

SPEECH DELIVERED BY PROF. W. O. ELLIS, VICE-CHANCELLOR OF KNUST AS A GUEST OF HONOUR TO THE 3RD APPLIED RESEARCH CONFERENCE IN AFRICA (ARCA, 2014) ON 7TH AUGUST, 2014 AT 8.30AM AT THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS, ACCRA ON THE THEME “*THE ROLE OF AFRICAN RESEARCHERS IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONTINENT*”

Chairman

Honourable Ministers

President and Executive Members of the Alumni Association

Distinguished Invited Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would want to thank the organisers of this Conference for inviting me as the Guest to this 3rd Applied Research Conference in Africa (ARCA 2014). On behalf of the management of the University, I would want to thank and congratulate you all for making time to be part of this Conference and it is my hope that the outcome would go a long way to positively affect the fortunes of our economies as Africans because as Teknokrats, we must be seen to be making meaningful, sustainable and cost effective contributions to the socio-economic development of our continent.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, focused research or demand driven research has become an integral part of every development effort and the need for African countries to use the outputs of scientific and technological research as one of the strategies for achieving economic and social development is not new to any intellectual discourse. This is because, we have continuously talked about the fact that it is through research that we will be able to make

findings and break-throughs which when disseminated, will significantly improve the quality of life of our people. It has also been stated that science and technology is the bedrock for development. However, this is underpinned by focused research and in this respect, the African Researcher becomes pivotal to changing the fortunes of this continent and it is a challenge to be embraced by higher education and research institutions as well as African governments.

As Africans, our age-old developmental problems of water supply, sanitation, malaria, road accidents, unemployment, inflation, food insecurity, access to health care and basic education, infant mortality and malnutrition, amongst others, continue to enjoy considerable public discourse without the needed practical implementation of the outcomes of such public discourses. Compounding these problems in recent times is the fluctuating returns from our export of raw materials and agricultural products. Consequently, our continent continues to lag behind in almost all the internationally accepted socio-economic development indicators such as GDP, life expectancy, literacy levels and employment, among others. Can we afford to perpetually lag behind in a globalised world where others are continually researching and developing better technologies and applications that are enhancing their lives?

Recent challenges indicate that there is an urgent need to vigorously build our research capabilities and the quality of research as well as build more effective linkages with businesses and other external stakeholders with a greater alignment of our research activities with our national goals. Our research should underpin knowledge creation and technology transfer that is linked to the achievement of national goals. We should be seen to be concentrating attention on carrying out high quality policy-relevant and development-oriented research and

disseminate the results of such research activities to facilitate the socio-economic development of our continent.

As an African researcher myself and coming from one of Africa's top-notch research institutions, I am not oblivious of the tremendous work African Researchers have done in a myriad of fields but the fact still remains that, there is more that needs to be done. We need to revisit results of our various scattered research works and by so doing, ensure that all unimplemented research outcomes are implemented to inform our way forward as far as development is concerned. In this direction, there is the urgent need for capacity building for the African researcher in the area of technology transfer.

As we may be aware, different economies require different sets of knowledge and research. Research, as the production of knowledge must include both discoveries and inventions and situation-specific enquiries in order to apply knowledge to any meaningful development. We must, therefore, carry our own burden by pursuing our own research agenda. The real challenge for us, therefore, would be the need to consciously ensure that our research efforts concentrate on areas that are at the core of our development effort such as food production, diversification, preservation and processing, livestock production and processing, industrial and manufacturing technologies, software systems, environment and its protection/sustainability, energy production and distribution, infrastructure, access to health care and funding, HIV/AIDS, maternal and child mortality, as well as education provision; amongst others.

We must also ensure that new technologies from our research efforts reach all those who really need them such as farmers, fishermen and rural dwellers by overcoming problems such as the lack of information in some cases and inability to pay for commercially developed technologies. In this respect, we would have to continuously revitalise and refocus our research units to deliver high quality research and services in their core areas and optimise the returns from such research efforts since the challenges of the time keeps changing. We also have to increase the capacity of researchers and knowledge users as an essential element of research development on the continent.

As Teknocrats, we are charged with a lead role in continuously charting a new paradigm for our development as a continent which is being plagued by underdevelopment. There is, therefore, the need for Teknocrats to be heard in professing opinions, alternatives and solutions on national issues. Unfortunately, in view of the prevailing political temperature and the resultant vilification others have suffered, we tend to recoil into our shells. At the end of the day, the whole society suffers and our conscience would never be clear. Let us all then resolve to make our technical and meaningful contributions to our development effort as Teknocrats for the socio-economic development of our continent squarely depends on you and I. I thank you all and wish you a fruitful Conference.