SPEAKING POINTS FOR THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION AT A4AI WEBINAR CONFERENCE ON THE THEME: SECURING GHANA'S DIGITAL FUTURE THROUGH INNOVATIVE INTERNET TECHNOLOGY AND PARTNERSHIP

<u>TOPIC" TRENDS IN INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY & SCIENCE' BRIDGING THE GENDER DIGITAL DIVIDE</u>

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Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I deem it an honour and privilege to be nominated to speak on behalf of the Minister of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), Prof. Kwabena Frimpong-Boateng.

Our Ministry exists to promote sustainable environmental management and the adoption and application of science, technological and innovations through the formulation of policies, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of sector plans and programmes.

The place of science and technology is so important in driving the developmental process of Ghana towards a knowledge economy.

This is the reason why Ghana is striving to change her national economic policy from capital accumulation to one that uses inputs in more productive ways by adopting knowledge-based economy that is driven by science and innovation.

We note as a country therefore that we can change our social and economic fortunes if we integrate science and technology in all policy segments under our national development plans so that the culture of innovation can be fully advanced.

My Honourable Minister has always emphasized that the poverty gap is a technological gap and the categorization of nations into advanced and developing nations is based on their capacity to intensify their scientific development and apply it in all aspects of development.

It is in this regard that the MESTI is bent on facilitating and liaising with other sector Ministries to ensure that Ghana moves through the middle-income bracket in a manner that will see the adoption and use of scientific/technological programmes to support our move into higher income levels.

Moving in this direction means that we should not leave any segment of our population behind. This is where MESTI is placing emphasis on gender parity to encourage more women and girls to use the Internet as a resource for development.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

While the national ICT policy recognizes ICTs as a tool for fighting gender inequality, statistics have it that less than 20% of women and girls in Ghana have access to the Internet.

This low patronage of the Internet resource by women and girls who form over 52% of Ghana's population is accounted for by the gender gap in access to technology, digital knowledge and ICT skills as well as the low percentage of girls in the science based fields.

And so as Ghana pursues the development of her Digital policy, MESTI will ensure that attention is paid to Digital Entrepreneurship and Digital Skills Development for girls so that they are not left behind.

Government will vigorously pursue the incorporation of ICT literacy into teacher training and school curricula, and encourage women and girls to enter science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programmes.

Adult ICT centres and programmes would also be established to support women's economic empowerment.

Other policies that will be pursued to address the main barriers to digital entrepreneurship and skills development for women and girls include the following:-

2) Ensure human capacity development to increase the supply of appropriate skills.

6 Create the best climate for incubation for women in ICT skills nationwide

7) Enable access to finance for start-up businesses by women who incubate

8) Improve social protection, particularly for women to ensure that no one is left behind

10) Create the emancipatory possibilities of digital entrepreneurship for women constrained by social and cultural practices to promote digital parity.

On Digital Skills Development, given that technology quickly transforms the skills required to compete for jobs and access to economic opportunities, attention will be paid by MESTI to:.

1. Promote Life-long learning opportunities particularly for low-skilled women workers, and address barriers to training needs that women face.

2. Put in an inclusive risk-mitigation mechanism that helps to crowd-in private funds to support SMEs in digital skills development particularly those operated by women.

3. Encourage females to study STEM subjects and pursue careers in the tech sectors, including ICT

4. Initiate access to relevant online content, especially content that is gender relevant as skills development will lead to the uptake of internet usage by women.

Let me add that MESTI has been informed by A4AI that the next Africa Summit on Women and Girls in Technology would be held in Ghana in 2021. MESTI welcomes the proposals and would collaborate to have the event achieve its purpose of encouraging more women and girls to move into the innovation platform offered by the internet.

On that note, I thank you for the attention.