Inspirational Public Sector Leadership Awards, Accra, 25th September 2019

Welcome address by H.E. Swiss Ambassador Philipp Stalder

Dear Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here today and represent the Embassy of Switzerland at this event to and welcome you to what I believe will be an exciting ceremony, namely to celebrate pioneers using innovation to make public services more efficient.

I would like to first commend IMANI Ghana for this laudable initiative to recognize the efforts of Ghanaian innovators.

Innovation is crucial to all aspects of our lives, not only when it comes to the world of business. From my own country's perspective, I can clearly say that in this knowledge-based society, innovation is one of the key drivers of economic prosperity and growth. The same observation I made during my postings in two Asian countries and I am convinced the same is true for Ghana and Africa. Constantly new approaches on how to deliver services faster, better and cheaper is the business model of the 21st century.

I am glad to note that the private sector in Ghana has taken a front lead in the quest for innovation and I note, for instance, the case of electronic bill payments, new e-commerce solutions, the application of drone technology to medical services delivery; or tech start-ups that do everything from applications that are used to screen crop diseases, to those that are used to deliver efficient health services.

So far, so good, one could say; and allow me to add that there is absolutely no reason why the overall benefits of innovation should not be made applicable and transferred to the public service. This is even more crucial when I look at the concept of "Ghana Beyond Aid". To create jobs and slowly decrease the level of foreign assistance is laudable and the right way to go for Ghana. With this in mind, it seems to me critical, that the public sector and the state bodies improve their interaction with the population by employing new means that make services delivered cost-effective, timely and efficient so that scarce public resources are not deviated or wasted.

Switzerland is well known for many things. But did you for example know, that Swiss people trust key institutions like the central or the local governments highly? A study in 2017 revealed that nearly 80% of Swiss citizens have confidence in the federal government, almost double the OECD average of 42%. My guess is that this trust can mainly be explained by the fact that people in Switzerland can always expect a high level of good services delivered to them by the
public sector. What can also be seen here is that efficiency in public service elicits solidarity and trust. In other words, one could also say: “In people we trust!”

And by the way and with a hint to the referendum taking place in Ghana in December, some research also shows that trust towards the public sector tends to be higher where there is greater political participation. To conclude, one could say, it needs trustworthy and visionary people in the public sector in combination with constant application of innovation, to provide citizens with the best solutions.

I am glad that IMANI Ghana has embarked on this task to advocate for, and highlight innovative reforms and award the persons who are making these advances. I am excited at the prospects that this awards scheme will engender for the future and the innovations it will inspire.

On this note, I thank you for joining us today to the 2019 Inspirational Public Sector Awards Ceremony and let me congratulate IMANI and its partners for the initiative once again.

Thank you.