

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS  
OPENING OF WORKSHOP ON  
TAXONOMIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN GHANA  
HONOURABLE MINISTER  
MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT**

Mr. Chairman  
Honourable Ministers of State  
Members of Parliament  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps  
Directors Scientists  
Workshop Participants  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I am happy to be with you this morning on the occasion of the formal opening of the inception workshop on the project on Taxonomic Needs Assessment in Ghana.

I have been told that this project in Ghana is following immediately after the UK undertook her own assessment and that the results, apart from providing useful hints on the end use of taxonomy for national development in Ghana, it is also going to be used as a case study for international consumption at the Convention on Biological Diversity through its Global Taxonomy Initiative.

In the first place, the Government of Ghana is pleased with the funding support from the Government of the UK through her Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Secondly, we are happy that Ghana through its veritable institutions was selected by the UK for this project from a very tall list of probable beneficiary countries. I am confident that the Ghanaian team assigned to this project will deliver and that at the end of the next ten to twelve months, we will have the privilege of assembling here again to listen to the outcome of the project.

Taxonomy, as a discipline, is the scientific mode of assigning names to biological organisms. Most of us may not be familiar with this terminology, but if we can recall a bit of our school days either undertaking nature study or biology, we are likely to remember some names which our teachers used to refer to certain local plants or animals. In many cases, these names were in Latin and their pronunciation as well as memorizing them was a very difficult task. It appears this initial introduction shut many of us off from pursuing this line of study. With time many of us found the subject dry and unattractive.

Under this project, we are now being made aware that for us, as a nation, to have a useful plan in the way we utilize whatever biological heritage we have, we need to know what it is. Knowing what it is is taxonomy.

We will ask such familiar questions about insects as what kind of insects do we have in Ghana? Which of them are destructive of our crops? Which are responsible for causing diseases to humans? Which are responsible for providing very useful services? When we begin such questions, not only for insects but for several other living organisms including micro-organisms in health, agriculture, forestry etc. then we are actually becoming end users of the discipline Taxonomy.

We know we need the information about the living organisms around us, but we have not made adequate efforts to get this knowledge.

I believe that given the enormous requirements in this project, whatever the impediment which is responsible for this low interest in the subject and low output in terms of knowledge base, would be unraveled for the attention of all stakeholders.

I also believe that the project will provide to government whatever is needed of this discipline in Ghana in terms of capacity development and utilization.

In assuming the environment portfolio as an additional responsibility, my ministry is poised to uphold all the international environmental agreements the Government and people of Ghana have subscribed to over the years.

We are vigorously pursuing the implementation of all the UN Conventions comprised of the Biological Diversity, Framework Convention on Climate Change and Convention to Combat Desertification with the common elements that run through them from a synergistic approach.

We recognize that Taxonomy has a very strong role in pursuing this approach. The identification of the types of organism that are well suited to overcome the effects of degraded environments is a must. We also need to understand the roles played by different species in climate change mitigation.

I think I must stop here because the more I delve into the promise of this project into our national efforts towards the MDGs in particular to the global targets of 2010, 2012 and 2015 as they related to wealth creation and poverty alleviation, the more I prolong the close of this opening ceremony. I do not want to keep you here longer than it is necessary.

I would therefore, wish to declare this inception **Workshop on Taxonomic Needs Assessment in Ghana** open.