

STATEMENT ON THE LAUNCH OF GHANA'S FIRST SATELITE INTO SPACE:

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Just this past Friday, Ghana made history when a privately owned university launched the country's first satellite into orbit. It took the tenacity and ingenuity of engineers and students from the All Nations University College (ANUC) In Koforidua, who designed, built and launched the satellite from the International Space Centre.

The Purpose for the launch into orbit of Ghana's first satellite christened Ghana Sat1 among other things is for the collection of data for the country's space and science and technology sectors.

Mr. Speaker, I first heard about the story on Friday on the BBC. Instinctively, I went online, scouring several sources for news of this historic satellite launch from local media. To my surprise, the story, as heart warming as it is, received little or no local press coverage at the time it broke.

A section of the media has subsequently given it the necessary prominence and I think that is commendable. I hope that in the future, the media in our nation would be very interested in giving prominence to positive news of this historic nature the same way they do negative ones.

It would be a shame, Mr. Speaker, if this Honourable House does not add its voice to the many messages of congratulations and encouragement to the ANUC, their sponsors and Japanese partners who facilitated the successful launch.

But this House, just like the Executive arm of government, must not just celebrate this success; we must add our voices to calls to help the ANUC and other Institutions of higher learning that are exploring new technology. The nation must be seen to be investing and spending

more on research and development. Data from the Ministry of finance show less than five percent of our GDP is spent on Research and Development. That would get us nowhere if we are interested in gaining from the advantages that come with advancements in technology.

Mr. Speaker, every generation has a mission, an opportunity to do better than the generation that preceded them. Our founding fathers and senior citizens paid their dues by securing for us independence. That is our inheritance. Ours is to take the development of our country to another level – a higher level or best possible height. And in doing so, we need a ‘stand on your two feet mentality’ to drive us to do better.

One of the things that have held us back is the inertia in trying and exploring new opportunities. We have become a consumer driven nation. And that explains why many of our youth are jobless - there's very little we create or produce ourselves. We import just about everything - from tomatoes to the toothpicks we use. The focus has to change and it will require political and personal sacrifices.

Let us discourage the importation of gas guzzlers; let's have a freeze on the importation of vehicles, it will help us to learn how to make and fix cars.

Let us have a freeze on the sort of things that we could comfortably create right here in Ghana if we put our minds to it and put in place the necessary investments.

The problems we face are surmountable. The All Nations University College; The KNUST, Ashesi University, the University of Ghana and others who have dared try something new have shown us that it can be done.

Mr. Speaker, in this 21st century, nations are no longer depending on natural resources for their prosperity. We may not be able to compete

with India, China, Germany on the size of GDP or salaries, but we can compete with the rest of the world on high value added goods and services.

That requires our ability to do everything we can to increase the involvement of young people in the study of science and maths. And to be successful at science and maths, we need universal internet access in every school in the country, and no child – be they from Kumbungu, Suame, Keta or La, must be left behind.

To paraphrase Dr. Luther KING – what we do now and what we decide now at this age, may well determine which way our country shall go. And the question is whether we have a proper, a solid and a sound blueprint.’ I believe we don’t have a solid and a sound blueprint, but we can start now.

Mr. Speaker, the world is changing so fast we just cannot afford to choose inaction as an option. We have to rise to the occasion and become competitive. If we can’t be the best in the world, if we can’t out-innovate Germany, Japan, America, China or India, let’s be the best in Africa, and if we can’t be the best in Africa, let’s be number one in West Africa. At least we must start from somewhere.

We must keep striving – keep moving – we must keep trying; for our enjoyment of the years ahead depends on our ability to work for it. Not only do we need to be sending more satellites into orbit, but we ^{should} to be making our own advances in science and technology that would give us a front row position in the world of science and technology and yes, oh yes we can. I thank you