SWITCH Africa Green began the 2-day Ghana National Networking Forum in Accra City Hotel in Accra on 21 March, 2017. The main objectives of the forum are to discuss opportunities, challenges and barriers faced by the private sector in transitioning to an inclusive, low carbon green economy that promotes SCP practices and patterns in Ghana; discuss ways of scaling up and replicating green business in the context of trade associations, MSMEs, government policies and programmes; and foster networking between different project entities with other stakeholders.

Patrick Mwesigye (UN Environment Regional Coordinator for Resource Efficiency) gave his remarks commending Ghana for being the first country to hold a national networking forum and its acceptance to host the SWITCH Africa Green Regional Policy Dialogue. He noted that the progress of the project in Ghana was impressive. The stakeholders were informed that funding for the second phase of the project was approved to a tune of 20 million euros from the European Union. He urged qualified organizations to apply for grants in the current call for proposals. The deadline for application is 31 March, 2017.
Ebenezer Appah-Sampong (Deputy Executive Director - Technical, EPA) in his remarks stated that the EPA would carry on board the success stories of the SAG project and the outcomes of the national networking forum in its dealings with SMEs in Ghana.

The keynote address was given by Hon. Prof. Kwabena Frimpong Boateng, Minister of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), Ghana who expressed government support and political will, appreciating the need for businesses in Ghana to uptake Sustainable Consumption and Production practices and the important role that SWITCH Africa Green and its partners are playing in supporting the country to achieve this. He reiterated that the government of Ghana shall continue to put in place appropriate policies that promote green business.

Among the highlights for the first day was the manner in which Ghana has used innovation for development through SAG support, replicating and upscaling various projects. SAG Grantees and beneficiaries of the project highlighted success stories and impact from various initiatives. Notably, there was the creation of the Biogas Association of Ghana (BAG) and the creation of the Ghana E-waste model including various projects on biotechnology and other sectors. Industrial Symbiosis as a concept was also seen to be adopted well with the slogan ‘get-get-no-want; want-want-no-get’ being used to illustrate the way in which one person’s waste can be another’s income (waste as money in transition). This was illustrated by Sylvanus Kyei, a farmer in Achimota region who is using effluent from a biogas plant from St. John’s Grammar School as fertilizer on his 1-acre farm, growing okru, corn and tomatoes. The biogas plant was installed as a SAG pilot project in and is now providing electricity to the girls’ dormitory, housing 400 girls.

Another beneficiary of the project, Gilbert Odjidja, the executive director of Atlantic electronics, explained his initiative in the collection of electronic (e-waste) in his presentation. He has set up a training facility to train youth on dismantling e-waste and reclaiming the usable parts while disposing off the remaining parts in an environmentally friendly way. The company has plans of developing a mobile app to collect more electronic waste and also set up buy-back centres for e-waste collection. So far, they collect about 1 tonne of e-waste, trained 40 youth and are on course to train 100 youth by the end of 2017.
There is an exhibition by over 20 organizations covering the who have benefited from the SAG project from project grantees to MSMEs showcasing innovation in greening the economy and their uptake of SCP practices. These cover the five projects from the three priority sectors in Ghana; agriculture, integrated waste management and manufacturing.
During the policy makers roundtable session in the afternoon, the private sector, represented by a number of organizations involved in adopting sustainable production and consumption practices expressed need for policy makers to provide support through policy intervention, allowing them to propagate and upscale green business models towards a greener economy. There was goodwill shown by the increased collaboration of the public and private sector.

About 150 participants mainly drawn from Ghana attended the first day of the event. During the second day, there shall be a session on financing MSMEs in Ghana where various organizations, financing institutions and participants shall have a chance to discuss challenges faced by MSMEs in advancing green business development in Africa looking at private and public sources of financing green business development. There shall also be break-out sessions where policy support initiatives for green business development under the SWITCH Africa Green shall be discussed covering the four priority sectors.

The overall objective of SWITCH Africa Green is to support 6 countries in Africa to achieve sustainable development by engaging in transition towards an inclusive green economy, based on sustainable consumption and production patterns, while generating growth, creating decent jobs and reducing poverty. SWITCH Africa Green is developed and funded by the European Commission and implemented by UN Environment in partnership with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

For more information, please visit www.switchafricagreen.org or email info@switchafricagreen.org