
U.S. TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY



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MEDIA INQUIRIES:

Donna Thiessen
(703) 875-4357

GHANAIAN VICE PRESIDENT MAHAMA OPENS USTDA CONFERENCE ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE IN WEST AFRICA

USTDA Awards Grants to Support the Development of the ICT Sector in Niger and Liberia

ACCRA, GHANA – In support of USTDA’s long-term commitment to infrastructure development in Africa, Vice President Mahama, Deputy Director Zak and Ambassador David Gross opened a conference on expanding information and communications technology infrastructure in West Africa. The goal of the conference, co-sponsored by USTDA, the U.S. Department of State and the Government of Ghana, is to promote a dialogue on the development of the ICT sector necessary to support West Africa’s economic development. The event, which opened today at the La Palm Royal Beach Hotel in Accra, Ghana, continues through July 10th and attracted participation by approximately 200 participants, including His Excellency Alhaji Aliu Mahama, Vice President of Ghana, as well as Ministers and other senior government officials from 12 West African nations.

“By providing the private sector with the connections it needs to compete in the global economy, ICT infrastructure is a catalyst for growth and an essential building block for development,” said USTDA Deputy Director Leocadia I. Zak. “The countries represented at this event are taking the steps necessary to create the right conditions for private industry to enter the market with the solutions necessary for this sector to thrive in West Africa.”

Under the theme *West Africa ICT Road Map to Opportunities Conference*, the conference agenda is addressing key policy issues and highlighting efforts to expand telecommunications infrastructure, improve delivery of government services, and support the growth of e-commerce. In particular, the event is focusing on regional market creation and cross-border cooperation on wireless technologies and includes an examination of ICT in the areas of e-Commerce and e-Government in West Africa.

Project sponsors from West Africa at the event are providing U.S. company representatives with details on new export and investment opportunities associated with 16 projects ranging in value from \$1 million - \$450 million. Participating countries at the event include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Gabon, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. The projects being presented include opportunities for commercial partnerships in expanding communication networks, developing fiber optic backbone networks and submarine communications systems, implementing solutions for rural connectivity, and the provision of e-Government, e-Learning, and telemedicine services.

Reflecting the U.S. Government's commitment to the development of this essential sector in West Africa, Deputy Director Zak signed two grant agreements, valued at \$745,000, to further the development of separate ICT projects in Niger and Liberia. The first grant will fund an assessment for Seaquest InfoTel Niger S.A., a private Nigerien company, of the technical and financial viability of a proposed national ICT backbone project in Niger. This grant represents the first investment by USTDA in Niger and reflects the importance that USTDA places on ICT development throughout West Africa. In addition, the second grant will support a similar study for the state-run Liberian Telecommunications Company on the technical and financial viability of a proposed metropolitan fiber optic ring project around Monrovia. Additional information on each grant is contained in a separate information sheet.

In addition to Deputy Director Zak, Vice President Mahama and Ambassador Gross, the Honorable Dr. Benjamin Aggrey Ntim, Minister of Communications of Ghana; Ambassador David A. Gross, U.S. Coordinator for International Communications and Information Policy; and Dr. Hamadoun Touré, Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union, also presented remarks at the opening plenary. Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate of the Federal Communications Commission also participated in the opening session and press conference following the plenary.

USTDA is pleased to partner with key players in the ICT sector including the following conference sponsors: Alcatel-Lucent Corporation, Microsoft, Oracle, Intel, Motorola, QUALCOMM, DiscoveryTel, and Telecom/Telematique, Inc. Each of these partners will share their perspective on ICT development and how different solutions may benefit long-term growth in West Africa.

The U.S. Trade and Development Agency advances economic development and U.S. commercial interests in developing and middle-income countries. The agency funds various forms of technical assistance, early investment analysis, training, orientation visits and business workshops that support the development of a modern infrastructure and a fair and open trading environment. USTDA's strategic use of foreign assistance funds to support sound investment policy and decision-making in host countries creates an enabling environment for trade, investment and sustainable economic development. In carrying out its mission, USTDA gives emphasis to economic sectors that may benefit from U.S. exports of goods and services.