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# **National Communications Authority**

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## **SHAPING THE FUTURE; THE NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY'S STRATEGIC PLAN AND ITS IMPACT ON AN EVOLVING INDUSTRY**

The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector continues to play an important role in supporting rapid and sustainable economic growth, equitable social development, and job creation. It is in this vein that development of strategies has become crucial in the bid to seize new opportunities and effectively overcome challenges.

In an era of rapid technological advancements, where industries are constantly evolving, earlier this year, the National Communications Authority (NCA) unveiled its transformative Five-Year Strategic Plan for the period 2024-2028.

The launch of the Plan marked a significant milestone in the Authority's journey and it was unveiled at a time when the telecommunications and digital landscape was not only evolving but becoming central to the nation's economic growth. It is apparent that the leadership of the Authority understands the necessity of continuous innovation and strategic foresight to navigate this fast-paced industry. This is relevant because without a laid down action plan, it is very easy for the most driven individual to get side-tracked.

It is for this reason that the NCA's Five-Year Strategic Plan, presents a forward-thinking roadmap to navigating the complexities of Ghana's rapidly evolving ICT landscape. By anchoring its vision on innovation, collaboration, and inclusivity, the Plan has the potential to drive transformative growth. Added to this, emphasizing the roles of diverse stakeholders and outlining a collaborative roadmap will ensure that every sector has a vested interest in the Plan's success.

The Plan is not just a roadmap; it is a blueprint that will guide the NCA to move from being a good Regulator to a Great Regulator over the next five years; it will serve as a guide for subsequent boards irrespective of political leanings.

Additionally, it positions the Authority to pushing the digital agenda, encouraging innovation, and providing fair access to ICT for all citizens. It also sets out ambitious goals to propel Ghana's communications sector to new heights, ensuring that the NCA remains at the forefront of regulatory excellence, innovation, and consumer welfare.

This feature article highlights the significance of the NCA's Five-Year Strategic Plan, focusing on its vision, goals, and impact on the communications industry and the country. It emphasizes

the collaborative approach, stakeholder engagement, and the need for constant innovation to drive success in the rapidly evolving sector.

### ***The Strategic Plan***

The Authority, in a quest to achieve its long-term obligation, between December 2022 and April 2023 embarked on an assignment to produce a comprehensive Strategic Plan that will detail the NCA's goals, objectives, and strategies for a five-year period spanning 2024 to 2028. The Authority employed a wide consultative approach bringing on board the combined expectations of all internal and external stakeholders, and taking into consideration the need for the Authority to re-invent itself in light of new and developing digital electronic communications globally, meet the needs of consumers and to sustain the existence of the NCA. It is important to note that this is the very first ever Strategic Plan that the NCA has developed under its own steam.

### ***Integration of Regional and International Strategies/Frameworks***

The development of the Plan was not done in a vacuum. However, it took inspiration from the key deliverables of the current Board Strategy. It also took into consideration prescriptions and strategies of the national, regional and international development agenda.

At the national level, this Strategic Plan ensured that it is in sync with Ghana's Development Plan namely:

- The Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies 2021-2025 (CPESDP)
- The National Digital Economy Policy
- The Digital Economy for Africa (DE4A)

At the international level, the Plan aligns with the Mission of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 7, 9 and 12).

### ***The NCA's Transformational Mission***

The Strategic Plan is not just about regulatory excellence; it is about transforming the NCA into a more impactful force within the communications sector.

As a forward-looking institution, the NCA aims to elevate its status from a "Good Regulator" to a "Great Regulator" over the next five years. This ambitious vision is embedded in the updated Mission Statement of the Authority, which reflects a commitment to professional and proactive regulation that aligns with global best practices.

It is worth noting that while the NCA maintained its vision, it has recast its Mission Statement for the next five years as: Moving from Good to a Great Regulator: An innovative, agile, professional and proactive regulator, adaptive to emerging changes in the communication and digital eco-system, and delivering optimally to all its stakeholders.

This goal will be achieved by the implementation of strategic activities under four strategic pillars.

### ***Core Pillars of the Strategic Plan***

As the Regulator reviews the evolving nature of the industry and looks at the expectations of its stakeholders, it cannot stay complacent. It requires audacious goals to drive it into the future. These audacious goals are enshrined in the four strategic pillars outlined below:

1. **Research, Innovation, and Process Improvement:** The communications sector is fast-paced, with new technologies and business models emerging continuously. The NCA considers research as a crucial driver to reducing the gap between the industry's technological leaps and regulation. The NCA is therefore committed to fostering a culture of innovation by prioritizing research and improving internal processes to stay ahead of industry trends. This will include efforts to adopt cutting-edge technologies while improving regulatory frameworks to support emerging digital ecosystems. Fostering innovation in an industry that is constantly changing and evolving such as the telecom and digitalisation space is more important now than ever. Consequently, the Regulator that can innovate effectively, is able to devise new policies, products, services, and regulatory models that can assist them to be abreast with the industry.
2. **Stakeholder Coordination and Engagement:** Collaboration is central to the NCA's strategic vision. The Plan emphasizes strengthening partnerships with internal and external stakeholders, including government agencies and private sector players. This collaborative approach will ensure the effective implementation of policies that benefit all sectors of the communications industry.

The overall purpose of this pillar is to ensure that a consistent, comprehensive and coordinated approach is taken for stakeholder engagement internally and externally. To ensure that this achieved, the Authority will engage in relationships and partnerships building and the stakeholder map will form the basis of this stakeholder engagement. Also, information and knowledge sharing platforms in the form of dialogue forums, virtual pages and dedicated software dashboards will be developed to facilitate work, demonstrate transparency and ensure understanding and compliance among stakeholders.

3. **Human Resource Strengthening:** One of the most significant pillars of the Strategic Plan is focused on empowering the Authority's workforce since a solid human resource base will be crucial in driving the success of the other strategic pillars. By enhancing staff welfare, boosting morale, reducing attrition, and providing professional development opportunities, the NCA seeks to create a highly motivated, skilled, and productive team.

Added to this, it will capitalise on the data management and automation already underway and will ensure the reduction in manual and monotonous work. The drive for a paperless eco-friendly work environment will also be keenly pursued as part of this pillar.

4. **Resource Optimization and Growth:** Maximizing the efficient use of available resources essential for the NCA's growth. The Plan outlines key initiatives to ensure that resources are allocated effectively and used in a manner that aligns with the Authority's overarching goals and priorities.

To this end, the NCA will position itself to accelerate Ghana's digital transformation through efficient and effective management of the radio frequency spectrum to facilitate the roll-out of the latest generation of mobile technologies such as 5G services to promote their use by various sectors of the economy. The Authority will develop an appropriate framework for the adoption of new satellite services, such as those in the Non-Geostationary Orbit (NGSO), giving due regard to the national interest and fair competition.

These Pillars encapsulate the total principles that are to guide the Regulator to cover the entire cycle and sphere of its operations and engagements.

### ***Expected Outcomes***

At the core of the NCA's strategic vision is the desire to leave a lasting impact not only on the communications industry but on the nation as a whole. The Strategic Plan will be instrumental in shaping Ghana's digital economy and ensuring that the country remains competitive in the global communications landscape. The strategies, goals and objectives encompassed by the Plan are the metric of success of the Authority for the next five years.

Over the next five years, the NCA's work will help create an environment where innovation thrives, competition is fair, and consumers are protected. This journey of transformation will:

- unleash research potential of the NCA to drive policy options or proposals;
- better position the NCA to effectively regulate new services that ride on emerging technologies;
- increase NCA's revenue streams; and
- move NCA's ranking on the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) G5 Benchmark from Advanced to Leading status.

For the consumer/stakeholder, improved stakeholder relations between the Authority and its stakeholders will strengthen internal and external collaboration and coordination and reduce stakeholder complaints.

The outcomes for the industry include improved quality and efficiency of broadcasting, enhanced market competition and industry growth, more efficient and effective use of spectrum, the availability of safe electronic devices, and increased broadband access and speed to support the digital economy.

The NCA's Strategic Plan marks a critical step in shaping the future of Ghana's communications industry. By focusing on regulatory excellence, digital transformation, and consumer protection, the plan will help navigate the complex, fast-evolving sector. Its successful implementation will not only enhance the communications infrastructure but will also position

Ghana as a regional leader in the digital age. As the industry continues to evolve, the NCA's proactive and strategic approach will ensure that the sector remains both competitive and consumer-friendly, offering a brighter, more connected future for all.

Without a doubt, this Strategic Plan is a guiding torch to enabling an innovative, agile and proactive regulator with the ability to adapt to emerging trends in the electronic communications industry. For this reason, the Authority is determined to embrace the Plan as a guiding beacon, lighting its way to a future where Ghana stands as a benchmark in the electronic communications industry.

The Five-Year Strategic Plan is not just a reflection of the Authority's ambitions but a call to action for everyone involved in the communications sector to join in building a brighter, more connected future for Ghana. Through concrete actions that will ensure the improvement of broadband access for underserved communities, enhance consumer protection through stricter device certification, and foster innovation to attract global investments into Ghana's communications sector, we can shape a future where Ghana is a leader in the global digital economy.

As the Authority embarks on the journey outlined in the Strategic Plan, Leadership and Staff remain confident that it will guide the industry towards a future of innovation, excellence, and success. Together, the Authority and its stakeholders will continue to advance the telecommunications landscape and fulfil its mission to serve the people of Ghana.

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