

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITALISATION,  
MRS URSULA OWUSU-EKUFUL**

**PRESS BRIEFING, MINISTRY OF INFORMATION**

**5G DEPLOYMENT IN GHANA**

**Thursday, 30<sup>th</sup> May, 2024**

The Hon. Minister for Information

Hon. Deputy Ministers

Heads of Departments and Agencies

Chief Director, Directors, and Staff of the MoCD,

Our Media friends

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you all for joining us today. I am delighted and proud to announce a transformative partnership that marks a new era in digital connectivity for Ghana. The Government of Ghana, in collaboration with Ascend Digital, K-NET, Radisys, Nokia, and Tech Mahindra, supported by All Mobile Network Operators in Ghana, starting with AT and Telecel, has launched the Next-Gen InfraCo (NGIC). This initiative aims to deliver affordable 5G mobile broadband services across our nation, propelling us towards a fully digitized Ghana by 2030. I am pleased to inform you that this landmark partnership was signed in Mumbai, India, on Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2024, the culmination of a process which started over 2 years ago.

Firstly, let me provide an overview of this groundbreaking partnership. The Next-Gen InfraCo (NGIC) is a new shared infrastructure company, co-promoted by the Government of Ghana, Ascend Digital, and K-NET. This partnership includes leading technology providers Nokia, Radisys and Tech Mahindra. Discussions will soon be finalised with Microsoft, which has expressed an interest in this project. NGIC's equity will be held by the Republic of Ghana, Ascend Digital, K-NET, all Mobile Network Operators in Ghana and other investors including the technology providers who may wish to join the consortium.

NGIC has been awarded a 5G license and is expected to launch 5G services across Ghana within the next six months, with plans for future expansion into other parts of Africa. The shared 4G and 5G infrastructure will be built by Nokia and Radisys, with IT architecture and integration provided by Microsoft and Tech Mahindra. This collaboration ensures that we leverage cutting edge world-class expertise and technology to build a robust digital infrastructure.

NGIC's neutral hosting model and Network-as-a-Service (NaaS) offering will accelerate national enablement programs, reduce the digital divide, optimize capital expenditure, and ensure efficient operating costs while respecting Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) fundamentals by reducing environmental impact and carbon footprint. This innovative approach will make high-speed, secure, and seamless mobile services accessible to all Ghanaians.

In addition to the above, the NGIC network will provide a strong foundation for the government to offer new services to the people of Ghana through extended inclusion programs, e-government applications, and enabling unlimited opportunities for the private sector and the economy to grow. NGIC's origin is rooted in our national vision of universal access to broadband, delivering citizen-centric services through e-Gov initiatives.

It is our expectation that the implementation of this will see NGIC democratize mobile broadband services and become a catalyst for growth in Ghana's telco market, enabling MNOs to focus on customer excellence, deliver differentiated and innovative services, and foster a high-tech economy with digital entrepreneurs. Our youth will have the opportunity to become digital entrepreneurs, driving innovation and economic growth. It will also facilitate the entry of other network operators into the Ghana market, riding on this infrastructure to deliver their services

NGIC will enable a "reset" of Ghana's economy by attracting investments across all sectors and providing access to all manner of e- services and improve the quality of life for all Ghanaians by ensuring that everyone, regardless of their location, has access to the latest digital services.

Efforts towards a 100% digital Ghana include rehabilitating critical national infrastructure such as the eastern corridor fibre, the national data center, and LTE FWA, building a rural telephony network connecting 3.4 million subscribers in rural communities, establishing the

Cybersecurity Authority and resourcing the Data Protection Commission among other initiatives, all aimed at providing a resilient framework for digitalisation. These efforts have already shown significant positive impacts on our communities.

We have also built a high-speed E-Gov network connecting 951 public institutions and agencies across the country, powered by 3500 kms of newly laid fibre, providing a nationwide resilient 100Gbps optical fibre infrastructure that will serve as the platform for delivering 4G/5G services across Ghana. This network has facilitated the delivery of essential services and improved the efficiency of government operations.

As the sole wholesale 5G licensee in Ghana, NGIC will offer an open access based neutral platform to all MNOs and collaborate with all tower companies in the country. AT and Telecel Ghana have already signed partnership agreements with NGIC. Discussions with MTN will begin shortly and they are also expected to sign on. This inclusive approach ensures that all service providers have equal access to the infrastructure needed to deliver high-quality services to their customers.

All MNOs and ISPs are part of this venture and have been invited to invest in the project. We believe it even has the potential of attracting renowned MVNOs to consider operating in Ghana, providing more choice to consumers.

The initial focus is on building a scalable shared infrastructure in Ghana, with the potential to expand to other parts of Africa. NGIC may seek additional funding through capital markets to support future scaling. NGIC aims to be the first 5G Mobile Broadband Shared Infrastructure Entity to build a nationwide 4G/5G network. The company plans to launch affordable 4G/5G-enabled Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) CPEs and smartphones within this calendar year.

The partnership will enhance the lives of Ghanaians by introducing digital services in education, healthcare, and digital payment transactions, creating sustainable jobs for VAS operators and other tech entrepreneurs. This initiative aims to reduce the digital divide and promote financial inclusion. The partnership will support NGIC in the entire deployment of network infrastructure and associated services, as communications service providers aim to address both enterprise and consumer markets with enhanced digital services. I'll urge our young people to take advantage of this infrastructure, learn, innovate and create solutions that address our contemporary challenges. This has the potential of creating numerous jobs in this sector and the prospects are very exciting.

NGIC plans to adopt India's successful model of affordable handsets, digital platforms, and localized content to replicate high-speed mobile data access across Africa. This approach will ensure that our digital services are accessible and relevant to all Ghanaians.

NGIC's wholesale 5G service is expected to be launched in the last quarter of this year. The company plans to deploy 4,400 sites, aiming to reach 37 million end customers by 2028, with the goal of making Ghana 100% digital by 2030. Ghana has a mobile penetration rate of 115%, with an average monthly data usage expected to rise from 1.9 GB to 20 GB by 2028. Despite launching 4G in Ghana 9 years ago, the current 4G penetration rate is 15%, with the majority of the population using 3G networks. Through NGIC, we hope to increase the 4G penetration rate to 80% and beyond nationwide, with a total deployment of 3,200 and 1,200 4G and 5G sites, respectively, rolled out in the next 3 years.

The existing 1,000 plus 4G-ready towers built by the Rural telephony Project, have significantly impacted 4G adoption in rural areas. NGIC expects to expand 4G services and enhance coverage in underserved areas to ensure that even the most remote communities have access to high-speed internet and the benefits it brings.

The benefits of 5G technology are numerous. It offers faster speeds, lower latency, more connections, and better reliability. These improvements will support a range of new applications and services, from enhanced mobile broadband to massive machine type communication and ultra-reliable low latency communications. 5G will transform industries, enable new business models, and drive economic growth.

261 operators in 101 countries had launched commercial 5G services as at January this year. In Africa, 16 countries, including South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and Tanzania, have deployed 5G services. Ghana has adopted the innovative shared network infrastructure model for 5G deployment to provide a level playing field for all service providers and ensure equal access to 5G services. A 5G-compatible phone or device will be required to access the network and NGIC will work with all MNO partners to launch affordable 4G/5G-enabled devices this year. This will ensure that all Ghanaians can take advantage of the new services enabled by 5G technology.

As the Government rolls out its digital agenda, the Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation aims to ensure equal access to internet connectivity throughout the country. Learning from previous experiences, where only one MNO had the means to acquire the 4G

spectrum, the government has implemented policies to ensure every communications user has equal access to public and private digital services, regardless of their service provider.

In line with international best practices, NGIC's license will be long-term, issued for a period of at least ten years. This approach acknowledges the capital-intensive nature of such projects and provides licensees with the necessary time to recoup their investments.

Ghana is well-positioned for 5G implementation due to a robust regulatory framework, existing infrastructure, market demand, and government support. Our proactive approach and commitment to innovation has positioned us as a leader in digital transformation in Africa.

Countries like Malaysia, Germany, and the United States have shown success with similar shared infrastructure models. Malaysia's Digital Nasional Berhad (DNB) has expanded 5G coverage, aiming to cover 50% of rural areas by mid-2024. Germany promotes infrastructure sharing for efficient resource use. The United States encourages innovation and reduces costs through initiatives like Open Radio Access Network (O-RAN).

The shared network infrastructure model aims to reduce investment pressures on incumbent MNOs while delivering best-in-class 5G services to all consumers. By increasing speeds and network capacity, 5G will open up opportunities for greater bandwidth, enabling significant data transmission compared to 4G LTE. This will drive economic growth, foster innovation, create new jobs, and open new business opportunities in various industries. This initiative is a significant step towards achieving a fully digitalised Ghana by 2030.

I would like to acknowledge our key partners.

Nokia is providing a state-of-the-art Radio Access Network and has committed to set up its first technology innovation lab in Accra, offering career opportunities for engineering graduates in the technology sector and creating 5G use cases for the continent.

Another partner, Tech Mahindra a global managed services company and the prime contractor for the Cloud Native Core network from Microsoft, will build a Cloud Native Core Network powered by leading OEM platforms to support the deployment of network infrastructure and associated services. This cutting-edge technology will ensure that our network is robust, scalable, and capable of supporting future innovations. Tech Mahindra will

also set up its first global software delivery center in Ghana, enabling our youth to acquire cutting edge skills and lead in AI, robotics, machine learning, and automation.

Radisys, a Jio Platform Company, is providing Open Radio Access Network (Open RAN) to enable disaggregated networks for 4G and 5G mobile and fixed wireless access. Radisys also brings affordable 4G and 5G devices along with digital platforms and applications, fostering sustainable and inclusive development. This collaboration with NGIC is its first venture in Africa, hopefully the first of many. Its partner company, Reliance Jio, is currently the largest MNO in the world with 477 million subscribers. We hope a little bit of their magic will rub off on us in Ghana and through NGIC, the rest of Africa.

A lot of interest is being shown in NGIC in the global world of technology as this model is the first of its kind in Africa. We hope to replicate it in other parts of the continent, showcasing that it is possible, with Ghana leading the way as the Digital Black Star of Africa.

In conclusion, the Akufo-Addo/ Bawumia Government is committed to ensuring equal access to internet connectivity throughout the country. This shared network infrastructure for 5G represents a strategic move to provide affordable, high-speed mobile broadband services, reduce the digital divide, and promote financial inclusion. This initiative is a significant step towards achieving a fully digitized Ghana by 2030. We look forward to the successful deployment of nationwide 4G/5G services and the transformative impact it will have on the lives of Ghanaians.

**Ghana, 100% Digital. It is possible indeed!!**

Thank you for your attention.