

## **MTN Ghana Foundation Launch**

23<sup>rd</sup> November 2007

Speech by Patrick Awuah

Mr. Chairman,  
Honorable Ministers of State and Members of Parliament  
Nananom  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps  
The Executive Committee – MTN Ghana  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you for inviting me to speak at the launch of the MTN Foundation in Ghana. It is a real honor to be here, because this day represents a true milestone in the history of Corporate Ghana, and it heralds a new day for corporate philanthropy in this country.

It is very exciting to be at the launch of an African Corporate Foundation. I am thrilled to be here because I know that as a pan-African organization, the MTN Foundation understands the needs of our society; and because MTN is approaching the challenge of social significance in a deliberate and strategic way. I am excited about this venture because it is MTN, acting the MTN way.

As an individual who is currently engaged in a philanthropic project to help transform the African continent through education, I feel, with the arrival of the MTN Ghana Foundation, that the cavalry has arrived. Let me explain.

A renaissance on this continent will depend on leadership that is driven by a deep belief in the capacity of nations to chart a new course, and that inspires an entire citizenry to make new strides in organizing a more excellent society. The values that MTN holds dear –Leadership, Integrity, Can-Do, Innovation, and Relationships– are values that this continent desperately needs to see reflected in more public and private organizations.

There is quite a bit of evidence that MTN lives its values. Over the past fifteen years of its existence, the MTN Group has invested approximately \$4.2 billion in telecommunications infrastructure across the African continent, and now operates in 21 countries in Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia. The MTN Group has incorporated foundations in several countries to drive its long term commitment to invest 1% of its after tax profits in its philanthropic efforts. By sponsoring and promoting excellence in African football, MTN has helped elevate our continent in the world of sports, and to connect our peoples with others in the world. Clearly, these are the actions of an organization that believes in Africa's potential.

These are the reasons why I feel honored to join you in a conversation this evening about the purpose and potential impact of corporate philanthropy on this continent.

But as we begin this conversation, it is useful to reflect on the lessons of the past and ask probing questions about where we might go from here.

From the textile companies of England, which built infrastructure to transport textiles to the ports, to more recent examples of philanthropists who have brought financial services and sustainable living to the poor, history is filled with illustrations of the importance of philanthropy in driving the advancement of nations. In this country,

the first educational institutions were trade schools established by merchants who understood that their companies would be the primary beneficiaries of a better educated workforce. Most importantly, they set an example for others to follow. As such, I see the MTN Foundation as a renewal of this engagement by corporate Ghana.

Throughout history, the most successful philanthropic efforts have been those that sought to drive long term catalytic change. Yet, because of the nature of the task at hand, making the right strategic investments in philanthropy is fraught with difficulty – a difficulty that is driven by complexity. In the face of such complexity, I believe that it is important to apply the simplifying concepts that have proven so successful in solving engineering and business problems. It will be important, I think, to approach your philanthropy with the same intellectual rigor that you have done in building a global company and global network.

It is encouraging to see that the MTN Ghana Foundation has selected two area to focus on – education and health. Your decision to simplify and focus your engagement greatly increases your chances of success. And your choices hold great promise to be catalytic in advancing our society. Happily, the MTN Group will also gain long term benefits from these investments too.

Consider this. A better educated workforce is more productive; creates more economic value and helps grow the economy; and in so doing increases the purchasing power of society at large and thus increases demand for MTN services.

A better educated public service devises policies that lead to social harmony and a stable society. Well educated public officials implement economic policies that lead to growth and strengthen MTN's suppliers and customers.

Better educated engineers and other specialists design and build more effective and robust networks and drive innovation that will make MTN more competitive in the markets it operates in.

Similarly, a healthier society is more productive and benefits MTN's business.

U guess the thing that most excites me about the MTN Ghana Foundation is the leadership that it will provide for other members of corporate Ghana. As a Ghanaian corporation, TN Ghana has a built-in institutional intelligence about the needs of this society. As a part of a multi-national company, the MTN Ghana Foundation will have access to a broad variety of ideas and approaches to its work. I believe that this intersection of ideas and intelligences will result in some excellent innovations.

I sincerely hope that your work will inspire others –corporations and individuals alike- to follow your example. That will be the ultimate catalytic change. I wish you all the best of success and significance in the years to come.

Thank you.