

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY BERNICE DAPAAH
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GHANA BAMBOO BIKES
INITIATIVE AT THE 10TH WORLD BAMBOO CONGRESS
DAMYANG,SOUTH KOREA**

I bring you special greetings from Ghana, 'the real Africa' where the warmth of the sun is like the smiles on every face.

I must say that I am humbled, honored, and at the same time excited to be in your midst to share with you the success story of the Ghana Bamboo Bikes Initiative. As I do so, I wish to recognize the presence of the Governor of Damyang,Choi Hyungsik, the President of the World Bamboo Organization Michael Abadie, The Executive Director of the World Bamboo Organization Suzanne Lucas, and the Director General of INBAR Hans Friderich.

Let me simply say I wish to recognize all the people to whom a special reference is due and that is all of you dear ladies and gentlemen gathered this afternoon.

Ladies and gentlemen, my being here would not be complete without letting you walk with me along memory lane, to see where we are coming from, and to pay tribute to the institutions who have helped transform our vision into reality.

5 years ago we made a commitment at the President Clinton's Global Initiative University. Our commitment was to take advantage of the bamboo in Ghana that grows abundantly in the wild and goes unutilized by building the capacity of rural dwellers that lack the skills and the knowledge necessary to create wealth from bamboo.We engaged these rural folk as partners in development and build their capacity to appreciate the value of these natural resources by enhancing their value to create wealth and employment opportunities. It was our means of reducing poverty in the rural communities as part of our contribution towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Ours is the story of a big idea which started from very little beginnings. Those little beginnings cultivated and nurtured that big idea which has become even bigger over the years and has travelled very far indeed, from Ghana to South Korea! And along the way, the big idea has lifted countless spirits and brought the joy of mobility to many hearts.

We empower and transfer the technology of bamboo bike making to rural local people to manufacture affordable multi-purpose bamboo bikes and frames, providing employment to people who otherwise would be out of a job or below the poverty threshold.

What makes our bikes unique is that it can withstand large loads, rough terrain and inclement weather and are configured to be not only affordable, but also maintained and repaired locally. The design can be easily modified for different purposes carrying farm loads, passengers, water, health workers kits, **and can be made suitable for women, even those wearing long robes.**

As I speak, the Initiative which started with only 2 bamboo bike builders in 2010 has created employment opportunities for 35 people. These 35 people are representing a household with an average of about 5 with the knock on effect of about 175 people benefiting directly.

The standard of living and quality of life has been improved. It has really been a positive investment in the local economy helping to improve livelihood and creating jobs which eventually contribute positively to people as we use local materials to support sustainable transportation.

Ladies and gentlemen, I stand here, tall and excited to let you know that due to the overwhelming success of the Ghana Bamboo Bikes Initiative, the Newmont Development Foundation the corporate social responsibility arm of Newmont Gold Mines approached us about two years ago to help create employment opportunities for the youth in the mining communities of Gyedu and Ntotroso in the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana and afforestation of depleted mining lands.

This has resulted in the setting up of a bamboo plantation project and afforestation of 100 hectares of depleted mining lands and the setting up of two new factories which will be commissioned soon with a resultant employment of 50 additional bamboo bike builders.

Our bamboo bike frames alone are now marketed in over 20 countries in Western Europe and US which keeps on growing with a diversity of markets and buyers which provides a degree of security to the initiative. In addition we have started using bamboo waste for the production of bamboo charcoal briquettes.

In the year 2014, a partnership was forged with Divine Chocolate in the United Kingdom to manufacture 100 bicycles annually for them to distribute to school children of farmers in the cocoa growing communities of Ghana where they source their cocoa for their chocolate as part of their corporate social responsibility program this unique partnership has attracted the interest of other corporate bodies in Ghana including UNICEF Ghana and Kwabens Limited that have also placed orders for 500 bamboo bicycles from time to time.

In our commitment to diversify our production process, the African Union funded the Ghana Bamboo Bikes Initiative to develop prototypes of Bamboo Bike Ambulance in our efforts to utilize locally available and sustainable materials in the manufacture of the medical transport device and promote the bamboo bike ambulance as a viable means of emergency transport, offering faster transit times and being a realistic, affordable and sustainable solution to the issue of patient transport by improving access to healthcare for rural inhabitants especially reducing infant mother mortality rate.

I am proud to announce to you that this year the Government of Ghana through its Skills Development Fund funded by the World Bank and Danida has allocated to the Ghana Bamboo Bikes some funding for expansion and diversification to manufacture bamboo charcoal briquettes as an alternative to wood-fuel to help addresses the energy needs of households in Ghana by reducing indoor air pollution while helping in the restoration of already destroyed forests.

Ladies and gentlemen, today we face the following challenges:

- high cost of epoxy and other imported materials for bike assembly.
- dealing with cracks
- as well as bamboo bike builders retention

Yes, they are big challenges and could be overwhelming if we let them. But we will not let them! We are determined to face them and win through.

We are excited to partner with the International Network of Bamboo and Rattan for the transfer of technology in adding value to bamboo to come out with our bamboo charcoal briquettes. Providing best alternatives to avoid greenhouse gas emissions from consumption of fuel-wood, and helps in the restoration of already destroyed forests.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am humbled to say that all our efforts have not gone unnoticed. The Ghana Bamboo Bikes Initiative has won 10 International awards including the following:

UN Habitat/Dubai International Best Practice Award 2014

Global Forum on Human Settlement Award 2014

AFD 100 Innovations for Sustainable Development Award 2013

UNFCCC Momentum For Change Lighthouse Activity Award 2013

World Business and Development Award Winner 2012

Samsung/Generations For Peace Award Winner 2012

2012 UN Habitat/Dubai International Best Practice

2nd Runner Up 2012 International Road Federation Inroad Awards

GIZ Impact Business Award Winner 2011

Imagine Nations Global Business Plan Competition Award Winner 2011

The Ghana Bamboo Bikes Initiative have developed various strategic innovative partnership with both government and the private sectors in the last five years which needs to be recognized.

The SEED Initiative and UNDP/GEF SGP laid the strong foundation for our existence by supporting the initiative with seed funds and technical support.

The Mechanical Engineering Department of Technological University of Michigan signed the initiative to provided services for to improve upon our quality control process in production.

The Santa Clara University in California has been supporting the initiative with placement of global fellows who intern for us during summer.

The International Network on Bamboo and Rattan provides technical support for the community's bamboo plantation development saving us huge amount of monies that would otherwise have been invested in engaging the services of a consultant. The US Global Partnership also assist in promoting our bamboo bike frames and handicrafts in the international markets and building corporate partnership with specialty bike chains, galleries, museums, and other fair trade stores using associates at the grassroots to expand the market of our bamboo bikes frames and showing that they can successfully source products that empowers poor rural dwellers and talented artisans creating world class products and trading them with the world as a means of shared prosperity. As I bring my address to a close I would like you all to join me in watching a 2 minute video of the Ghana Bamboo Bikes Initiative which summarizes all that i have said this afternoon Thank you so much and God bless you all!"