

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE MINISTER FOR SANITATION AND WATER RESOURCES, HON. LYDIA SEYRAM ALHASSAN (MP) ON THE OCCASION OF OPENING OF MOLE 35 WASH CONFERENCE ON 7<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2024 AT THE VOLTA SERENE HOTEL, HO**

Today marks another milestone in the history of the MOLE WASH Conference, an important national platform where Ghana's most pressing Water, Sanitation and Hygiene issues are deliberated upon and appropriate solutions proffered. Today, we have come together to shed light on critical issues pertaining to the WASH sector of Ghana. As suggested by the theme for this year's conference: **"Looking back on SDG 6 implementation in Ghana: Progress, Challenges and the Way forward"**, it is appropriate to pause and assess our performance with the view of correcting mistakes made and re-strategizing for accelerated implementation of agreed actions. I am therefore happy to know that after 9 years of implementing the various targets of the SDG 6, as a sector, we ought to pause to assess our collective performance and renew our commitments to perfecting our approaches to make us get to our destination faster and easier.

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**, I am very happy to note that, together, we have developed the appropriate strategic documents that would guide us into the future. Key amongst these documents are the Ghana WASH Sector Development Programme (2021-2030), the National Water Policy, National Solid Waste Management Strategy, Liquid Waste Management Strategy, Rural Sanitation Model and Strategy, the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area Sanitation Masterplan and the Hand Hygiene for All Strategy. Others are at the final stages of development. The next critical issue then is how we leverage on our varied, unique strengths to implement the strategies seamlessly. It is for this reason that I see this gathering as a very vital forum in our quest to bring water and sanitation services to the doorsteps of everyone living in Ghana.

It is imperative that we are also guided by the commitments made in the Ghana Presidential Compact on Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), signed by **His Excellency the President of the Republic, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo**, about a month ago. This Compact represents our collective commitment to achieving universal access to safe and sustainable WASH services, which helps us to set clear goals and align our national priorities with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). I am of the view that our success in managing water and sanitation services and adapting to climate change will largely depend on how effectively we implement the commitments made in the Compact as well as those in the other strategic documents earlier mentioned.

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**, the MOLE Conference series cannot and should not be taken for granted. This is a forum that offers all stakeholders an opportunity to confront the challenges of implementation of our shared strategies. We need to appreciate the fact that, like any other sector in Ghana, the WASH sector has had its fair share of challenges along the way, but the good news is that we have far more opportunities to be proud of and make the next 6 years ahead of us even better. I have a firm conviction that the MOLE 35 Conference is going to set a unique tone to deepen the conversation around the strategies and I would be keenly waiting for the outcome from this four-day conference, to guide my Ministry in the effective coordination of implementation activities. I am convinced that with the enthusiasm I see in this room, we can get more than enough to guide our thoughts and actions, going forward.

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen**, climate change and gender inclusiveness should be an integral part of our discussions, especially at this time when the Affirmative Action Act has been passed and we are experiencing erratic rainfall patterns, droughts and frequent floods which pose serious threats to our natural resources, particularly water bodies and infrastructure provided for water and sanitation. We cannot fail the next generation, so we ought to redouble our efforts at tackling the myriads of challenges in the sector.

To augment the advantages of working together as a unified sector, we also need to address the yawning gap in funding for WASH services, which has caused many of our ambitious plans to remain un-realised. We therefore need to explore innovative financing mechanisms, strengthen public-private partnerships, and mobilise both domestic and international private sector funding to help bridge this funding gap.

I must emphasise, that effective service delivery in the WASH sector requires robust policies, strategies and plans that must be coherent and mutually reinforcing to our current needs and sector aspirations.

**My Dear WASH Partners**, I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to you all for your unwavering and invaluable support for this sector. I must reckon that your expertise, dedication, and collaboration have in no small way helped in shaping our sector and brought us closer to our national development goals. Your continued partnership is crucial, as we continue the remaining SDG journey together in delivering effective, sustainable and accessible WASH services for all.

**Chairman**, I wish to reaffirm the Ministry's commitment to leading and supporting the efforts of partners in achieving sustainable WASH services. Let us use this Conference as a catalyst for action, strengthening our partnerships, reviewing challenges, discussing the way forward, refining our strategies and committing to a future where every Ghanaian has access to adequate, safe, affordable and reliable basic water services as well as practicing safe sanitation and hygiene.

At this point, I have the singular honour, **Ladies and Gentlemen**, to declare the 35<sup>th</sup> MOLE WASH Conference duly opened, and I wish you all fruitful deliberations.

**Thank you and may the Good Lord bless us all and our homeland Ghana.**