2020 Regional Development Forum for Africa (RDF-AFR)

Digital transformation to accelerate achievement of the SDGs
– Digital development, partnerships and funding

6-7 October 2020, 12:00 – 15:00 CAR (Virtual meeting)
with preparatory break-out sessions on 5 October 2020 (12:00 – 13:30 CAT time)

CONTRIBUTION BY National Communications Authority, Ghana

TITLE: Building Confidence in the Adoption and Use of Telecommunications/ICTs

EXPECTED DURATION OF PRESENTATION: [5 minutes]

CONTACT: [Isaac Boateng, isaac.boateng@nca.org.gh , +233302776621 and Roland Yaw Kudozia, roland.kudozia@nca.org.gh, +233203004570:]

❖ **Africa Regional Initiatives:** [Select the Regional Initiative(s) relevant for your contribution]

[Yes/No] **AFR Regional initiative 1** – Building digital economies and fostering innovation in Africa

[Yes/No] **AFR Regional initiative 2** – Promotion of emerging broadband technologies

[Yes/No] **AFR Regional initiative 3** – Building trust and security in the use of telecommunications/ information and communication technology

[Yes/No] **AFR Regional initiative 4** – Strengthening human and institutional capacity building

[Yes/No] **AFR Regional initiative 5** – Management and monitoring of the radio-frequency spectrum and transition to digital broadcasting

❖ **Related ITU development thematic:** [Select the thematic area(s) relevant for your contribution]

[Yes/No] **Networks and digital infrastructure**

[Yes/No] **Cybersecurity**

[Yes/No] **Emergency telecommunications**

[Yes/No] **Environment**

[Yes/No] **Digital policy and regulation**

[Yes/No] **Capacity development**

[Yes/No] **Digital services and applications**

[Yes/No] **Digital inclusion**

[Yes/No] **Digital innovation ecosystems**

[Yes/No] **Statistics and data for evidence-based decision making**

❖ **Year(s) of implementation:** [Select the year(s) for which your action/project/initiative is relevant]

[<mark>Yes</mark>/No] **2018**	[<mark>Yes</mark>/No] **2019**	[<mark>Yes</mark>/No] **2020**	[<mark>Yes</mark>/No] **2021**	[Yes/No] **Others**

❖ **COVID-19 response related initiative:** [Please indicate if your action/project/initiative is relevant for COVID-19 response]

[<mark>Yes</mark>/No] **COVID-19 response related initiative**

Background [max 300 words]

Ghana's journey in the digital age can be summarized in three phases. The first is the **policy phase:** national telecommunications policy, which gave direction to a vision to harness the value of technology. The second is infrastructure **development phase** where licences were issued to develop networks and the third is the **services and applications phase** where solutions and services are being developed and deployed to drive various sectors of the economy. The service and application phase has led to tremendous growth in telecom/ICT adoption, and invariably telecom/ICT devices.

However, Ghana just like many African Countries has had to deal with pertinent challenges, which threaten the gains made over the years in building public confidence in the adoption and use of telecommunications/ICTs. The influx of sub-standard ICTs equipment, community apprehension to the deployment of telecommunication mast and base stations, and e-waste have a detrimental effect on spectrum efficiency, network expansion, quality of service, safety of consumers and the environment, and above all public perception to emerging broadband technologies.

To deal with the aforementioned challenges, Ghana instituted her Conformance and Interoperability (C&I) regime, which provides a general framework for the National Communications Authority (NCA) to sustain its efforts in building confidence in the adoption and use of telecommunications/ICTs.

The Type Approval Certification (Equipment Authorization) process, Dealership Licensing, NCA Type Approval Laboratories and Market Surveillance have enabled the NCA to ensure the availability of quality and safe electronic communication equipment, improve quality of service, build human and institutional capacity and more recently respond to Covid-19 related challenges.

It is worthy to note that these initiatives have been funded by internally generated funds of the NCA, with some technical support from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

Other NCA regulatory interventions that have contributed to the sustainable growth and development in telecom/ICT in Ghana include Quality of Service (QoS) drive test, efficient spectrum management, consumer education on the rights and use of ICTs as well as Computer Emergency and Incidence Response. Due to the MNOs lack of capacities to respond to the huge demands for data services, at recent COVID-19 lockdown, the NCA issued additional free spectrum to the MNOs to improve their capacities and satisfy the needs of consumers.

Proposal [max 400 words]

In broad terms, an enabling legal and policy environment is critical to the success of any C&I enterprise. The National Communications Authority Act 769, Act, 2008 and other subsequent legislation and guidelines laid the foundations for all on-going initiatives on C&I in Ghana.

Pursuant to the Act and subsidiary legislation, the NCA set out to develop a comprehensive C&I ecosystem by reviewing Type approval process in 2014. The NCA developed a digital portal for Type Approval certification, the portal also allows the public and Customs access to approved equipment.

TEMPLATE FOR SUBMISSION OF CONTRIBUTIONS

The Type Approval Administrative framework and guidelines were published in 2014 and subsequently reviewed in 2015 to provide a reference guide and simplify the application process.

The dealership licensing regime and inspection of equipment at the ports of entry provides visibility and traceability for electronic communication equipment, and serves as a pre-market surveillance mechanism. Oversight of the importation, distribution and sale of electronic communication equipment is critical to dealing with the influx of sub-standard ICTs.

In 2017, the NCA established Type Approval Laboratory comprising four (4) distinct labs for testing for Radio Frequency (RF), Specific Absorption Rate (SAR) and Electromagnetic Field (EMF) Strength and Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT). The labs generally, are for testing of Electronic Communications Equipment for conformance and interoperability as part of Type Approval certification, and particularly for in-country post market surveillance where the NCA randomly test ICT equipment from the market to ascertain conformance to national and international standards.

The NCA also conduct regular EMF field measurement to ascertain the levels of EMF emissions from radiating sources with the FM, TV, WIFI, BT, and Mobile Cellular access bands (100kHz to 6000MHz). These measurements are geared towards conducting evidence-based community engagement on the safety levels of radiations from telecommunications/ICTs equipment. At the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic between March – June 2020, in Ghana, the NCA used its scientific measurement and real-time field data from its EMF laboratory to issue public press statement to refute/debunk a conspiracy on the possible health related concerns on 5G deployment and Covid-19.

Whiles strengthening conformance of telecommunication and ICT equipment to adopted national and international standards, the NCA collaborates with academic institutions in Ghana to leverage its C&I Labs for research. Through the ITU, the NCA has opened its doors to regulators within Africa for capacity building, knowledge transfer and possible testing of electronic communication equipment.

Specific proposals

Taking into account the above narratives, the National Communications Authority (NCA) through the Administration of Ghana would like to propose the following:

1. that the 2020 Regional Development Forum for Africa (RDF-AFR) should adopt the NCA testing labs as a regional or sub-regional testing hub/centre. This will contribute to the realization of Regional Initiatives 2, 3, 4, and 5; that is;
   a. Promoting emerging broadband technologies
   b. Building trust and security in the use of telecommunications/ information and communication technology
   c. Strengthening human and institutional capacity building
   d. Management and monitoring of the radio-frequency spectrum and transition to digital broadcasting
2. The meeting should resolve to provide sustainable funding to the NCA labs through partnership for regional digital transformation, acceleration and achievement of the SDGs.

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