

ADDRESS DELIVERED BY DR KOFI MBIAH, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE GHANA SHIPPERS AUTHORITY, ON THE OCCASION OF 10TH THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNION OF AFRICAN SHIPPERS COUNCILS HELD AT THE ACCRA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE ON THE 27TH OF JANUARY 2016.

Mr Chairman

The Representative of His Excellency the Vice President of the Republic of Ghana,

Honourable Ministers and Members of Parliament,

The Secretary General of the Maritime Organisation of West and Central Africa (MOWCA),

The Chairman of the Union of African Shippers Councils,

Secretary General of the Union,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

The Media,

Distinguished Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I wish you all a very good morning. On behalf of the Board of Directors, Management and Staff of the Ghana Shippers Authority and on my own behalf, I welcome you all to the 10th Edition of the General Assembly of the Union of African Shippers Councils.

I consider it a great privilege and indeed an honour to address this august and distinguished assembly. The pleasure to do so is mine and I do cherish it. Nine months

begets a child; 39 years in the life of an International Organisation such as ours is indeed significant and that is why this Assembly holds a pride of place in the annals of our Union. This is the birthplace of the Union of African Shippers Councils. Indeed the Union has come home.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished invited guests, ladies and gentlemen, over the last couple of years, the centre of gravity of global manufacturing shifted to Asia and with it, increased trade and prosperity. Today, the economies of the new and emerging markets in Asia and the BRICS are showing signs of overheating. There is no doubt that the next centre of gravity for global manufacturing, production and consumption would be Africa. According to the International Shipping Development Index published by BIMCO, global trade is expected to double in the next decade while world population as estimated by The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs in 2014 hovers around 7.3 billion out of which our continent is home to over 1.2 billion; 950 million of which live in sub Saharan Africa. Africa's population is projected to reach 2 billion in the next decade. The expected growth in population should bring with it the potential for increased growth and prosperity. How do we unleash the potential?

The second golden age of globalization is on its way, yet Africa still accounts for only 3% of world trade and has the greatest untapped market in the world.

To what extent is Africa preparing itself to assume the reins of the global economy?

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Guests Ladies and Gentlemen, in the coming years, a number of emerging issues would take centre stage in the rapidly changing dynamics of the maritime trade and transport industry. The new paradigm and the attending dynamics would require huge investments in ports and ports infrastructure; the world would see an unbridled determination to shift to cleaner fuels. The crave for gas deposits would increase. Undoubtedly, with the increase in global trade, we must

expect our waterways to get more crowded especially within straits, enclosed seas and on the new sea routes of the arctic. The need for ecological balance will more and more engage our attention and there would thus be the need for global regulation to provide direction and decency. Concerns over logistics chain security would be on the increase and so would be the quest for increased trade facilitation. There would be the need to invest in people and to upgrade our human capital and capacity. The rule of ocean governance would be paramount.

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Guests. How does Africa and in particular our sub-region position itself to confront the challenges of this milieu? Our sub-region is characterized by a low level of Infrastructure which continues to act as a stumbling block to intra Africa Trade. The railway and road infrastructure were designed by the colonialist to facilitate the exploitation of the wealth and resources of our countries. Our level of technological penetration in business in an ever-increasing technological world has been all but appreciable. We are still confronted with tariff and non- tariff barriers to trade.

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Guests, it is only by our own exertions that we can bring progress, unity and strength into Africa. In this Union, we see a unifying force and an essential requirement in the progress towards African Unity.

Through our Union we must work with our governments to transform our infrastructure, remove the barriers to trade, give true meaning to a common market and build linkages to our territories for easy access to trade.

It is only a robust infrastructure with the requisite connectivities that can boost the industrial expansion of the sub-region and thus generate employment for our teeming youth.

Our deliberations at this Assembly must set a new tone and a landmark for the resuscitation of our economies. It must mark a new and purposeful beginning for strengthening the trading relations and hence the industrialization of our sub-region. It

must be the stepping stone for our industrial expansion, a challenge to our industry and fortitude and our hope for the future.

Mr Chairman, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. It is 39 years since we came together to form our Union. We had an objective in doing so. We cannot turn back. We cannot walk alone. None of our countries can do it alone. Today must be yet another landmark. Today must mark a new beginning. A beginning of promise towards the realization of sub-regional cohesion, unity and solidarity. Our meeting here today must narrow the gap that lies between the promise of the ideals of our founding fathers and the reality of our time.

We cannot resolve our issues with respect to the bottlenecks in trade facilitation, excessive charges, the poor service standards and the growing issues of competitiveness unless we solve them together. Unless we strengthen our Union. I have hope, I have conviction, I have belief. My belief stems from our cultural lineage, our common bonds of family and heritage. We are the same people, Francophone, Anglophone, Lusophone call it what you will. We are Africans. We are bound together by the commonality of our culture and our identity,

Thirty-nine years. We have indeed come a long way. Together, we have a contribution to make, not only to our sub-region but to Africa. Our Union has survived over the last 39 years not only because of the bureaux we established at the various meetings but more because those of us gathered here today have believed in the ideals of the Union and been true to the vision of our founding fathers.

Mr Chairman, in ending this address, I would be remiss if I fail to pay tribute to the founding fathers of our union and all others who over the years have exerted their energies to build for us all a rallying point for the consideration and attainment of the lofty ideals of our common objectives. Therefore Mr. Chairman, in this 39th year of our history, at this time when we mark the 10th Session of the General Assembly of our union, let us take this opportunity to salute the gallant shippers of West and Central

Africa, it is through their sweat and toil that we get clothes on our back, that we get food on our tables that we drive about in our cars.

We say to the Shippers of West and Central Africa, Ayekooo!

Long Live the Union of African Shippers Councils.

Long Live Africa Solidarity.

You are most welcome

I thank you for your attention.