

ADDRESS BY MINISTER FOR INFORMATION, HON. KOJO OPPONG NKRUMAH, AT THE LAUNCH OF THE INFORMATION SERVICES DEPARTMENT (ISD) WEBSITE ON MONDAY, 13TH MARCH 2023 AT THE PRESS CENTRE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION UNDER THE THEME “EQUIPPING THE ISD TO FIGHT MISINFORMATION”

HON. DEPUTY MINISTER, MOI

CHIEF DIRECTOR, MOI

ACTING CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

DIRECTORS OF MOI & ISD

INVITED GUESTS

Good morning,

I am delighted to welcome all of you to this event which is very important to us here at the Ministry of Information and the Information Services Dept. To start off, I want to outline the six major things that we are focused on here at the Ministry of Information in accordance with our mandate and situate today’s event within the framework of our six focal priorities.

1. Our **Government Communications** function is to support Ministries, Departments and Agencies to provide governance information to stakeholders regularly and promptly. This is executed through;
 - Minister’s Press Briefings
 - State of the Region’s Reports

- State of the Agencies Report
- Representation of Govt Spokespersons on Mass Media Platforms

Hon Deputy Minister Fatimatu Abubakr leads this brief.

2. Our **Media Support Programs** are designed to help build a stronger media ecosystem for Ghanaian Democracy. This is executed through two programs;
 - Media Capacity Enhancement program, which provides financial support for industry players to train practising journalists.
 - Coordinated Mechanism for the Safety of Journalists, which assists the National Media Commission in developing a strong framework to protect the work of journalists in Ghana.
3. **Oversee the implementation of the Right to Information Act, ACT 989.**

This has been done by deploying 250 information officers across Ministries, Departments and Agencies and supporting the Right to Information Commission to oversee and, where necessary, sanction MDAs that fail to comply with the law.
4. **Provide a platform for channelling feedback to the Executive Branch of Government.** This is done through regular scientific surveys conducted by the newly established research dept of the ISD. It is also done by engaging stakeholders at Town Hall Meetings and Policy Summits to get

inputs and feedback for consideration in policy and program formulation, implementation and assessment.

5. **Represent the State-Owned Media in Parliament.** It must be noted that State-owned media, by virtue of the provisions of article 167(C) of the 1992 constitution and section 2 (1) (c) of The NATIONAL MEDIA COMMISSION ACT, 1993 (ACT 449), insulated the media from governmental control. Their Boards and Management administer them under the Supervision of the NMC. MOI plays a perfunctory representation role in Parliament. In recent months however, we have secured a 3 million USD grant from the AfDB to assist Ghana News Agency in rolling out a Business and Economic News Project, which should make it the leading audiovisual hub for Business and Economic News about the Ghanaian Economy.

We have also assisted the Boards of Graphic and Times in exploring new ways of injecting capital into their operations and becoming more competitive. But as I mentioned, these entities are independent.

6. **Supervise the work of the Information Services Dept.**

Today's launch is in furtherance of the combined objectives 6 and 1. Which are Supervising the ISD and supporting Ministries Depts and Agencies to communicate regularly.

Brief History of the Department

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Information Services Department (ISD) was established in the latter part of 1939 (84 Years Ago) as a branch of the Colonial Government Secretariat dedicated to conveying news on the 2nd World War to the people of the then Gold Coast. This was done by producing a weekly journal dubbed the “*Empire at War*”. After the war, it remained as a *Public Relations Department* with oversight responsibility for the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, the Ghana News Agency and the Ghana Film Industry Corporation until they were decoupled to form separate entities.

In accordance with recommendations made by the Coussey Committee constituted to investigate the 1949 disturbances, the Gold Coast Government reorganized the Department into the *Department of Information* and transformed it into an information disseminating unit to bridge the communication gap between the government and the governed.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Department, famous for its iconic green and yellow vans and usually described as “aban cine”, has over the years earned immense credit and won wide acclaim as the authentic voice of government, particularly in rural communities in the country. The ISD provides critical public relations and public education support in collaboration with relevant public organizations. A few of the notable

successes of the Department on major national landmark projects include providing PR, sensitization and education for the construction of the Akosombo dam; re-introduction of the VAT of 17% after a previous failed attempt; seamless introduction of the new Ghana cedi in 2007; successful conduct of the 2018 national agriculture census; 2017 national education campaign on voluntary tax compliance, sensitisation campaign for the referendum held in connection with the creation of six (6) new regions and the Public Education Campaign on the E-Levy in recent times.

The Department has been doing this through the use of various Public Education Campaign strategies and the deployment of Public Relations professionals and Regional and District Information Officers to MMDAS and MDAs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Department is currently represented in all sixteen (16) regions and 261 districts of the country.

The Retooling Programme

Despite the successes that have been chalked in the delivery of their mandate over the years, the Department has lost some steam mostly due to two main factors.

- The Inability of successive administrations to equip it.
- The inability of the department to keep up with the ever-changing media landscape and the technology that goes with it.

In response to this difficulty and to make the Department relevant in contemporary times, Cabinet approved a Programme for the Department to undergo vigorous re-tooling and re-organization to meet the needs of the present day.

So Far, we have established a state-of-the-art research department, an ultra-modern Public Relations Coordinating Division, and the Media Division, which rolls out its first project today. All these are geared towards positioning the Department to become a very vibrant institution for the dissemination of authentic information on government in order to keep the public well informed. We expect to complete processes shortly to open up the new Public Education Campaign, featuring the iconic Green and Yellow Vans popular known as ‘Aban Cine’. This will be useful in ensuring that word gets to the last mile about Governance.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The launch of this project by the Media Department of the ISD forms an integral part of the re-organization and retooling Programme and it is aimed at equipping the Department to serve more audiences with its work even as the times and media consumption patterns change.

As you may be aware, a significant section of our population now relies on online platforms and other social media platforms for information. It is also important

to note that some unscrupulous persons have used many of these portals and social media platforms to propagate falsehood and misinformation. This phenomenon is gradually undermining our democracy.

The rollout of this website will, therefore, aid the Department in the fight against misinformation by providing direct information from Ministries, Departments and Agencies about the works of Government and becoming a repository of all happenings in government. It will provide facts about Government projects and programmes, full texts of all speeches by heads of MDAs, official communications and publications, policies and program documents to reduce the level of misrepresentations and sometimes outright misinformation online.

I wish to thank the leadership of the ISD Media Division and the ISD generally for developing this all-important tool. As I have charged you earlier, platforms like this are only as useful as how regularly and accurately you update them. So work quickly and accurately to ensure that the Ghanaian citizen is reached with all the facts and the necessary documentation as soon as possible. Do not wait until tomorrow. Do it now.

To your PROs across the MDAs, it is your job to ensure that the information and the documents reach ISD Media today, so they are published. The regular delays

in getting materials to your colleagues at ISD media will only undermine the potential efficacy of this very useful tool. So, get to work with speed and call for help if you need help with the bureaucracy in your ministries.

To our colleagues in the media, we hope this becomes a useful tool that makes your all-important work easier. To the general public, reach out to www.ghanatoday.gov.gh if you want to validate the information about Govt works that you may come across. Let me conclude by thanking the Management and staff of the Ministry and the Information Services Department for your hard work and thank you, our friends, for attending upon our invitation today.

I now declare the www.ghanatoday.gov.gh

formally launched.

Thank you for your attention!