

ADDRESS BY WAEC REGISTRAR DR IYI UWADIAE
AT THE FORMAL OPENING OF THE 61ST ANNUAL
COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN BANJUL, THE GAMBIA
ON TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 2013

Your Excellency, President and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of The Gambia

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps

Honourable Minister of Education

Vice Chairman of Council

Leaders of Delegation and Chief Government Nominees on Council

Members of Council

The Registrar to Council

Former Chairmen of Council

Former Registrars to Council

Distinguished Friends of Council

Staff of the Council

Members of the Fourth Estate

Ladies and Gentlemen

INTRODUCTION

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the Formal Opening of the 61st Annual Meeting of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC). On behalf of Management and the entire staff of WAEC in The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, I present to you all warm greetings and sincere appreciation for honouring our invitation. We are highly delighted that the Chief Host of the 61st Council Meeting, the President and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of The Gambia, His Excellency, Sheikh Professor Alhaji Dr. Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh (*GMRG*), has graciously accepted to set aside many pressing state engagements to be in our midst at the opening of this Council Meeting. We thank you so very much for your presence, Mr. President. We appreciate your Government for the impeccable arrangement and functional facilities put in place for the comfort of delegates and for the

successful hosting of the various events. I want to also appreciate the people of The Gambia for the first class hospitality we have been accorded since our arrival in Banjul. Delegates have noted all the places in and around Banjul, where they must find time to visit and appreciate the rich cultural heritage of the Gambian people. They will also find time enjoy the special African dishes and delicacies, which are available in this great country.

ROTATIONAL PRINCIPLE

Your Excellency, hosting of the Annual Council Meeting among member countries is based on a well-defined rotational arrangement agreed upon by the member governments. In line with the rotational order of hosting, we were last gathered in this great City for the 56th Annual Council Meeting in March 2008. After that memorable occasion, the meeting shifted to Sierra Leone in 2009, Liberia in 2010, Ghana in 2011, Nigeria in 2012, and we are here again. The only time this principle of rotation has had a break was in 1996 when Liberia was unable to host Council due to the raging civil strife in the country at that time, and which was why the 44th Annual Council Meeting was hosted by Ghana.

The pleasant experience we had in our interactions with the highly hospitable people of The Gambia and the nostalgia we felt concerning the sandy beaches at the end of our stay in Banjul six years ago, still linger in our memories. I am confident that this time we shall also have such a wonderful stay in this country that departing Banjul after the Meeting may be a difficult decision to make.

THE COUNCIL'S EXAMINATIONS

Your Excellency, I am pleased to inform this august gathering that all the scheduled examinations of the Council – national and international – were conducted hitch-free and leakage-free in 2012. The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone presented candidates for the May/June and November/December 2012 editions of the Council's international examination, the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), while The Gambia, Ghana and Sierra Leone also presented candidates for various national examinations. The Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) was conducted for candidates in The Gambia, Ghana and Sierra Leone. In addition, the General Business Certificate Examination (GBCE) and the Advanced Business Certificate Examination (ABCE) were conducted for

candidates in Ghana; the National Primary School Examination (NPSE) was conducted for candidates in Sierra Leone; while the National Assessment Test (NAT) was conducted for candidates in The Gambia. Liberia presented candidates for the Junior and Senior High School Certificate examinations.

PATRONAGE

The Council has continued to record increase in the total candidature for its international examination, the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). A total of 2,548,230 candidates sat the Council's WASSCE in all the Member Countries in 2012. This total figure was made up of 1,936,728 school candidates and 611,502 private candidates who included 1,402,552 males and 1,145,678 females. The 2012 total figure showed an increase of 248,041 candidates (or 10.78%) over the 2011 figure of 2,300,189 and an increase of 681,490 candidates (or 36.50%) over the 2010 figure of 1,866,740.

Further details of the 2012 WASSCE candidature shows that a total of 14,206 candidates (or 0.55%), made up of 7,848 school candidates and 6,358 private candidates sat the examination in The Gambia; 351,001 candidates (or 13.77%) made up of 174,383 school candidates and 176,618 private candidates in Ghana; 2,109,192 candidates (or 82.77 %) comprising 1,695,878 school candidates and 413,314 private candidates in Nigeria; and 73,831 candidates (or 2.89%), comprising 58,619 school candidates and 15,212 private candidates in Sierra Leone.

Like its international examination, the Council's main national examinations recorded an improvement in overall patronage in 2012. The total entry figure was 729,559 candidates, indicating an increase of 36,847 candidates (or 5.31%) over the 2011 figure of 692,712. This increase, as against the decrease caused by Liberia's stoppage of the 6th Grade examination in 2011, was due to the introduction of the Grade 8 edition of NAT in The Gambia in 2012. The total candidature for the Council's national examinations in 2012 comprised 100,931 candidates (or 13.83%) from The Gambia, 384,201 (or 52.66%) from Ghana, 64,862 (or 8.89%) from Liberia and 179,565 (or 24.61%) from Sierra Leone. The Council does not conduct national examinations in Nigeria.

The Council conducted aptitude/selection tests for public and private institutions in the member countries. The test batteries were developed by the Council's Aptitude Test Development

Section of the Research Department. A total of 16,951 testees sat the tests in 2012. This total figure was made up of 2,620 testees from Ghana, 1,318 from Liberia and 13,013 from Nigeria.

The overall patronage for the Council's international and national examinations and aptitude tests increased in 2012 by 9.38% with a total candidature of **3,294,740** compared to the total of **3,011,925** candidates that sat the examinations in the previous year 2011.

EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

Your Excellency, I am glad to re-state here, as I have said earlier on in this report, that all the Council's examinations were conducted leakage-free in 2012. I wish to express deep worry however, that other forms of examination fraud have continued to plague the Council's examinations in all the Member Countries. Cases of collusion, mass cheating, use of cell phones to cheat and the non-appearance syndrome were reported from the various countries where some of the perpetrators were said to have exhibited varying levels of sophistication and desperation.

The evil of examination malpractice is a reflection of the decadence in our society and has its roots in the unfortunate neglect which educational institutions have suffered for many years. Most schools are ill-equipped for the teaching-learning process as they lack, among other things, facilities, conducive environment and qualified teachers. Candidates who are inadequately prepared to face examination often lose self-confidence and resort to cheating as a way of achieving success. Examination fraud has assumed criminal dimensions in some member countries and the war against the malaise has become too stressful, dangerous and expensive for examining bodies to prosecute alone. I therefore, wish to reiterate the Council's constant appeal to Member Governments and other stakeholders to re-focus attention on the funding of all levels of education, and intensify efforts in various directions to subdue the diehard perpetrators of examination malpractice for the total eradication of the malaise. The Council, on its own part, shall continue to protect the sanctity of its assessment instruments and processes, and keep on the alert its monitoring systems to detect and sanction all cases of impropriety in its examinations.

DEPLOYMENT OF ICT TO SERVICE DELIVERY

Your Excellency, in the past year though most aspects of the Council's operations and activities at the various offices in the member countries had become ICT-based, the Council kept marching

on with giant strides towards the attainment of the highest standards in the application of ICT to the various processes. In our strive for the highest level of ICT deployment we also engaged in capacity building for the Council's staff, candidates, teachers, service providers and other stakeholders to ensure their ability to cope with the demands of the emerging technology-driven service delivery systems of the Council. In the current year, we are determined to increase the tempo of ICT deployment in the Council's service delivery systems by, among other things, taking advantage of ICT to expand the Council's database, improve on security and further accelerate the processing of results and issuance of certificates.

FINANCE

Your Excellency, the issue of poor funding has remained a challenge in the affairs of the Council. Despite constant reminders and appeals to the Member Governments, the level of fulfilment of their financial obligations to the Council in the past year was far from adequate. Huge arrears of contribution to the Headquarters and subvention to some National Offices were left unpaid by their respective Governments. The Secretariat appreciates the economic situations of some of our member countries and the efforts being made by Governments to meet their financial commitments to the various sectors of the economy. While we express profound gratitude to all government representatives on Council for their efforts in the period under review at ensuring the fulfilment of government commitments to the Council, we wish to appeal for greater efforts to be made in the current year towards clearing all government indebtedness to the Council and ensuring prompt payments in the years ahead.

WAEC ENDOWMENT FUND

Your Excellency, during the WAEC 30th anniversary celebrations in March 1982, Council inaugurated an Endowment Fund. The objects of the Fund are to promote educational projects of an international nature, provide awards to individuals and institutions for outstanding contributions to the Council's work and give prizes for outstanding performance by candidates in the Council's examinations. Pursuant to these objects, Council will at today's ceremony present three candidates with the WAEC Excellence Awards for their outstanding performance in the May/June 2012 WASSCE. The candidates are Miss Yvette Yeboah-Kordieh (1st Prize), Master Josbert Abaasa Ayambire (2nd Prize) and Master Bright Seyram Tsevi (3rd Prize).

The three candidates, all Ghanaians, were selected from a total of 1,936,728 candidates who sat the May/June 2012 WASSCE in the The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

Miss Yvette Yeboah-Kordieh has also won the Bandele Oyediran Award for the Best Candidate in West Africa.

Similarly, at this ceremony, the prestigious Award of *Distinguished Friend of Council* will be conferred on Mr. Matthew P. Ndure, former Head of National Office, WAEC, The Gambia and former Registrar to Council.

The Secretariat of WAEC heartily congratulates the award recipients.

Yesterday, the WAEC Endowment Fund Lecture titled *Rethinking Teaching, Learning and Examining for Quality Enhancement in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Roles, Challenges and Prospects of Digital Technologies*, which is the 18th in the series of lectures, was delivered by Professor Mohammadou M. O. Kah of The Gambia. We appreciate the lecturer for his erudition and eloquence in the delivery of the lecture.

CONCLUSION

Your Excellency, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, we appreciate the Governments of WAEC Member Countries for their commitment to the Council's success and continued existence. We are grateful to their Ministers of Education for finding WAEC worthy of patronage in the administration of the various national and international examinations. We thank the Permanent Secretaries, Chief Directors, Directors General, Directors and other Professional Officers in the respective ministries of education for the positive roles which they have continued to play in the Council's collaborative efforts with their ministries. We appreciate our service providers – item writers, moderators, centre supervisors, invigilators, custodians/depot keepers, internet providers, cyber café operators, etc – for their contributions to the success of the Council over the years. We must also congratulate ourselves on holding high the banner of this noble organization by keeping faith with its Vision and Mission statements through quality service delivery to stakeholders worldwide.

Mr. President, we appreciate you, Sir, for the great honour done our organization by your presence on this occasion.

Most of all, we thank the Almighty God for the divine favour which our organisation has enjoyed in the sixty one years of its existence.

I thank you all.