

SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS, HON. URSULA OWUSU-EKUFUL (MP), AT THE A4AI-GHANA COALITION MEETING ON THE THEME: "ADVANCING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE BROADBAND: PROGRESS AND OPPORTUNITIES" AT THE GHANA INTERNATIONAL PRESS CENTRE – 23RD AUGUST 2018 AT 9:00A.M.

Mr. Chairman

National Coordinator, A4AI-Ghana

Members of the A4AI-Ghana Coalition

Distinguished Invited Guests

All Protocols Observed

Good morning. We appreciate the invitation extended to the Ministry to participate in this event. I will like to apologize for my Hon. Minister who would have wished to be here but due to exigencies of work could not attend the event. As a Ministry, we have adopted the use of ICTs to formalise the economy, improve delivery of services across the sectors, and create the smart society that we yearn for.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, with the introduction ICTs, Computers, Smart Phones and the Internet, and the many enhanced features associated with the advancement in these technologies, communications have become efficient, time saving, enhanced business transactions and virtually improved our way of life. There is high demand today for data services due to the advent of social media platforms, live streaming of events and several applications for service delivery.

Mr. Chairman, Government intends to focus on helping the citizens to embrace the use of ICT in all sectors especially in the acquisition of knowledge. It is our conviction that through pragmatic programmes and initiatives and the right investments in critical ICT infrastructure, Ghana will become a knowledge-based society. Government is also keen on establishing a digital and smart economy which would improve the efficiency of doing Government business using ICT as the enabler. The Ministry is mandated to drive the digital agenda of Government.

Broadband is facilitating the development of the entire ICT-enabled sector and unlocking vast new possibilities and also re-engineering existing businesses and industries. Broadband is having a profound impact and changing education services delivery, the delivery of health care, the management of energy resources, delivery of public services and safety, the manner of engagement of Government and the citizenry and above all, the provision of access to organize and disseminate information and knowledge.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Government is making a conscious effort to partner the private sector in resolving the need for available and easy access to broadband internet, and infrastructure sharing is a key component to prevent duplication of efforts and the inefficient use of the scarce resources of the country.

To facilitate the availability of broadband, Government auctioned one bloc of spectrum in the 800Megahertz band which was acquired by MTN Ghana to improve their services. The Ministry currently, is working with the NCA to further auction other blocs of spectrum in the same band to further propel the broadband growth in the country. Government also gave regulatory approval for Mobile Network Operators to offer broadband to the home to offer lastmile connectivity solutions to Ghanaians. It is the intention of Government to encourage the provision of lastmile solutions nationwide through either fibre or wireless solutions.

One key component of making any economy smart is the availability of adequate broadband capacity to propel innovative applications and services. Government and the private sector have roles to play to make the smart economy agenda achievable. Government will continue to provide the right enabling environment to attract Private Sector investments for ICT infrastructure development. The opportunities exist for investments in the broadband space as the world is moving towards Big Data, Cloud computing, high computing power, storage capacity, Internet of Things (IoT), etc.

Investment in infrastructure will improve access to the latest technology and will result in greater availability of affordable and reliable broadband connectivity and broader adoption of digital

technologies. We need to blanket this country with fibre and other wireless transport modes such as Long Term Evolutions (LTEs) to provide last mile connectivity to unserved and underserved communities.

The Ministry is implementing the Broadband Policy which seeks to promote broadband adoption by industry to guide the uptake of internet broadband in Ghana. However, taking into consideration the technological trends and the availability of fibre to the home (FTTH) now, Ghana cannot wait till 2020 for the attainment of the broadband indicator of 2 Megabit per second speed. In this regard, we are facilitating and supporting broadband-related initiatives to enhance infrastructure investment in the country to the benefit of citizens. Healthy competition due to the enabling laws and policies are further driving prices low and increasing quality of services by Service Providers.

It is worth noting that all telecom networks offer various internet packages to address the demand for usage of the internet to facilitate access to information and provision of feedback. Today, there is internet banking, live program streaming, online tuition and social media platforms which has become popular due to the availability and affordability of broadband packages for the citizenry.

Ladies and Gentlemen, The Ministry will continue to collaborate with the **A4AI** to promote and make broadband very accessible and very

affordable for citizens. Our collective synergies will enable the achievement of this goal. I must admit that the conversation about affordability of the internet for Ghanaians should continue and we need to closely collaborate with key actors in the industry to make accessible and affordable internet a reality.

I thank you.