Press Statement on the occasion of One Web Day Celebration
(22nd September 2009) by the Local Internet Community

Today is OneWebDay. September 22 every year has been set aside to mark OneWebDay. OneWebDay is an annual global celebration of the collaborative, participatory nature of the World Wide Web. The idea behind OneWebDay is to focus attention on a key Internet value, and this year, the theme for the Day is "digital inclusion –one web for all"

As we reflect on how far we have come since last year's celebration, we realize that more has to be done in terms of improving on Ghana's penetration. Compared to 2.8% penetration of internet users quoted last year, the figure as at June 2009 is 4.2%. This is a marginal growth of 1.4% which is the same as the Africa average which grew by 1.4% from 5.3% to 6.7%[1]

It is worthwhile to note that realizing the need to improve this situation, Ghana is embarking on a multi-stakeholder National Broadband Strategy to change the fortunes of the country with respect to Internet user penetration by making the Internet accessible and affordable to Ghanaians, which makes the theme for this year's One Web day, Digital inclusion-One web for all, very appropriate indeed.

As part of the celebration, the Local Internet Community held a one day workshop yesterday with Sir Tim Berners-Lee at the Ghana India Kofi Annan Centre for ICT. Sir Berners-Lee who is the founder of the World Wide Web (www) twenty years ago was excited to be in Ghana and meet the local community whom he sees as including Africa and for that matter Ghana in the development of the world wide web. There was consensus that we need to overcome elements of what limits our active development of the web locally and internationally - speed is of essence.

According to the National Broadband Draft Strategy, investing in broadband is an investment in economic growth and development, and to realize this investment, broadband must be made accessible and affordable. This investment will have a positive impact on health, education and the standard of living; the three main indicators in the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI). Investing in broadband will help Ghana achieve its Millennium Development Goals.

The National Broadband Strategy seeks to achieve an increase in broadband penetration to 50% of the Ghanaian population and an increase in broadband bandwidth to 2 megabytes per second (mbps) by 2015. It is expected that this will contribute at least 6.9% to our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth over five years.[2]

For this to be realised, the commitment of government in particular and stakeholders in general to the implementation of this strategy is very critical.

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[1] http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm
[2] National Broadband Strategy (NBS) and Communiqué from NBS Workshop

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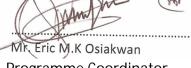<Tel: +233.21.258800 ext 7031> <Fax: +233.21.258811> <Cell: +233.28.7300377>
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Australia is highlighting its National Broadband strategy in this year's OneWebDay. We share a similar situation with Australia which, after realising that it was seriously lagging behind within the Organisation of Economic Development (OECD) has come up with a multi-billion broadband infrastructure plan, which aims to reach 90 percent of households and business.[3] This plan is being spearheaded by the government's Department of Broadband Communications and the Digital Economy. In addition, the government has committed $2.4M to support the development of web 2.0 tools and applications that have the potential to enable greater engagement between the government and community.

Ghana must take a cue from the Australian example. The Internet community in Ghana calls on the government and all stakeholders to vigorously pursue the National Broadband Strategy by developing policies and implementing the recommendations in the strategy. To this end, we recommend a Department or a desk at the Ministry of Communications be established to take charge of implementing the recommendations made at the National Broadband Strategy Workshop. Government must also commit adequate funds for this purpose, so that come One Web Day 2010, we shall see a marked improvement in our penetration statistics.

To achieve the objective of increasing our usage statistics in the coming decade, we CALL UPON the government, civil society, the private sector and individuals to ensure that human capacities that are enhanced or enabled by the Internet are preserved

For and on behalf of Internet Community in Ghana

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Mr. Eric M.K Osiakwan
Programme Coordinator

Conveners

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[3] http://www.onewebday.org

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