Speech by
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Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for opportunity to speak to your distinguished audience at the AMC-Ticon conference 2025.

This is a particularly difficult time for me to speak in public,

so soon after the memorial of comrades and a former minister of communications Hon Dr Edward Omane Boamah with whom we worked towards ITU council seat for Ghana during his term. Knowing Dr Omane Boamah's commitment to addressing digital divide, I gather courage to address you today. The organizers expressed interest in my views on "Africa's Internet story: what we got right and what must do better "

Ghana is celebrating 30 years of full connectivity internet and a time to reflect making the ask pertinent. These will be discussed more at upcoming AIS2025.

The Ghana Internet experiment by NCS, a Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) distributor, started in 1993 and went through international dialup, 9.6kbps international lease circuit, 128Kbps IP only Vsat at

1995 and forced an independent regulator to be established in 1996.

We are celebrating local expertise that did this, the policy environment that made that possible and the social context of self development which energized the experiment.

We are certain that that rapid engagement with new technology was most possible in

regime of late President Flt. Lt Rawlings in which President Mahama served as minister of communications. We could have talked and disagreed with each other, while the technology wave passed..but Ghana did not do that. Rather the Rawlings government reformed telecommunications to embrace the new idea and supported it regionally.

We celebrate the many lives in Ghana touched by internet in 30

years and are grateful to the many who contributed to the internet being alive continuously. Some of you were born in to internet world. There's a lot to say and many opinions to express.

Africa internet story:
What did we get right and what we must do better

I am an internet pioneer and here's an opinion

Africa's emerging Internet communities have been fortunate to have the open practices of the Internet, that gave us a chance to be globally involved. The open standards, open documentation and open participation have been particularly helpful in building capacity and networks over the years.

Though we've made progress with Internet, we have several challenges. Observations on

resilience of Internet in Africa show a ready digital economy, at about midway user penetration but has fragile infrastructure and known technical capacity deficiencies. In spite of these challenges, the number of data centers, connectivity, exchange points, capacity and users, are all improving.

Success

- We offered access to the internet from uucp to satellite, to fiber and to 4G
- We are Literate and comfortable users of tools in cyberspace
- Governments are making laws and policies
- Internet penetration from 0% to 40% in 30 years
- Countries got CcTLD delegated
- GTLD registry(.Africa…)
- Icann accredited registrars
- IXP in almost all countries

- technical coordination institutions: number registry, NOG, AFTLD, Africacert, AFREN, Afriregistrar….

Failure

- Majority of Internet Service providers did not go beyond access and did not survive. The NCS experiment in Ghana was shutdown in 2003.

- We did not create any giant of the internet
- The internet business model did not help late comers. Winner take all
- We did not achieve the goal of 80% of content local… the struggle for 50% ongoing
- Regulation was restrictive and did not help innovation
- No internet industry… just consumer

- Africa is at 4.4 domain names per 1000 where global is 45 per 1000.
- Weak innovation and participation in standard development
- We did not master the MS, bottom-up and consensus approach.
- The fast tracking of things for immediate results, creates inadequate policies, expertise deficient ecosystem, that is unable to

address the challenges and coping with the future.

- With weak foundations: power, general infrastructure, skills, science education…., our efforts were not enough to meet the rapid constant growth of access speed, quality and IPv6 access technology upgrade. We ended up in a never-ending race with no critical mass.

Must do differently

- Being a late comer and the race to catch up did not help.. we must think long term and be consistent and persistent
- Policy and regulations must encourage innovation and anticipate new resources and position local industry to domesticate
- Make Long term strategy and plans and avoid fire fighting and not impactful

actions for immediate results
- design a model of MS, bottom-up and consensus method which can take the best of the traditional top-down of Africa, the merit of ideas, the sense of responsibility, to build a resilient ecosystem to sustain   the governance of Internet in Africa.
- Use the Internet to intentionally solve domestic problems

- Address the Fundamental education required by sector
- Give attention to creating Producers; from Investments in research
- address the Capital flight coming from dependency on global consolidation (revive import substitution)
- Optimize knowledge transfer and technical capacity building through strong fundamental and

inter-generational menthorship/coaching

I conclude by commenting on the maturing AI technology, and wonder if there are lessons from the Internet's past for AI in Africa. After all, networks and AI are both computer science technology solutions, impacting society..

AI itself threatens the digital divide in the global south the most, given its associated high

cost of infrastructure, high power requirements and unique technical skills needed to be on the supply side. What would we do differently?

Are we going to become a market for large already consolidated global providers again and what can we develop by ourselves for ourselves? Some countries have publicly communicated their intentions to dominate the emerging AI industry in policy briefs. Can

we take refuge in UN for global governance and open source resources for self development?

What is our response ?

Thank you for your attention