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MMDA's Must Embrace Digitization

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A building permit is the authorization to start the construction phase of a building project, granted by public authorities. It is part of a process of spatial planning that ensures that the requirements set to ensure a sufficiently high quality are met for new constructions, in order to guarantee a sustainable and controlled development of the built environment, benefiting communities and economy. Several aspects are involved, such as functionality, sustainability, circularity, safety and security, disaster prevention, emergency management, environmental quality, among others.

In ensuring quality service delivery in relation to building permits, Head of Service at the Office of the Head of Local Government Service (OHLGS), Ing. Dr. Nana Ato Arthur has revealed that applications for building permits are being digitalised at the various Assemblies across the country, to ensure effective service delivery.

He explained that the initiative is to ensure swift service delivery to clients, adding that the Local Government Service wants to go to the extent of allowing clients to upload drawings online for engineers at the Assemblies to have access, and thereafter, grant permit.

In this interview with the Africa Public Sector Magazine, Dr. Nana Nana Ato Arthur elucidates on the various innovations in the Local Government Service, recruitments, technological transformations in his reputable institution, and other sundry issues. Excerpts...

What are some of the transformations undertaken by the Local Government Service through digitalisation?

In the service, there are three (3) key areas that have been transformed through digitalisation. Records in the Local Government Service are being digitalised, Internally generated fund by the various Regional

Coordinating Councils, the Metropolitan, Municipal and the District Assemblies are also being digitised. With the use of the Digital Addressing System, utility and other bills can be distributed to clients. The use of Mobile Money for the payment of bills has also been initiated by the various Assemblies. This initiative has mitigated corrupt practices in the various Assemblies. Central to this discourse, to avoid issues of embezzlement, bills and other payments can be made by clients directly into the accounts of the various Assemblies. I am therefore, calling on the entire Metropolitan, Municipal and the District Assemblies to embrace digitalisation, to ensure prudent use of finances at the various Assemblies.

As the Head of the Local Government, what does your job entail?

The Local Government Service comprises of the Offices and Departments of all the 16 Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs) as well as the Offices and Departments of the 261 Metropolitan, Municipal and the District Assemblies (MMDAs) in Ghana. Pursuant to Section 51 of the Local Government Service Act 2016 (Act 936), the Local Government Service is to secure effective decentralisation administration. In reference to Act 936, the Head of the Local Government Service coordinates all activities of staff members in the 16 Regional Coordinating Councils and the 261 Metropolitan, Municipal and the District Assemblies at the subnational levels. These are all staff members of the Local Government Service, and are accountable to the Service.

How do you handle all the Regional Coordinating Councils and Metropolitan, Municipal and the District Assemblies?

As the Service has a decentralised system, all the Regional Coordinating Councils have Administrative Heads. These are the Regional Coordinating Directors. The Coordinating Directors represent the Head of the Service at the Regional level. When there is a policy implementation, it goes to the Regional Coordinating Council through to the various Metropolitan, Municipal and the District Assemblies.

Again, the Administrative Heads at the various Metropolitan, Municipal and the District Assemblies have Coordinating Directors. Each Coordinating Director has a planning team made up of Head of Planning, Head of Budget, Head of Internal Audit, Head of Finance, Head of Procurement, Head of Works, Head of IT, among others. The works at the various levels are therefore, not done by one person. There is shared assignment among the various departments.

An officer or a staff from the Assembly level cannot write directly to the Office of the Head of local Government Service. It must go through the Regional level before moving to the Office of the Head of Local Government Service.

What are the challenges you go through as the Head of the Local Government Service?

Since the Local Government Service is a decentralised institution, monitoring from the Head Office becomes a challenge. Although, monitoring is done at the regional level over the various Assemblies, it is also important to monitor the various regions. Monitoring the various Regions comes with a cost. There is high cost in terms of travelling to monitor all the 16 Regions.

Another challenge the Local Government Service encounter is the perception inferiority as compared to the Civil Service. Some people have the perception that working in the Civil Service shows how better a staff is as compared to another staff in the Local Government Service. However, this perception is not grounded on

any fact. It is factually inaccurate to assume that the Civil Service personnel are better than the Local Government Service personnel.

In continuation from the above, others also have the perception of Accra being the best place to work. There are 261 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies in Ghana, and personnel can be posted to any of the Assemblies. One thing personnel should understand is that Accra is congested. When there was an outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, staff members were running a shift system. It will be ethically wrong to allow some staff members to run shift in the capital city whilst other Assemblies in other Regions have inadequate staff members. Sometimes, after recruitment, postings become a challenge because some personnel do not want to go to other regions.

Can we overcome this challenge in future?

I always make it clear to potential applicants that there is no place in Accra in terms of postings. Other Regions such as Central Region, Ashanti Region and Eastern Region are also congested. Other Regions such as Volta, Oti among others have adequate staff members. In ensuring effective delivery and competency, personnel must accept postings to these areas.

How does the Local Government Service conduct its audit?

The various Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies have internal audit units. All financial documents are vetted by the internal auditors to ensure transparency. The introduction of the Ghana Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS) has also helped in ensuring accountability. However, the use of the GIFMIS system has become a challenge in some parts of the country due to poor network and internet connectivity. This situation sometimes cause delay in the use of the System.

What are some of the achievements as the Head of the Local Government Service?

I am proud of the massive transformation in the Local Government Service. Since I came to office, all those who qualified for promotion have been promoted. All the requisite procedures were put in place to ensure that promotions were done based on merit.

The major achievement within the last five (5) years as the Head of the Local Government Service is the recruitment of about 12,000 staff members into the Service. From March, 2017 to May, 2022, major recruitments have taken place. We have been able to put 12,000 staff members in various classes. If we are able to continue to provide job opportunities, the unemployed youth will be able to find jobs to do.

Another important area the Local Government Service is focusing is an improved service delivery system. We want to improve the time we deliver services to clients. The Local Government Service has instituted an electronic biometric system to check lateness at the office. Staff members are to log in when reporting to the office as well as log out when leaving. Due to COVID-19, the use of the device was put on hold to avoid surface spread through touching. However, the institution has reintroduced the system. The current electronic system comes with a facial recognition where the device takes records of staff members. This initiative is to improve effectiveness.

How did COVID-19 affect the operations of the Local Government Service?

COVID-19 affected the Local Government Service in terms of its operations. When COVID struck, we were thinking of improving productivity; but many of the staff members had to be on a shift system. In ensuring social distancing, some workers were working for just two weeks. However, they were paid for one month, which affected productivity.

In spite of the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, there had been some positives in terms of innovation in the institution. Virtual meetings were introduced during the pandemic. It has reduced cost of in-person meetings. I can have a meeting in the comfort of



person meetings.

How will you rate the Local Government Service?

The Local Government Service is very high in terms of service delivery. Before 2017, few people knew about the Local Government Service. Within a period of five (5) years, my team have helped me to project the image of the Local Government Service in a positive way. I have a strong team who helped me to achieve these results. A new Head Office complex is also being built to elevate the institution.

Another huge edifice has also been built at Akumadan in the Offinso North District in the Ashanti Region. The edifice is a huge Human Resource Development Centre, which in future, could be used as a university. That edifice can accommodate all Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives as well as Chief Directors for meetings. This is one of the big achievements in the Local Government Service.

Are you able to make time for your self and family despite your busy schedule?

As a leader, you must be able to manage and have time for your family. There should be a balance in work and home management, to ensure responsible upbringing of children. As a leader, it is important to think about the education of your children. Although I render my services to the public, it is also my responsibility to take care of my family. In most times, I wake up as early as 4:00am to work on all my emails. Thereafter, I make sure my secretary sends them to the various Chief Directors immediately I come to the office. This is done early in the morning before attending to clients and visitors.

Irrespective of all these tedious tasks, I also leave the office very late and I spend much time in the office than home, I still need to balance my work to ensure that my children get that fatherly love and presence. In as much as I have a busy schedule, I make sure I have time to relax to avoid stress. Whenever I get the opportunity to really sleep, I do so.

How would you describe your leadership style?

I am open, transparent and results oriented. I ensure that staff members do what is expected of them. I do not necessarily force staff members to work under duress, but I ensure that they deliver on their tasks. I have a very committed team who ensures that I achieve the results I want.

In every organisation, there are three (3) categories of

committed and competent. There is another category of those who are committed but not competent and those who are competent but not committed. In all these, the institution is ensuring that staff members are competent and committed.

What are some of the factors that have propelled the positives in your career?

Humility is key in everything as a leader. I think what has really brought me this far is the fact that I come from a very humble home. I am always mindful of where I come from. I believe that whatever I do today should be a reflection of the past. It helps to check the way things are done.

When I was appointed as District Chief Executive by the Kuffour-led administration in 2001, I was rated as one of the top DCEs in Ghana within my four (4) years in Elmina. After President Kuffour's first term, he appointed me as the Deputy Central Regional Minister. Within a year, there was a reshuffle, and I became the substantive Central Regional Minister, until the NPP lost the election in 2008. Thereafter, I went to Germany for my PHD course, and came back in 2012 to contest as a Member of Parliament for Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abbreem Constituency. Fortunately, I won the seat and served as an MP from January 2013 to January 2017. In March 2017, President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo appointed me to Head the Local Government Service. Since my appointment as DCE to this time, I always remember my past and think about the future as well

If you have three wishes, what will they be?

I will wish that as a nation we can secure the Ghana we want. There is so much to be done to transform this country.

Again, I will wish that the unemployment rate in Ghana would be reduced. The government has done a lot in securing jobs for the youth. However, the number of graduates from the various universities is extremely high for the government to absorb. Over 100,000 graduates are produced every year from over 60 universities and tertiary institutions in the country. It will be very difficult for the government to find jobs for all these people. My prayer is that the government will be able to reduce the high rate of unemployment in Ghana. Finally, with the economic downturn the country is experiencing, it is my prayer that we will be able to produce more to transform the economy.

“AFRICANS MUST RISE TO BUILD A UNITED AFRICA THROUGH TRANSPARENT AND FAIR SYSTEMS” - PROFESSOR KWAKU APPIAH-ADU

The Special Assistant to the Vice President of Ghana, Professor Kwaku Appiah-Adu, has indicated that Africans must rise to build a united Africa through transparent and fair systems. Delivering a keynote address on behalf of the Vice President of Ghana, Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia at the 3rd Africa Public Sector Conference and Awards in Accra-Ghana, Prof Appiah-Adu indicated that for Africa to break away from the perception of inferiority in the delivery of public services, the onus of justifying effectiveness and efficiency falls on the policies and systems introduced by African governments. He pointed out that Ghana has made strides in transforming the public sector through the introduction of technology. Prof Appiah-Adu stated that over the years, the Lands Commission was inundated with hard copies of documents, which consequently, led to misplacement of vital documents. He added that through the government's transformational agenda, the Lands Commission has developed a swift online portal for registration of documents, payments and related matters. In his speech, Prof Appiah-Adu informed the participants that the Civil Service in Ghana does recruitments electronically. “80% of the recruitment process is done electronically, and promotions are also done electronically. This year, the Office has launched a staff appraisal system as well”, he established.



Other electronic systems by the Government
Prof Appiah-Adu further espoused that significant strides have been made to issue biometric national ID cards (The Ghana Card). “With the introduction of the Ghana Card, Ghana now has a database that will serve as the foundation for all future transactions, giving each person a unique identity. The Ghana Card is also an electronic passport (E-passport) that contains biometric information and can be used to authenticate the identity of travellers. Furthermore, through the transformational agenda of the Government, service can be accessed at a click of a button from the comfort of your home. Registration of business and its related matters can be done through the effective and responsive portal of the Registrar-General's Department”, he stated. To ensure fast and safe licences acquisition without the stress of middlemen called “goro boys”, Prof Appiah-Adu revealed that Digital Drivers Licenses and Digital Vehicle Registration have been introduced by Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA). Referencing other transformation and reforms at the public sector include, Prof Appiah-Adu stated that E-justice system by the Judicial Service of Ghana has been introduced. “Paperless ports system by the Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority (GPHA), electronic renewal of the National Health Insurance by National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA) and online ticketing of the State Transport have all been introduced by the Government”, he concluded.

By Samuel Saint-Ayisi

“OUR ENVIRONMENTS ARE MONITORED BY DRONE TECHNOLOGY TO ENSURE SAFETY” – EPA BOSS

The Executive Director for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Ghana, Hon. Dr Henry Kwabena Kokofu, has revealed that the Agency has deployed drones that monitor the environment to ensure safety and security. He stated that in driving technology at the public sector, the EPA has initiated technology-driven policy to ensure that there are no delays when there are reported incidents of environmental cases. The Executive Director further explained that the Agency has partnered a private institution to monitor the air space and the environment, adding that there are pilot studies to help research on the air space and the environment on how to improve them. In a panel discussion at the 3rd Africa Public Sector Conference and Awards, Dr Kokofu explained that the agency will soon employ more environmental officers who will be moving across the country to ensure the protection of the environment.



He continued that the Agency will soon have the prosecutorial powers to independently prosecute environmental offenders. Dr. Kokofu added that there are existing legislations that can put environmental offenders behind bars when found guilty. He established that the work of the Agency becomes tedious when the various Assemblies grants permits to individuals to build at unauthorised places or sites. The Executive Director informed the participant that if permits are granted to build on unauthorised places, the Agency cannot use its powers to demolish such structures. He appealed to the various Assemblies to visit and inspect sites of clients before granting building permit.



GHANA'S CIVIL SERVICE HAS REPOSITIONED ITSELF THROUGH TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT

– NANA KWASI AGYEKUM DWAMENA

The Head of Service at the Office of the Head of Civil Service (OHCS), Nana Kwasi Agyekum Dwamena, has stated that the Civil Service, as a public institution has, repositioned itself through technological advancement. Speaking at the 3rd Africa Public Sector Conference and Awards in Accra-Ghana, Mr. Agyekum Dwamena explained that the policy initiative is backed by the digitalisation agenda of the Government, to reform public institutions to meet international standards. He added that the initiative has provided a synergy between the various Ministries, Departments and Agencies for effective delivery of service. “Through the digital reforms, Ministries, Departments and Agencies have achieved most of their targets despite the challenges associated with the new working arrangements. Virtual training

programmes have been deployed to build the capacity of Civil Service staffs. Most workers have participated in a number of E- learning programmes”, he explained. Mr. Agyekum Dwamena further elaborated that the Civil Service has made a lot of inroads in the area of digitisation aimed at improving quality, transparency and accountability in the delivery of public service. The Head of Service established that milestones in the digitisation space has facilitated the implementation of the flexible working hours in the Civil Service, to ensure effective adherence to the Covid-19 instituted by the Government. “We believe with technology there can be more efficient, bringing governance close to the people, ease the lives of our people and leapfrog development into the 3rd world”, he concluded.

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SOUTH AFRICA GOVT PLANS TO CREATE 2MILLION JOBS BEFORE 2024

THULAS NXESI - Labour Minister

The South Africa Minister of Labour, Thulas Nxesi has promised that the government is planning to add as many as 2 million new jobs before the next elections as the nation grapples with one of the highest unemployment rates in the world. About 12 million South Africans are without jobs. Unemployment according to the expanded definition, which includes people who were available for work but not looking for a job, is at 45.5% - the highest rate on a list of 82 countries monitored by Bloomberg - although some of the data is outdated. South Africa will go to the polls to elect its next president in 2024. Nxesi's jobs target adds up to the amount of people who were rendered unemployed at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. Strict labour laws, stagnant

productivity, bureaucratic hurdles and a skills shortage have reduced the ability of South African companies to hire additional workers. "Whether or not that is achievable, I don't know," Nxesi said of his goal in an interview in Bloomberg's office in Johannesburg. The government is working on policy amendments to prioritise South Africans' access to jobs over foreign nationals with the same skills, he said. The high unemployment rate has added to anti-immigrant sentiment among some South Africans who resent facing additional competition for jobs. That's prompted the government to follow through on proposals to enforce employment quotas for foreign nationals. There's been a trend of "employment of foreign workers at the expense of the South

African workers," Nxesi said. "The issue is the employers who deliberately employ these vulnerable people." Reducing undocumented immigrants will be vital in addressing unemployment, according to Nxesi. "It's a very sensitive matter everywhere, but if you look in Zimbabwe, Botswana, Nigeria and Ghana - they have all declared that you can't bring anyone from outside if there is a national who is able to perform that job," he said. To limit the influx of illegal migrants from neighbouring nations, South Africa wants to establish a border control agency. The Border Management Authority will have branches at six border posts to begin with, and employ people from various government departments to tighten the implementation of immigration policies.

Meet Samuel Dubik Masubir Mahama: The Lawyer Running ECG



Samuel Dubik Masubir Mahama is an affable lawyer with nearly a decade of experience in handling corporate clients within West Africa and North America and a proven track-record in international law.

He was recently appointed by President Nana Akufo-Addo, as the New Managing Director of the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG), where he assumed office on May 17th 2022,

Research has shown that firms run by CEOs who trained as lawyers are associated with much less corporate litigation than firms run by CEOs with MBAs or other advanced degrees and therefore make better profits. We are hopeful that Mr. Mahama's leadership at ECG will turn around the fortune of the institution taking into consideration is expertise in law.

Like his predecessor, Kwame Agyeman-Budu whose vast experience in the energy sector spans over two decades, Mr. Mahama has focused mainly on the energy sector, having worked with American companies such as Bridgewell resources LLC based in Portland Oregon Gulf South Forest products based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and Elsewedy Electricals based in Cairo Egypt for a decade.

The Achimota School Alumni, has an in-depth experience in consulting for local energy, mining, and engineering firms and has been in Ghana's business industry for about 2 decades; having worked in both the private and public sectors. During his tenure in the public sector, he worked with the Ghana Investment Promotion Center (GIPC) whose sole aim is to promote

foreign direct investment in Ghana he served as the head of Monitoring and Evaluation at the GIPC.

A product of the University of Ghana, he bagged a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and Sociology between the years 2003-2007; and later on pursued law at the same university before proceeding to the Ghana School of Law for his Professional Law Course in 2011-2013.

Known for perfection and being ardent team player, Mr. Mahama who is a partner at Dubik and Associates law firm also serves on the Board of a few companies including Wilkins Engineering Limited, De-Montag Company Limited and Ghana Industrial Holding Company (GIHOC).













HEADS OF STATES, PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND AT THE 3RD AFRICA PUBLIC SECTOR



The President Kenya, His Excellency Uhuru Kenyatta, the Vice President of Ghana, His Excellency Alhaji Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia and a number of top Public Institutions and Public Servants across Africa were honoured at the 3rd Africa Public Sector Conference and Awards (APSCA 2022) held at the Kempinski Hotel in Accra, Ghana. The honorary award is in recognition with the massive transformations in the various public sectors for fast and effective operations and service delivery.

His Excellency Uhuru Kenyatta was honoured with Reformatory Leadership Award whilst His Excellency Alhaji Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia was honoured with Public Sector Transformation Leader Award. Keynoting the event under the theme “Repositioning Africa's Public Sector for Sustainable Development” by the Vice President of Ghana represented by his Special Assistant, Professor Kwaku Appiah-Adu, various Heads of Public Institutions, Senators, Governors and other stakeholders were honoured.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Instinct Wave, Mr. Akin Naphtal, in his welcome address, stated that the public sector is the initiator of transformation, yet, less recognition is given to the sector.

He added that as the public sector is the engine of economic growth, it is important to recognise the most outstanding public institutions and personalities who have contributed to the public sector through innovation.

“Given the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on African governments and key public sector agencies involved in battling the pandemic, recognition will be bestowed on outstanding public servants who have demonstrated excellence in policy innovation and exceptional leadership at various levels of governance during the pandemic”, Mr. Naphtal stated.

Some of the Public Institutions and Heads of government agencies who were honoured at the gala night include outstanding personalities from Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria and other African countries.

Organisational Awards

In the oil sector, Bulk Oil Storage and Transportation Company Limited (BOST) was honoured as Excellence in Bulk Oil Transportation Infrastructure and National Petroleum Authority (NPA) was awarded as Excellence in Downstream Oil and Gas Operations. The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation as well, was honoured Africa Energy Regulator of the Year.

Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG) on the other hand was awarded Excellence in Electricity Service Delivery Award as Energy Commission walked away with Best Public Sector Website.

The Local Government Service (LGS) was adjudged Excellence in local government service delivery as Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA) was honoured Excellence in Service Transformation.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from Ghana bagged Driving Excellence in Sustainable Land and Water Management Projects whilst National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) from Kenya was adjudged Environmental Regulator of the Year.

PUBLIC SERVANTS ACROSS AFRICA HONoured R CONFERENCE & AWARDS (APSCA)



In the power sector, the Volta River Authority (VRA) swept away the Outstanding Contribution to Power Sector Development and Excellence in Transforming Public Assets whilst Kenya Power and Lighting Company PLC carried away Driving Efficiency through Technology Adoption.

Galaxy Backbone was honoured as the Digital infrastructure Service Provider of the Year whilst Margins Group was recognised and honoured as the Innovative Government Service Support Provider of the year.

Other reputable institutions include Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) - Excellence in Trading Standards, Ghana Tourism Authority - Excellence in Promotion Art, Culture & Lifestyle and Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL) - Excellence in Urban Water Supply

Top 50 Public Sector Leaders

The Gala Night also honoured top 50 Public Sector Leaders in Africa. This category recognised top leaders in the public sector who have influenced transformation through technology and innovative public policies.

Individual Awards

Pursuant to the sterling performance by some personalities in the public sector, APSCA was enthused with the extraordinary leadership by some public sector leaders.

The Minister for Ministry of Energy, Hon Mathew Opoku Prempeh was honoured as the Minister of the Year whilst Senator Willington Greevon Smith of Liberia was awarded Outstanding Contribution to Humanitarian Services.

Nana Kwasi Dwamena of the Office of the Head of Civil Service was honoured with Civil Service Icon Award as the Director of Recruitment, Training and Development at Office of the Head of the Civil Service, Mrs. Elizabeth Obeng-Yeboah was honoured as the Civil Servant of the Year.

Chief Director of Ministry of Finance, Mrs. Patrick Nomo bagged Lifetime Achievement Award. On the other hand, the Auditor-General of Nigeria, Mr. Aghughu Adolphus Arhotomhenla received Public Sector Hall of Fame.

The Acting Managing Director and CEO of

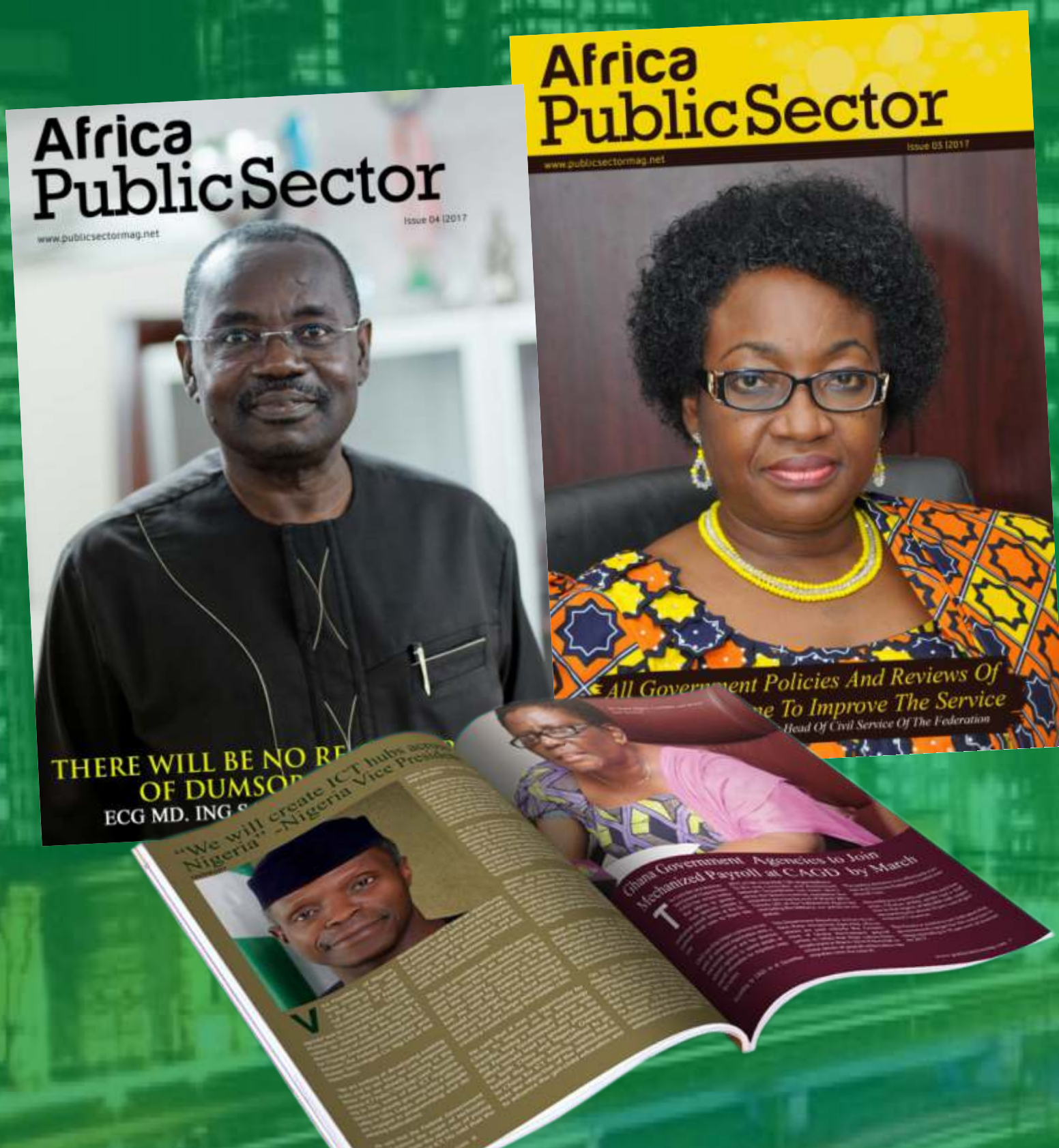
Kenya Power and Lighting Company PLC, Mrs. Rosemary Oduor carried away Outstanding Woman in Power as the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Volta River Authority, Dr. Mrs Stella Agyenim Boateng was honoured the Outstanding Woman in Public Service.

The Chief Executive Officer of Food and Drugs Authority, Mrs. Delese Mimi Darko Public Sector CEO of the Year in the Female category whilst the Director-General for National Environment Management Authority in Kenya, Mamo Boru Mamo was awarded Public Sector CEO of the Year in the Male category. Again, the Chairperson of Liberia National Commission on Small Arms, Mr. Maxwell Grigsby was awarded with Outstanding Contribution to Humanitarian Services as the CEO of Margins Group, Mr. Moses Baiden was awarded with Outstanding Contribution to the Government Initiatives.

It was indeed a night of pomp and pageantry.

By Samuel Saint-Ayisi

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