CHAIRMAN’S SPEECH

WORLD TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SOCIETY DAY (WTISD), 17 MAY 2010.

Hon Minister of Communications,

Distinguished UNDP Resident Representative,

Hon. Members of the Parliamentary Select Committee for Communications

Distinguished partners and stakeholders in the Communication Industry

Invited Guests, Representatives of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen;

My assignment this morning is a simple one. I am to welcome all of you to this ceremony to commemorate this year’s World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD). This day is being celebrated globally under the theme: “BETTER CITY, BETTER LIFE WITH ICT’s”.

From 1969 up until 2006, May 17th every year was observed as World Telecommunications Day. Since 2007, the day has carried added significance by focusing on the importance of ICT hence the re-designation of the day as World Telecommunications and Information Society Day.

We have come to understand that one of the key objectives behind this celebration is to increase global awareness of the advantages that information and communication technologies have to offer in human development. Raising awareness should inspire action that would lead to the provision of better access to ICT’s for a higher percentage of people especially low income groups in developing countries.

A little over a decade and a half ago the telecommunications sector in Ghana was relatively under developed. In the period since then, this country has experienced remarkable improvements and enormous growth especially in mobile services. ICT has become an integral part of the lives of many Ghanaians. The television, mobile phone, computers [desktops and laptops] and the internet are reshaping the way we live, work and play.

Today there is an estimated fifteen million (15M) mobile phone subscriber base, providing over 60% of our population access to telecommunications. While
Ghana has covered considerable distance in developing our own information society, the fact still remains that there are challenges. There are gaps in respect of access and availability of service especially broadband in rural and even urban areas.

Leadership is important in addressing the challenges we face, and I am pleased with the dynamism of our sector minister Hon. Haruna Iddrisu.

All those involved in the sector including the regulator, network operators, service providers, government agencies, district and metropolitan assemblies owe a responsibility to work in unison if Ghana is to attain the targets set out in our national telecommunication policy blueprint as well as the UN Millennium Development goals.

Whether it is in respect of analogue- digital migration, number portability, SIM card registration, co-location of communication towers- we have a duty to work together to create a win-win situation.

The key to growth and expansion is to ensure that policies work, that technologies work properly and that quality of service is never compromised. To this end, it is the determination of the NCA as regulator to improve its monitoring and enforcement checks on delinquencies among licensees. As part of our mandate we also aim to reach out more often to Ghanaian consumers. Indeed, this commemorative ceremony will be followed by a consumer assembly, the second of its kind since the inception of the NCA.

The commemoration of world telecommunication and information society day is a call to action. What we have gathered here to do is to stimulate discussion on the way forward, to help raise awareness of the possibilities that the use of internet and other information and communication technologies [ICT] can bring to Ghana.

As we settle down to listen to the addresses to be delivered by the various speakers, we must bear one thing in mind- we have to empower the majority of our people who are still at the margins of society and who need to be integrated into the knowledge society. And by connecting our youth especially to knowledge and information we would be creating employment and social and economic development. Clearly, the future belongs to those countries which make the best of ICT.

ICT is the future that beckons and bids us all welcome to World Telecom and Info Society Day.