

Remmy Nweke

Ghana is committed to FOSS penetration in Africa - Oquaye

The Ghanaian Minister for Communications, Prof. Mike Oquaye, has said that his country is committed to the penetration of Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) on the continent.

Declaring open the first-ever FOSS-Media workshop on Tuesday, April 24 at the Ghana-India Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (AITI-KACE), Prof. Oquaye said that this commitment is evident in the deployment of FOSS in most of the Ghanaian universities.

“Our educational institutions are also moving forward on the Open Source front,” he said, stressing that the active Linux user groups exist in a number of key institutions, consisting of the University of Ghana, Legon, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), University of Education at Winneba and University of Cape Coast.

He also asserted that Open Source is alive in Ghana, hence the government of President John Kufour, has shown some seriousness on its usage including having an Open Source group at the University of Development Studies, Navrongo Campus. Prof. Oquaye noted that more and more institutions in Ghana are exploring the use of Open Source solutions, even as the banking sector has indicated interest as well.

“I am very pleased to note that the Ghana-India Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence in ICT has migrated its entire server services to Open Source,” he declared.

The minister pointed out that this migration has saved some fund for the centre, the country and all its partners at large, thereby reducing costs and improving security. According to him, Ghanaian youths are embracing the FOSS and its activities through the campaign of AITI-KACE known as “I too can programme (i2CAP)” competition with focus on Senior Secondary Schools in Ghana.

“Our young people are being given the opportunity to learn Ruby and Open Source programming languages and to develop software while they are still in school,” he said, emphasising that Personal Computers (PCs) given out to winners’ as prizes under the i2CAP are all loaded with Debian, the FOSS Foundation Linux release. He further said that Ghana sees FOSS solutions, as having African content and it is good as the media is being brought to the centre stage, explaining that any revolution without media is bound to fail.

Therefore, he lauded the organisers for recognising the media and the need to carry the fourth estate of the realm along in this project, pointing out that ICT as a tool for development should be sustained, even as he hopes that this workshop would continue to be extended to other parts of the continent in order to attract the relevant success story expected, just as he later declared the event open.

In her remark to the occasion, the Director-General of AITI-KACE, Mrs Dorothy Gordon, said that the continent awaits eagerly the outcome of the training session, especially since it affects the media empowerment.

She also expressed confidence that journalists on the continent would continue to support the crusade for an increased use of FOSS.

Equally speaking at the occasion, the ICT Programme Officer at the Open Source Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), Mr. Ben Akoh, tasked African media practitioners to be committed to evolution of the FOSS modules on the continent.

Welcoming participants, chairperson, FOSS Foundation Association, Ms Nnenna Nwakanma said that FOSS-Media workshop is a FOSSFA model for empowering African media practitioners and strengthening good governance.

As said by her, FOSS solution enthrones accountability, transparency and encourages growth, which is what is currently needed in the continent to develop in bridging digital divide.

“We also encourage good governance and support and coordinate FOSS activities in Africa by bringing in experts and facilitators to share and train our people,” she said.

Restating that the workshop would focus on hands-on training during its five-day exercise and called for open model in every aspect of societal engagement to foster the creation of level playing field for every interested participant.

“There should be an open model in everything we do, in our individual lives and government,” she urged.