness and Access remain major issues for Internet Governance, but the question is to know if these issues have all the same weight in our region? We need to identify which of them we see as priority for our local and regional long-term Internet development plan.

There is need for continuous support to successful model that have helped to Africa on the global map such as Afrinic which allows Africa to have a better visibility on the Management of IP address, for instance. Other self organized bodies like AFNOG, AFTLD and their communities need to be fully integrated in our region's global policy decision making process.

Mr. Chairman, the communications landscape is changing and at a very fast pace. We, as a nation are determined to leap frog and catch up with the rest of the growing world and nobody should doubt either our intention or ability. I want to assure all our friends, compatriots and development partners that Ghana is determined to cross the digital barrier because it is important and necessary for our development as a nation.

We are confident that in ICT, Ghana has a great potential to speedily establish some global pre-eminence. Our National Agenda for **Transparent and Accountable Governance** identifies ICT as a priority area to transform the economy.

Indeed our meeting here today, affords us all the opportunity to examine effective ways of synergizing our efforts to promote access and usage of the Internet to boost our economies. No one country can do it alone in today's competitive and global environment.

The information society requires all-inclusiveness in national development through access to relevant and timely information. Under commitments made by Governments at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), there is the urgent need to provide ICT connectivity to all schools, hospitals and health institutions, to mention a few, irrespective of their location in the country. Though we have not attained full coverage of connectivity as required, we are one course.

Mr. Chairman, it is also interesting to note that the forum will highlight the need to increase dialogue and the exchange of information especially between governments, regulators and the technical community for cross-fertilization of ideas to move our continent forward.

Not too long ago, the Ministry began addressing issues of Internet Governance in the country and inaugurated the Ghana Network Operators Group (ghNOG). The existence of this group, together with the existence of the Research and Educational Network Group, GISPA and other related bodies now paves the way to transform the present Ghana Internet Registry into a Publicly-managed institution to be formally Chartered in accordance with the guidelines of the IGF.

I must at this stage commend the Internet pioneers of this country, and Prof. Nii Narku Quaynor, for the continuous support and management of the Internet in

Ghana. We are also grateful for the training he has provided for the Internet Industry.

Let me at this juncture, remind AfriNIC about Ghana's readiness as host to its Africa Training Institution and we are expecting that by the end of this Forum, the necessary protocols will be completed to enable the early commencement of training and capacity-building programmes in Ghana.

We are also aware of the ongoing discussions about the migration from IPv4 to IPv6. We owe it to ourselves to question our readiness and capability for this migration in Africa. We need to make the right policies and identify the key professional talent to prepare our country for its adoption at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Chairman, Internet Governance comes with its associated challenges that Governments must overcome. It is incumbent on the experts in this field to ensure that we build the capacities of developing nations especially in Africa to find solutions arising from the use or misuse of the Internet, that is cyber crime or 'SAKAWA' as popularly referred to in Ghana and '419' in neighbouring Nigeria.

As a country we want to fight this challenge by enacting the appropriate cyber crime legislation that will empower the security agencies as well as the judiciary to combat this menace in our society. One of the best ways to help address the challenge is to

provide the necessary education and awareness as to the benefits of the Internet. In addition, appropriate punishments, essential in order to deter cyber crime perpetrators and to help reduce it to the minimum if not totally eradicated in Ghana.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have a firm belief that Internet Governance and its security demands the involvement and expertise of Academia, private and public institutions through information sharing and exchange of best practices.

Access to the Internet as studies have shown in Africa is still very low and even worse in the rural areas. We in Ghana want to share our ideas at this forum as to efforts we are making to surmount this challenge. We are equally prepared to learn from our compatriot's new ideas they may have.

The Government of Ghana is putting measures in place to accelerate the availability and affordability of the Internet through infrastructure development, which would enhance and improve Government service delivery to the citizenry and create a fruitful dialogue between citizens and government, government to business and business to business throughout the country.

We recently launched the landing of GLO 1 submarine cable and other such cables, MAIN 1 and West Africa Cable System (WACS) will pretty soon land on our shores. What this means for us as a country is adequate bandwidth and capacity as we take

steps to complete the national fibre optic backbone and e-government points of presence blanketing the whole country to link the outside world.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I passionately appeal to all of us that we put efforts together and build a common stand as we prepare to participate in the forth-coming annual IGF meeting to be held from 15-18 November 2009 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, to make a strong case for Africa for the adoption of suitable Internet Protocols that will be compatible with our environment and cost effective enough for our growing economies. We can no longer afford to be left behind.

We must let the world know about our sense of urgency to contribute effectively to the ideals of IGF and about what assistance we need to move in tandem with the global direction.

On this note Mr. Chairman, I wish this forum successful deliberation. Once again I wish to welcome delegates and assure you of your security whilst you enjoy our Ghanaian hospitality.

Thank you.

