

CONTRIBUTION BY AMBASSADOR KABRAL BLAY-AMIHERE TO THE 6TH ACRAN SUMMIT IN ARUSHA, TANZANIA

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Colleagues and Participants

My name is Kabral Blay-Amihere. I am the Chairman of the National Media Commission, Ghana's Constitutional body charged with the responsibility of regulating all media in the country.

Like my two colleagues from Guinea and Mozambique, this is my first time at an ACRAN SUMMIT in the capacity as Chairman of the NMC, but I was privileged to attend the first Summit/Congress of ACRAN in 1998 in Libreville, Gabon representing the West African Journalists Association(WAJA), of which I was the President at that time.

By some coincidence, I had made my own migration from journalism to diplomacy as Ambassador of my country to Cote d'Ivoire when ACRAN in 2008 celebrated its 10th Anniversary and facilitated the invitation of journalists and other participants from some English speaking West African states at the instance of Mr. Diegou Bailly who hosted the celebration in Yamoussoukrom.

Permit me, Mr. Chairman to first of all congratulate, the Chairman of ACRAN, Hon. Ahmed Ghazali and previous chairmen of ACRAN for successfully keeping the dream of Libreville alive and making ACRAN survive to this day as a strong continental body.

Let me also congratulate Benin which has served as the Executive Secretariat for remaining the engine for the growth of ACRAN. Finally I salute Tanzania for successfully hosting this Summit. I am convinced ACRAN will be stronger under the leadership of Tanzania which has always stood with the continent in all its struggles.

Specific to the theme of the Congress, let me simply state that Ghana is on course for its migration to digital broadcasting.

Since December 2010, a Digital Migration Committee headed by the country's Minister of Communication has been in place.

Based on its work and recommendation, the Cabinet has approved the roll over plan or roadmap for a successful migration.

Secondly, a Private Public Partnership is to be established to oversee the practical task of acquiring a transmission platform. Tender bids are under consideration for the awarding of the contract for the commencement of work.

The programme and time table for the final switch off are as follows:

By the end of 2012 there will be a switch off and simulcast in the 10 regional capitals in Ghana to be followed by the final switch off by the end of 2014.

Ghana is determined to meet this deadline but as has been the experience of other countries, we face some real challenges in the following areas among others; creating the relevant legal framework for the new realities of digital broadcasting; monitoring and evaluating the performance of the resultant media spectrum and the new social media and finally ensuring that the public are adequately informed and educated about digital migration.

As some of you may be aware of, Ghana has two bodies in the media/communication sector. There is the National Communication Authority which as of now allocates frequency for the telecommunication industry and the broadcasting sector but has no powers to regulate content. That duty is the responsibility of the National Media Commission.

There lies the challenge. Hopefully a Broadcasting Bill in consideration might resolve this dilemma.

The NMC is close to establishing a Monitoring scheme that will enable us to monitor and evaluate broadcasting and the print media next year. In this regard we shall use our membership of ACRAN to learn from the experiences of other

countries. I visited HAAC, Morocco and saw the great pioneering work in this direction.

Finally a massive public education is planned for next year to ensure that the public are in full tune with the migration process and its implications.

It is our hope that deliberations at this summit will contribute to a successful migration for all our countries, and that we shall all collaborate to make this goal a reality.

I thank you for your attention.

Ambassador Kabral Blay-Amihere

Chairman

National Media Commission,

Ghana