

RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT

THE 74TH ANNUAL NEW YEAR SCHOOL & CONFERENCE: POSITIONING THE AFRICAN MARKET FOR SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH AFCTA (AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA)

ISSER CONFERENCE CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON, 17TH – 19TH JANUARY 2023

YOUTH SCHOOL, JANUARY 19, 2023.

The youth school, third edition, was organized by the school of continuing and distance education. It was held on the third day of the 74th Annual New Year School and Conference, dubbed “Positioning the African Market for Sustainable Economic Development through AfCTA. Other organizations, which co-sponsored were AfCTA, MTN and McDan Group.

The conference participants were mainly junior and senior high school students with their teacher guides, some tertiary students, young professionals and delegates from various stakeholder institutions such as AfCTA, Ghana Entrepreneurship Agency (GEA), Ministry of Finance and the University of Ghana College of Education summing up to about 300 participants. Participating senior high schools were Global School, Accra Girls, Accra High, Yiriel Bracha, **God's..... Montessori School and Mum's Memorial Academy.**

There were three (3) sessions; 1) the opening or first sessions which comprised opening addresses, a keynote presentation and a panel discussion 2) a breakout session and 3) a mentorship session.

The program began at 9:00 am with a beautiful choral performance by Accra High School Choir after which Dr. Olivia A.T Kwabong, Dean of the School of Continuing and Distance Education gave the welcome address.

In her address, she acknowledged the various committees, sponsors and individuals whose hard work made the organization of the conference a success. She then addressed participants saying “this conference is for you” and encouraged them to be interactive and learn.

The opening session continued with short addresses from the conference leadership and stakeholders. The first speaker, Mr. Jake Andrew Dotsey, Director of the 74th Annual New Year School and Conference, challenged the young participants to open up and take responsibility as they are the future and stakeholders

of sustainable development. He charged them to ponder over what they can do to also contribute to development, setting the stage for transformation.

The second speaker, Dr. Simon Peter Aheto, also Director of the 74th Annual New Year School and Conference, declared the expectations of the conference, which included inspiration by keynote speaker, entrepreneurship session, and enlightenment on AfCTA. He hoped that the conference will cause the preparedness of participants in accessing the opportunities that AfCTA presents.

Following him was a statement from the secretary of the College of Education, Mr. Nkansah who came in the stead of the college provost. Mr. Nkansah affirmed the support of the college for the youth school. A paradigm shift, he said, is all he hopes for the youth today. He charged them to stop wasting their lives on social media and assured them that the conference will enlighten them on the several advantages of AfCTA.

The fourth speaker, Prof. Felix Ankomah Asante, Pro Vice Chancellor, Research, Innovation and Development (RID) expressed the importance of young people in the society and the RID approach to harnessing the potentials of the youth for development. He mentioned some of these approaches as creating local and international platforms to utilize youth's ideas, enhancing opportunities for hands-on learning, providing mentorships, counselling, and providing resources to support youth driven innovations. He stated that these approaches are interdisciplinary, gender balances and socially inclusive in order to intentionally and consistently encourage innovations. He also said that RID increases access to information, digitization and protects the intellectual properties of students. He concluded by saying, "young people should not just bring solutions but solutions that can be monetized".

Next was Dr. Farid Arthur, National Coordinator, AfCTA. He expounded AfCTA as a collaboration of all fifty-five (55) African countries seeking to merge Africa economically through transformation and value addition of goods and services. He said AfCTA offers Africa the opportunity to make use of the our resources for ourselves as a continent. He mentioned that AfCTA has a protocol on youth and women and thereby encouraged them to approach the world in this perspective.

The session continued with the keynote speaker's presentation. The keynote speaker, Mr. Nana Owusu-Achaw, CEO of Kings Innovation, started by saying that the opportunities in Africa are found only in Africa after a brief of his educational background. He believed that young people today have been programmed to be lazy and suggested that to fight this laziness, they must intentionally seek information/knowledge. He also said that everyone is not meant to be an entrepreneur but rather some are intrapreneurs and so the youth

take a pause on everyone running around trying to start their own thing and look for a team to work with. He encouraged them to seek information on how economies are driven, learn a foreign language, preferable French as Ghana's neighboring countries are Francophone. He concluded with two questions for which he presented prizes: 5kg and 1kg bags of Nana's rice, 1kg of Ceresoya and \$100.00 leaving the participants in excitement.

The panel discussion followed afterwards. It had three speakers first in the person of Seth Twum Akwaboah (business development consultant), Ms Christiana Adu (GRASGA UG President), Mrs. Diana Adobea Antwi(Snr Researcher) and Stephen Odatefio from the Ministry of finance. Mr. Akwaboah was the first to speak. He spoke on the importance of youth creating businesses. He touched on what youth can export and channels for export. Before wrapping up his delivery, he urged youths to take advantage of internships and all available opportunities to learn and grow. Ms. Christiana Adu spoke briefly on leadership and how youth can leverage on African continental free trade Agreement to go into business and export globally. Mrs. Diana Adobea took her turn to speak on the role of the intellectual property right. She touched on the need to support one's innovation and how to properly protect it. In addition, she made known some types of intellectual property protections that exist and can be used. She took the audience through the process to get a grant and Intellectual protection done. Mr. Odatefio from the ministry of finance gave a preliminary speech on the YouStart initiative and the opportunities that it has for youth especially those with business ventures or ideas. He spoke extensively on entrepreneurship and encouraged youth to direct their energy to that aspect.

The afternoon session kick started with a breakout session where participants were placed into four groups and taken through a series of lessons on identity, self-worth, integrity, leadership, self-leadership, personal value, and personal mission statement. Resourced persons from the International Leadership Foundation facilitated this session. Participants were guided on how to prepare their personal mission statement, how to plan their day, and principles and values that will help them develop and be highly efficient in life.

Dr. George Acheampong, Snr. Lecturer, Marketing and Entrepreneurship, UGBS and Mr. Gamaliel Adjaho, Engaged the participants during the Mentorship Clinic session. They addressed questions on creating a career path and how students should harness their skills and pursue their goals. Dr. Acheampong in his closing remarks urged participants to try everything: education is more than acquiring knowledge in the classroom, they should learn to network. This is because the experiences they will gain will shape their life.