

**African Leadership in ICT and the Development of Knowledge Society
(ALICT) Programme
Official Certification Ceremony
Côte d'Ivoire**

**African Development Bank, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
28 January 2016**

**Speech by Jerome Morrissey,
Chief Executive Officer,
Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative (GESCI)**

Mr. Kabran Assoumou, Director of Cabinet of the Minister of Education of
Côte d'Ivoire,

Madam Oley Dibba-Wadda, Executive Secretary of ADEA,

Directors and representatives of the African Development Bank,

Successful graduates of the LaTIC program,

Representatives of the media,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure today to participate in this special event to honour the successful participants who have completed the African Leadership in ICT and Knowledge Society Development – in French “*Leadership africain dans les TIC et le développement de la société du savoir*” (LaTIC) - program in Côte d'Ivoire in 2015.

I wish to thank the African Development Bank for hosting this special occasion as well as ADEA and the Ministry of Education of Côte d'Ivoire for the support they have provided in organizing the event.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In today's globalized, increasingly competitive and rapidly changing world, the successful integration of ICTs at all levels and in all fields is critical - particularly in education and the strengthening of scientific, technological and innovation skills - all of which have become crucial to foster modern economic and social progress.

GESCI, the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative, was founded in 2003 on the recommendation of the United Nations Task Force on ICT to ensure that efforts are made to advance the integration of ICTs in developing countries.

Kofi Annan, former United Nations Secretary General stated in 2003: *“The Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative matches the power of ICT with educational need, and has the potential not only to improve education, but also to empower people, strengthen governance, open up new markets and galvanise our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.”* Our mandate is to assist governments in the socio-economic development of their countries through the widespread integration of technology for Knowledge Society development. GESCI's tag-line is ***“A knowledge Society for all”***.

GESCI, in partnership with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland and the African Union Commission, launched the programme entitled “Leadership in ICT and Knowledge Society Development Programme in Africa” (LaTIC) in 2012.

Regarded as a flagship initiative of the African Union, it is an 8 month blended learning programme developed by GESCI. It was offered in 13 East and southern African countries starting in 2011.

There was instant and overwhelming demand for the programme for mid-to-senior level government officials across ministries with an average of 35 successful applicants in each country.

In 2015, we were delighted to extend the programme to 3 Francophone countries: Côte d'Ivoire, Morocco and Senegal.

In total, over 500 participants from 16 Countries have already successfully taken the programme. The programme has provided leadership development and knowledge to enhance knowledge society planning within governments and it has imparted a critical understanding of the key role of digital technologies in both social and economic development for the future.

In Côte d'Ivoire, 12 participants have followed the LaTIC programme. We are particularly proud of them, acknowledging that LaTIC requires much investment in time and intellectual focus, which added to the already heavy professional responsibilities of our graduates.

We are happy that the graduates come from a wide range of government institutions, including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Vocational Training, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Health and Fight Against HIV/AIDS and the University of Côte d'Ivoire, thereby ensuring leadership for the integration of ICT and development of KS across several sectors.

GESCI has established an online network for the Alumni to continue to offer support, professional guidance and to share knowledge and experience among its members.

All graduates here today are now eligible to join this exclusive online network and I strongly encourage them to do so. GESCI intends to develop this network to make it an indispensable service for the professionalisation of its members and a source of support and inspiration for career advancement. In passing, let me say that a very significant number of promotions and career advancements have taken place from among the alumni and those promoted attribute this to having completed LaTIC.

I want to acknowledge again the foresight of Finland in funding this programme over the past 5 years and I thank the AUC for its active support for the programme over this time.

Today, GESCI is very happy to announce that its programme to enhance the quality of Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) teaching and learning and to improve the digital status of secondary schools will be extended to include Côte d'Ivoire. I wish to pay tribute to the Minister and to the Ministry of National Education for partnering with us on this exciting initiative. This project demonstrates that GESCI's contribution to Côte d'Ivoire's ICT integration and KS development plans extend from policy level to local and school levels.

I now wish to mention our growing relationship with ADEA which does such important and strategic work in Africa. I acknowledge again and welcome the presence of Madam Oley Dibba-Wadda, Executive Secretary of ADEA. Regionally, GESCI is delighted that it will carry forward to greater heights its mission to integrate ICT in education in Africa through its partnership with ADEA. I am particularly pleased that we will be signing, today, a renewed and enhanced MoU between GESCI and ADEA. Both organisations will better realise their core objectives through active collaboration and partnership on effective ICT integration to raise the quality of education and training systems,

through Knowledge Society development actions, conferences and fora planning and knowledge dissemination.

Ladies in gentleman,

In today's globalized world, digital technologies are transforming the world: people's lives, businesses, work environments and governments. However, as the World Development Report 2016 on Digital Dividends published by the World Bank states *"The benefits of the rapid digital expansion have been skewed towards the wealthy, skilled and influential around the world, who are better positioned to take advantage of the new technologies. In addition, though the number of internet users worldwide has more than tripled since 2005, four billion people still lack access to the internet."*

We must strive to ensure that the new technologies benefit and facilitate the rise of developing countries.

It gives me great joy and satisfaction that Côte d'Ivoire is building on initiatives such as the ALICT program and that through partnerships with the Ministry of National Education and with ADEA, we are making strides to advance knowledge society development both at country and continental level in Africa.

But today, first and foremost, let us all congratulate the LaTIC graduates, who we are hoping will play an important role in the advancement of ICTs and Knowledge society in Côte d'Ivoire.

Thank you all.