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## **National Communications Authority**

*- Press Release*

### **GHANA AND CÔTE D'IVOIRE KICK OFF BILATERAL 'FREE' ROAMING**

**Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 4<sup>th</sup> July, 2023:** The National Communications Authority (NCA), Ghana and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Côte d'Ivoire (ARTCI) under the leadership of their respective Ministries (Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation (MoCD), Ghana/Ministry for Communication and Digital Economy, Côte d'Ivoire) have launched bilateral roaming services between the two Countries. The service was launched on 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2023 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

This milestone is in fulfilment of the recommendation at the 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Ministers in Charge of Telecommunications, ICT, Digitalisation and Post which required Member States that have met all prerequisite conditions to proceed with the ECOWAS Roaming implementation on a reciprocity basis.

Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire are the first Countries to activate roaming services (Voice, SMS and Data) under the ECOWAS Roaming Regulations. The initiative which was implemented in collaboration with Mobile Network Operators of both countries is aimed at reducing roaming rates/charges within the two Countries and facilitating cross-border movement.

Following the successful launch of the service, subscribers who travel within the two countries will henceforth be exempted from international roaming charges. This simply means that Ghanaian subscribers who travel to Côte d'Ivoire will be charged the IDD rate from Côte d'Ivoire when calling Ghana from Côte d'Ivoire and will be charged standard Ivorian Local rates when making local calls in Côte d'Ivoire with no roaming charges. This exemption, which was made possible by the removal of the surcharge on incoming intra-community roaming traffic in 2019, will result in substantial cost savings and enhance convenience for this category of subscribers.

Mr. Kwame Baah Acheamfuor, Head, International Relations at the MoCD, who read the Hon. Minister for Communications and Digitalisation's speech on her behalf, said the launch of the ECOWAS Free Roaming

Initiative between Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire was a major achievement in regional cooperation and connectivity. He reaffirmed that it is consistent with the vision of a borderless Africa and emphasized the need for robust cybersecurity measures to protect telecommunications networks. He thanked stakeholders and urged concerted action to harness the power of connectivity for the advancement of ECOWAS and Africa.



***Mr. Kwame Baah-Acheamfuor, Head, International Relations, MoCD, delivering a speech on behalf of the Minister, Hon. Ursula Owusu-Ekuful***

He further urged Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire to initiate discussions with their respective remaining neighbouring countries - Togo, Burkina Faso and Liberia, Guinea and Mali respectively. Additionally, the two countries were entreated to use the data gathered from the bilateral implementation to assist Member States that intend to implement same.

The Chief of Staff to the Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, Mr. Jean-Martial Adou, who read the speech for the Minister, Mr. Amadou Coulibaly, reiterated that a call to a neighbouring country like Ghana should not cost more than a call to Europe for example. "It is therefore imperative to find ways to reduce the cost of communications between our countries if we wish to develop the South-South cooperation dear to our governments", Mr. Coulibaly said. He added that the desire to see both countries develop is another reason his country has enthusiastically welcomed the collaborative initiative between Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. "We therefore did not hesitate to sign our agreement to initiate these exchanges, which in turn received a favourable response from the Ghanaian side" he said while complimenting Ghana's Minister for Communications and Digitalisation for her leadership and her commitment to the development of telecommunications.



***Mr. Jean-Martial Adou, Chief of Staff, Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy of Côte d'Ivoire delivering remarks on behalf of the Minister, Mr. Amadou Coulibaly***

In his speech, the Deputy Director General for Technical Operations (DDG-TO) at the NCA, Prof. Ezer Osei Yeboah-Boateng, stated that the initiative promotes collaboration, trade, and tourism between the two countries by facilitating affordable roaming services. He emphasized that this initiative serves as a model for other ECOWAS Member States, demonstrating the capacity for cooperation to create a more interconnected and prosperous region.



***Prof. Ezer Osei Yeboah Boateng, Deputy Director General for Technical Operations, NCA, presenting his remarks at the Launch***

Following the formal declaration of the launch of the bilateral ECOWAS Roaming Initiative, a Memorandum of Understanding underpinning the continued interaction between Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire was signed by Prof. Ezer Osei Yeboah-Boateng (DDG-TO, NCA) and Ms. Namahoua Touré (Director General, ARTCI).

The event was attended by representatives from the MoCD, NCA, ARTCI, Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy of Côte d'Ivoire, Vodafone Ghana, MTN Ghana, Moov CI, Orange CI and West Africa Telecommunications Regulators Assembly (WATRA).



***Prof. Ezer Osei Yeboah-Boateng and Ms. Namahoua Touré exchanging pleasantries after signing the Memorandum of Understanding***

Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire are optimistic that the successful implementation of this phased approach will incentivise other ECOWAS Member States to commit to the ECOWAS Roaming Initiative thereby fostering regional connectivity, trade and tourism in West Africa.

The Authority seizes this opportunity to express its appreciation to the MoCD for its support and direction and all MNOs in Ghana for their efforts and dedication so far towards the Project.

The NCA's door is widely open to further collaboration with other Member States and is hopeful that more bilateral agreements will be reached with other ECOWAS Member States for the benefit of the Ghanaian populace.



*A group picture of participants at the event*

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***About NCA***

*The National Communications Authority, (NCA), was established by an Act of Parliament, Act 524 in December 1996, which has been repealed and replaced by the National Communications Authority Act, 2008 (Act 769). The Authority is the statutory body mandated to license and to regulate electronic communication activities and services in the country.*