

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF  
AFRICAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION MR. AKOSI  
AKOSI AT THE ITU REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM  
'08 "BRIDGING THE ICT STANDARDISATION GAP IN  
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES" ON 26<sup>TH</sup> MAY, 2008 IN ACCRA,  
GHANA.**

**OUR CHIEF GUEST THE H.E. DR. BENJAMIN AGGREY-NTIM,  
MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS,  
ITU TSB DIRECTOR MALCOLM JOHNSON  
DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,  
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

**IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO WELCOME YOU ALL THIS MORNING TO THIS VERY IMPORTANT FORUM. BUT FIRST, ALLOW ME TO THANK THE GOVERNMENT OF GHANA THROUGH HIS EXCELLENCY THE MINISTER FOR HOSTING THIS FORUM IN THE MAGNIFICENT BEACH OF ACCRA. AS THE SG OF A LEADING INSTITUTION PROMOTING ICT IN AFRICA, I SEIZE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK ITU AND IN PARTICULAR THE BDT AND TSB DIRECTORS FOR ORGANIZING THIS FORUM IN A TIMELY MANNER.**

**I WISH TO EXPRESS SINCERE APPRECIATION TO H.E DR NTIM BENJAMIN MINISTER OF COMMUNICATION FOR HIS CONSTANT FRIENDSHIP AND HIS STRONG SUPPORT FOR CLOSER PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN AFRICAN COUNTRIES. I ALSO THANK MALCOM JOHNSON AND ITU FOR THE COMMENDABLE EFFORTS THEY HAVE MADE TO ENSURE THE SUCCESS OF THIS MEETING AND THE FORTHCOMING WTSA 08 IN SOUTH AFRICA.**

**THIS FORUM BRINGS US TOGETHER TO DELIBERATE ON ISSUES TOUCHING ON THE GROWING GAP BETWEEN DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES CONSIDERING THAT WE HAVE THE LARGEST CONCENTRATION OF THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES IN THE CONTINENT.**

**HONOURABLE MINISTER  
DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,**

**IN JANUARY THIS YEAR, THE AFRICA UNION IN ITS 10<sup>TH</sup> ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF MINISTERS AND GOVERNMENT BROUGHT OUT MANY ISSUES ON THE NEED TO ACCELERATE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH INDUSTRIALIZATION IN AFRICA THROUGH NEPAD INITIATIVES FOR THE PROMOTION OF RAPID, INTEGRATED AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES. ONE OF THE INITIATIVES IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE TO REDUCE ON COSTS AND EASE OF DOING BUSINESS, ENHANCE ACCESS TO INTERNET AND OTHER CRITICAL AREAS OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY.**

**THIS IS A CLEAR INDICATION THAT THE GOVERNMENTS ARE AWARE AND CONCERNED AT THE RATE AT WHICH THE CONTINENT IS DEVELOPING. THE EXPECTATION IS THAT BY 2015, AFRICA WOULD HAVE ATTAINED THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDG) OF ERADICATING POVERTY AND ENSURING GOODS AND SERVICES ARE WITHIN REACH OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL IN THE CONTINENT. OF COURSE, THE GROWTH IN THE ICT SECTOR IN AFRICA CONTINUES TO PRESENT BOTH A CHALLENGE AS WELL AS THE OPPORTUNITY FOR US ALL. THE CHALLENGE MAINLY LIES IN:-**

- **DEVELOPING RELEVANT STRATEGIES TO SUSTAIN THIS GROWTH WHILE ENSURING THAT THE MAJORITY OF AFRICANS ENJOY PREDOMINANCE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN THE ICT INDUSTRY.**
- **PROCURING THE TECHNOLOGY WHICH FOSTER EFFICIENT ECONOMIC GROWTH AND BETTER LIVING STANDARDS**
- **AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS**
- **THE NEED FOR ACTION**
- **THE OPPORTUNITY IS THE AVAILABILITY OF HUMAN RESOURCE SKILLS WHICH IS NOT WELL TAPPED.**

**THIS MEETING IS YET ANOTHER MANIFESTATION OF ITU'S STRONG COMMITMENT TO SEEKING REGIONAL SOLUTIONS TO TRANS-BOUNDARY CHALLENGES AND IT IS PLEASING TO NOTE THAT AFRICA IS MAKING STEADY PROGRESS IN THIS REGARD. INDEED, CONCRETE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE INSTITUTIONAL BASIS FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION AND INTEGRATION ARE ALREADY MANIFEST AT BOTH CONTINENTAL AND SUB-REGIONAL LEVELS. OTHER EMERGING TRENDS ARE SIMILARLY ENCOURAGING ACROSS ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SECTORS.**

**AFRICA ENTERED THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY FACING IMPORTANT ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CHALLENGES. INDEED, WE ARE WITNESSING A SHARP ACCELERATION OF ECONOMIC GROWTH IN AFRICA, PARTICULARLY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA. THE WORLD BANK NOW REPORTS THE AVERAGE GROWTH RATE TO HAVE ACCELERATED FROM 5,7 PERCENT IN 2006 TO 6.1 PERCENT IN 2007 - THE REGION'S FASTEST IN MORE THAN THREE DECADES.**

**YET DESPITE THESE ENCOURAGING TRENDS, WE KNOW THAT SEVERAL AFRICAN COUNTRIES WILL NOT MEET THE PRINCIPAL MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL OF HALVING EXTREME POVERTY BY 2015. OUR CONCERN THEREFORE MUST REMAIN HOW TO ACCELERATE THE PACE OF AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT.**

**GLOBALIZATION IS CHARACTERIZED BY GROWING ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND RAPID TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE, IT HAS GENERATED INCREASED PROSPERITY FOR THE COUNTRIES ABLE TO COMPETE IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY, BUT HAS RESULTED IN STEADY ECONOMIC DECLINE AND MARGINALIZATION FOR COUNTRIES THAT ARE NOT ABLE TO COMPETE.**

**AFRICA AS A WHOLE HAS SO FAR NOT BEEN ABLE TO MEET THE CHALLENGE OF GLOBAL COMPETITION: ITS CONTRIBUTION TO GLOBAL MANUFACTURING VALUE ADDED HAS REMAINED AT LESS THAN 1 PERCENT DURING THE PAST TWO DECADES, AND WHILE MORE THAN 75 PERCENT OF TOTAL WORLD MERCHANDISE TRADE CONSISTS OF MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS, AFRICA ACCOUNTS FOR ONLY 2 PERCENT OF THIS SHARE. MOREOVER, MOST OF AFRICA'S MANUFACTURED EXPORTS CONSIST OF LOW-TECH, SEMI-PROCESSED LIGHT CONSUMER GOODS. AND IN THESE PRODUCT AREAS THERE IS STRONG COMPETITION FROM OTHER DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.**

**AFRICA CAN AND MUST DO BETTER THAN THIS, IF WE ARE TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINED GROWTH AND MAKE POVERTY A THING OF THE PAST.**

**AS A MATTER OF FACT, IT IS QUITE TIMELY AND APPROPRIATE TO DELIBERATE BRIDGING THE ICT STANDARDIZATION GAP IN AFRICA.**

**FOR ME IT IS ALL ABOUT INDUSTRIALIZATION IN AFRICA BECAUSE INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION IS NEEDED TO TRANSFORM AFRICAN ECONOMIES THROUGH INCREASES IN PRODUCTIVITY, IMPROVED SKILLS AND CREATION OF ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR DECENT AND PRODUCTIVE WORK.**

**INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA WILL ALSO REDUCE THE DEPENDENCE OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES ON PRODUCTION AND EXPORT OF PRIMARY COMMODITIES AND INTEGRATE AFRICAN FIRMS AND BUSINESSES INTO GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS AND HELP THE CONTINENT TO BECOME DYNAMIC, DIVERSIFIED AND TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED.**

**THERE IS A LONG WAY TO GO AND THE PROCESS OF CREATING AN AFRICAN INDUSTRIAL SECTOR, WHICH IS A SERIOUS PLAYER IN WORLD MARKETS, HAS NOT YET REALLY STARTED.**

**INDUSTRIAL GROWTH PLAYS A PIVOTAL ROLE IN ACCELERATING ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION, IN MODERNIZING SOCIETIES AND CREATING ECONOMIC PROSPERITY.**

**LOOKING AT THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES AND THE NEWLY INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES OF THE ASIAN CONTINENT WE SEE THAT ALL OF THEM, WITHOUT ANY EXCEPTION, USED INDUSTRY AS THE MAIN VEHICLE FOR ACHIEVING ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROSPERITY FOR THEIR POPULATIONS.**

**INDUSTRY, MORE THAN ANY OTHER SECTOR, IS A SOURCE OF PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT, NEW SKILLS AND NEW ATTITUDES.**

**INDUSTRY MODERNIZES THE ENTERPRISE SECTOR - IT STIMULATES THE ADOPTION OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND HELPS TO DRIVE INNOVATION, WHICH ALSO SPILLS OVER TO SECTORS SUCH AS AGRICULTURE AND THE MODERN SERVICES.**

**INDUSTRIAL EXPORTS ARE THE BASIS FOR COMPETITIVENESS IN WORLD MARKETS.**

**IN AFRICA, WITH ITS VAST RESOURCES - HUMAN AGRICULTURAL AND MINERAL, INDUSTRY CAN ACHIEVE THE SAME.**

**AFRICA WAS LED TO BELIEVE BY THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM PREVAILING IN THE LATE 1980S THAT GOVERNMENTS HAVE NO ROLE TO PLAY IN BUSINESS. POLITICAL AND MACRO-ECONOMIC STABILITY WERE CONSIDERED SUFFICIENT TO ENCOURAGE PRIVATE INVESTMENT, ESPECIALLY IN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs), AND TO ATTRACT FOREIGN INVESTORS.**

**TWO DECADES LATER, AFRICAN COUNTRIES DO NOT HAVE A VIBRANT PRIVATE SECTOR TO CREATE THE EMPLOYMENT NEEDED BY THEIR YOUNG AND RAPIDLY GROWING POPULATIONS.**

**DURING THE SAME PERIOD, A NUMBER OF ASIAN COUNTRIES, FOLLOWING A DIFFERENT PHILOSOPHY, PROVED THAT GOVERNMENTS DO HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY:**

**THEY DEVELOPED INDUSTRIAL STRATEGIES JOINTLY WITH THE MAIN STAKEHOLDERS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY; TRANSLATED THESE STRATEGIES INTO EFFECTIVE POLICIES AND INDUSTRIAL SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURES, AND EMBARKED ON A PROCESS OF SUSTAINED GROWTH.**

**HOW CAN AFRICA EMBARK ON SUCH A PROCESS AND**

**SPEED UP THE DEVELOPMENT OF A VIBRANT PRIVATE SECTOR?**

**TO ACHIEVE THIS OBJECTIVE, SEVERAL CHALLENGES MUST BE OVERCOME. THESE ARE FORMIDABLE CHALLENGES, BUT AFRICA CAN AND WILL RISE TO THEM.**

- 1- EMPOWERING THE PRIVATE SECTOR**
- 2- REDUCING THE COSTS OF DOING BUSINESS**
- 3- PROMOTNG TRADE AND INVESTMENT**
- 4- INDUSTRIAL ENERGY FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH**

**AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND - HOW CAN WE CREATE A SOLID INDUSTRIAL BASE FOR DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA?**

**THIS IS THE CRUCIAL QUESTION THAT YOU WILL BE CONSIDERING DURING THIS FORUM AND BEYOND.**

**IN THIS CONNECTION, THIS FORUM COULD CONSIDER AMONG OTHERS THE FOLLOWING ISSUES:**

- 1- MOVING FROM COMMODITIES TO HIGH-VALUE PRODUCTS ALONG A SUSTAINABLE PATH**
- 2- DEVELOPING A CONDUCIVE POLICY ENVIRONMENT**
- 3- LEARNING FROM OTHERS**
- 4- THE ROLE OF PARTNERSHIP**
- 5- REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND GLOBALIZATION**

**I HAVE HIGHLIGHTED THE IMPORTANCE OF PUTTING INDUSTRIALIZATION AT THE TOP OF AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT AGENDA.**

**I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT MAJOR OPPORTUNITIES FOR AFRICA'S INDUSTRIAL AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT HAVE BEGUN TO UNFOLD OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS.**

**I HAVE TRIED TO CONVEY TO YOU MY BELIEF THAT INDUSTRY HAS THE GREATEST POTENTIAL FOR ADDRESSING AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT NEEDS AND THE ASSOCIATED SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHALLENGES.**

**I AM CONFIDENT THAT YOU, WILL KEEP THIS IMPORTANT THEME ON YOUR AGENDA FOR THE FORTHCOMING WTSA08 IN SOUTH AFRICA AS YOU CONTINUE TO CHART A SUSTAINABLE PATH TOWARDS AFRICA'S INDUSTRIALIZATION IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY,**

**ATU, THE SPECIALIZED AGENCY OF THE AU FOR ICT WILL CONTINUE TO GIVE ALL IT HAS TO PROMOTE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA.**

**FOR THE NEXT TWO (2) YEARS, ATU WILL SET ASIDE RESOURCES TO DRIVE THE REMAINING AGENDA AND WOULD LIKE TO CALL UPON ALL MEMBER STATES TO CONTINUE IN THEIR SUPPORT TO THE ORGANIZATION BY HONOURING THEIR OBLIGATIONS.**

**OUR GRATITUDE GOES TO ITU THROUGH ITS REGIONAL OFFICE FOR AFRICA WHO HAS BEEN SUPPORTIVE IN THE**

**IMPLEMENTATION OF A NUMBER OF OUR ACTIVITIES. IT IS INDEED A CLEAR DEMONSTRATION OF AN EFFECTIVE COOPERATION WITH OUR PARTNERS AND IT IS OUR SINCERE HOPE THAT WE SHALL CONTINUE TO WORK WITH ALL OUR PARTNERS IN PROGRESS IN BRIDGING THE ICT STANDARDIZATION GAP IN OUR CONTINENT.**

**AFRICAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION IS CONVINCED THAT THE OUTCOME OF THIS FORUM WILL LIVE UP TO THE FOLLOWING EXPECTATIONS:-**

- **IMPROVEMENT OF THE INFRASTRUCTURES FOR ATTAINING INDUSTRIALIZATION BY 2015 AND IMPROVEMENT IN THE WAY WE DO BUSINESS.**
- **IDENTIFY COMPONENTS FOR THE RETENTION OF SKILLED HUMAN RESOURCE ESPECIALLY ICT SKILLS WITHIN THE CONTINENT**
- **ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN STANDARDIZATION WORK**

**HON MINISTER  
DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,**

**THE SUCCESS OF THE FOREGOING DEPENDS LARGELY ON OUR COMMITMENT TO UTILIZE THE RESOURCES WITHIN TO CARRY OUT PROJECTS THAT WOULD GO ALONG WAY IN CREATING SYNERGY WITH DEVELOPED WORLD. WE ALSO WANT TO ASSURE YOU THAT ATU CONTINUES TO STRIVE FOR GREATER COHERENCE AND COORDINATION IN ORDER TO SUPPORT NATIONAL EFFORTS OF MEMBER COUNTRIES MORE EFFECTIVELY.**

**AS I CONCLUDE, MAY I REMIND US OF THE NEED FOR OUR INCREASED COMMITMENT AS A CONTINENT TO WORK TOGETHER IN ACHIEVING THE DESIRED MDG GOALS.**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION**