

Your Excellency, President and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Ghana
Honourable Minister of Education
Regional Minister for the Greater Accra Region
Your Worship, the Mayor of Accra
Vice Chairman of Council
Leaders of Delegation and Chief Government Nominees on Council
Members of Council
The Registrar to Council
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Former Chairmen of Council
Former Registrars to Council
Distinguished Friends of Council
Staff of the Council
Members of the Fourth Estate
Ladies and Gentlemen

I feel greatly honoured and pleased to welcome you on behalf of Council to this Opening Ceremony of the 59th Annual Council Meeting. I am particularly delighted by the rare privilege of welcoming His Excellency, Prof. John Evans Atta Mills, President and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Ghana, who is our Special Guest of Honour and on whose behalf the Chairman of the Council of State, Prof. Kofi Awoonor, will declare open the 59th Annual Meeting of the West African Examinations Council.

“Council” is the main Governing Board and as such the highest decision-making organ of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC). It meets annually to review the activities and operations of its Offices in the five Member Countries - The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. It considers reports from

its Committees, National and International, on various aspects of its operations and ratifies the decisions taken on its behalf in the course of the preceding year by the Committees. Council also deliberates on the action plans presented by the Offices and Committees to ensure smooth and successful operations in the year ahead.

Your Excellency, the Headquarters of WAEC is situated in Accra, Ghana. The Ghana National Office of the Council is also in Accra. That the Republic of Ghana has, over the years, hosted both offices successfully, despite the obvious responsibility is a measure of the commitment of the Government of Ghana to the continued existence of the Council. The enduring peace and stability in this country over the years have also made it possible for the Council to plan its strategies, execute its mandate and consolidate its achievements without distractions. I want to thank the Government of Ghana through your good self, Your Excellency Sir, for all these and several other benefits that WAEC has continued to derive from its collaboration with this great nation. I also want to express appreciation for the typical African hospitality which members of country delegations to this meeting have been accorded since their arrival in Ghana. The warmth and calmness as well as the orderliness and tranquility that we have experienced in the city of Accra, in my humble opinion, are signs of good governance and public satisfaction with the performance of the government of the day.

I wish to express profound appreciation, on behalf of Council, to the People and Government of Ghana for the role this great nation has been playing in the affairs of WAEC in the fifty-nine years of the Council's existence. I recall, with appreciation that the ordinance establishing the West African Examinations Council was first passed by the Legislative Assembly of Ghana (then the Gold Coast) in December 1951, before similar enactments by the governments of

Nigeria, Sierra Leone and The Gambia. Since that historic action by Ghana's Legislative Assembly, the country's interest in the affairs of WAEC and support for the Council's operations have increased in scope and intensity.

Your Excellency, the West African Examinations Council was, at its inception in 1952, charged with the responsibility of determining the examinations required in the public interest in the English-speaking West African Countries, to conduct such examinations and award certificates of international standard to deserving candidates in the examinations. I am pleased to say that amidst the vicissitudes of the economic, social and political terrain of our Sub-region, the Council has executed this tripartite mandate creditably for 59 years in the member countries.

On its own volition the Council has even gone far beyond its mandate by providing reliable statistical data that have been found very useful for policy formulation and implementation by governments and relevant agencies in the member countries. The Council provides on request consultancy services in various aspects of educational assessment. The Council also monitors developments in the education sector of the Sub-region with a view to assuring quality in education service delivery. In this direction, Council mandated the Chief Government Nominees of the member countries to present, at its Annual Meeting, progress reports on the activities, plans and programmes of their respective governments for the improvement of education. Council has found that lofty and laudable as some of the plans and programmes are, they are either in their infancy or are not very effectively implemented. Such a situation must not be allowed to continue because a lack of commitment in the business of educating the youth of our Sub-region is bound to have grim implications for quality manpower production and succession. I therefore, want to use this opportunity to reiterate my appeal to member governments and relevant

agencies to pay closer attention to education and ensure adequate funding of the education sector for national growth and sustainable development.

WAEC is always ready and willing to lubricate the wheel of national development through its collaborative efforts with governments and modernized service delivery systems. As part of its service improvement efforts, the Council embarks on building the capacity of the citizens of the member countries. Between April 2010 and now, the Council organized training programmes in various educational skills for about sixty thousand citizens of the member countries who participate in the execution of its operations as examiners, item writers, item moderators, supervisors, invigilators, cyber café operators, ICT service providers and candidates.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, part of the Council's strength is its well-developed committee structure. The committee system of WAEC ensures that decisions are taken by consensus and that experts in various fields, especially education, are involved at all levels of the decision-making process. The Council is strengthened by this arrangement and the quality service which emanates from it to stakeholders, has engendered public confidence in the Council's processes and procedures. The Council thus remains an icon in educational testing within and beyond the member countries. However, threats to the Council's reputation and delivery of quality service to stakeholders are becoming increasingly formidable and worrisome. Key among such threats are examination malpractice and dwindling revenue.

The scourge of examination fraud has pervaded the entire Sub-region posing daunting challenges to the conduct of public examinations in each country. WAEC is in the vanguard of the fight against this social malaise, but the fight is still very far from being won as the perpetrators demonstrate resilience and ingenuity in their systems of operation. Though to an appreciable extent WAEC

is able to checkmate the nefarious activities of cheats at every examination, I must confess that the Council is doing so at enormous costs which include stressing its personnel and draining its lean resources. I wish to appeal to all member governments and other stakeholders in education to rise up and launch renewed onslaughts against this cankerworm. In this regard, Council wishes to applaud the Government of Ghana as the only member state where examinations fraudsters have been successfully prosecuted.

WAEC is a non-profit-making organization which depends on two main sources of revenue for the funding of its operations. The two sources are government subvention/contribution and examination fees. The revenue accruing to the Council from these sources has, in real terms, dwindled precariously in recent years as the Council is not permitted to charge economic rates for its examinations, despite inflationary trends. Furthermore, some member governments owe the Council huge backlogs of unpaid contribution and subvention. While I express special appreciation to the member governments, including the Government of Ghana, who have continued to remit promptly and fully their subvention to the respective National Offices and contribution to the Headquarters, I wish to appeal most fervently to the others who are owing the Council to intensify their efforts and endeavour to meet their financial obligations in 2011. Adequate funding of the activities and operations of WAEC will always guarantee optimum performance by the Council through the delivery of world-class service to its stakeholders.

Your Excellency, as I said earlier, the Headquarters of WAEC is located in Ghana. Arising from that, there exists the Headquarters Agreement with the Government of Ghana. Part of the provisions of the Agreement is that the Government of Ghana will provide office and residential accommodation for staff of the Headquarters. We are very confident that the Government of Ghana will meet

its commitment at facilitating the relocation of the Headquarters from the premises of the National Office at Ridge to its permanent site at Okponglo, hopefully before the end of 2011.

Distinguished Guests, at this Opening Ceremony, under the aegis of the WAEC Endowment Fund, the *Distinguished Friend of Council Award* will be conferred on an eminent citizen of the Republic of Ghana, Mrs. Sabina Ofori-Boateng. I congratulate her and rejoice with members of her family on this notable achievement.

Yesterday, as part of the activities that usually precede the Annual Council Meeting, the 16th WAEC Endowment Fund Lecture was delivered by a distinguished academic and renowned Mathematician, Prof. D. A. Akyeampong of Ghana. The topic of the lecture was *Towards Excellence in the Teaching and Learning of the Language of Science*. The Professor authoritatively took his audience for a philosophical excursion tracing some of the thoughts of Euclid, Galileo, Plato and other great philosophers, while submitting that to understand nature and science one must understand Mathematics which is the key to innovation. Among other submissions, the Professor extolled the beauty of Mathematics and compared it to the Arts such as sculpture. He challenged WAEC to encourage its teachers to adopt innovative and imaginative approaches to pedagogy and to recognize that a love for Mathematics begins by imbibing a positive outlook in kids using hands on examples and making Mathematics fun.

Council wishes to assure Prof Akyeampong that the issues raised in his lecture will be carefully discussed by the relevant committees with a view to incorporating the recommendations made that will promote the understanding of Mathematics.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of Council I once again thank the Government and people of Ghana for accepting to host the 59th Annual Council Meeting. I also thank all individuals, institutions and corporate organizations that have contributed in various ways to make the hosting of the meeting in Accra a reality and for ensuring our comfort at all times.

May peace, prosperity and stability continue to be your blessings.

I thank you all for your attention.