

Esteemed Guests
Head of National Office
Colleagues
Media Representatives
Ladies and Gentlemen

Today, the 16th day of March 2020, marks the 68th anniversary of the establishment of our flagship organization, The West African Examinations Council (WAEC). On this joyous occasion therefore, I most heartily convey to you messages of goodwill, love and best wishes from the Chairman, Members of Council, Heads of Country Office and the entire staff of WAEC in the other four member countries. March 16 is the day designated WAEC Day, and on this day each year staff and friends of the Council in The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone set aside all other things to celebrate in commemoration of the creation of this iconic and resilient institution in March 1952. Our celebration takes various forms in different member countries as we bring together staff of all grades and cadres to actively participate in communal programmes with the friends, stakeholders and well-wishers of the Council. In some offices WAEC Day celebration has assumed the elaborate dimension of a week-long series of activities which include health, sports, charity, religious and public enlightenment programmes. I urge you all to use the occasion of this celebration to shake off stress and rejuvenate your zeal and commitment towards the building of a new WAEC of our collective dream. As the merriment gets underway in your country and you interact freely within the celebration arena, you should individually endeavour to encourage fellow members of the great WAEC family to continue to raise high the banner of WAEC and uphold the ideals upon which the Council was founded.

We have commenced preparations for the conduct of examinations and other activities of the Council across the sub-region. We were at the peak of arrangements for this anniversary celebration to be followed by the holding of the 68th Annual Council Meeting in Monrovia, Liberia from March 23 to 27, 2020 when we realized that the rapid spread of the Corona Virus pandemic would not augur well for large gatherings and close interactions which normally characterize the events of the Annual Council Meeting. Under the current unfortunate circumstances therefore, the international A & F Committee, at its 176th (Special) Meeting held in Accra on Thursday, March 12, 2020, had to take a difficult decision to suspend the 68th Annual Council Meeting until the global health situation improves.

Colleagues all, we deserve to congratulate ourselves on the achievements recorded through our collective efforts in the past year. The Council met the expectations of its publics and satisfied the aspirations of stakeholders in education by executing its mandate creditably across the sub-region. While flaunting the impressive scorecard of the past year, we are conscious of the commitment and support received from Council, the confidence reposed in the Council by Member Governments and the trust and goodwill expressed by stakeholders in education. Management has therefore, pledged on behalf of all staff to showcase better performance and greater achievements in the years ahead. To this end, Management has identified a number of latent potentials and mapped out in each case the appropriate strategy that can enhance the quality and scope of productivity in the critical operations of the Council.

Let me use the opportunity provided by this celebration to remind us all that the issues which I described in details in my New Year message to all staff must dominate our thoughts and actions as from the current year. We must consign the leakage of question papers permanently to history and suppress all other forms of malpractice towards extinction. Before long, examination administration and most other operations must be technology-driven. Best conditions of service and motivational packages are to be replicated across the national offices as a matter of urgency. Officers of high intellectual standing shall be identified and sponsored to deliver academic papers at international conferences to brighten the Council's image. The Council's services will be advertised more aggressively to expand the clientele beyond the sub-region. The Council's repository of skilled and competent human resources will be exploited to generate more revenue through consultancy services. Funds will be sought through various means to erect befitting head office buildings and establish branch/zonal/regional offices, where necessary, to decentralise operations. The Council must commence 100% in-house printing of all examination materials and codes without further delay to truly take its destiny in its own hands. Improvement of the working environment and provision of tools will be given priority attention in all the offices to enhance productivity and service delivery. Offices will be encouraged or assisted to install solar facilities to embrace a cleaner source of energy supply. The above-stated agenda will be encapsulated in a new Strategic Plan for the Council to be drawn up soon.

Colleagues all, changes have taken place at some top management positions in the Council. One of the conditions to be fulfilled by any serving officer who wishes to take up the contract appointment into the position of Registrar to Council is that he/she must first retire from the service of the Council. In line with this extant policy, I retired voluntarily as Head of the Gambia National Office before assuming duty at the Headquarters on October 1, 2019. Mr. Pa Samba Baldeh was subsequently appointed and has since taken over as HNO, Banjul. Similarly, Mr. Patrick E. Areghan assumed duty as HNO, Lagos following the statutory retirement of the former HNO, Mr. Olutise Adenipekun, on March 5, 2020. I congratulate Messrs Baldeh and Areghan on their new appointments and wish Mr. Adenipekun good health in retirement.

On the political scene, we wish and pray for peaceful and successful elections in the Republic of Ghana in December 2020.

Esteemed guests, as the scourge of the dreaded Corona Virus is rife globally at this period, I urge you all to pay closer attention to the health and safety of all members of your families. Ensure that you take all necessary precautions based on informed advice from medical experts and promptly take advantage of the health facilities provided by the government in case of any emergency.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I am grateful to you all for setting aside various other important matters competing for your attention to grace this occasion. Your presence is highly appreciated and you are most cherished.

I wish you all a happy celebration.