ADDRESS DELIVERED BY PROFESSOR ERIC OPOKU MENSAH AT HIS INVESTITURE AS THE 2ND VICE CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION ON WEDNESDAY, 18TH DECEMBER 2024

SALUTATIONS

Honourable Dr. Yaw Osei Adutwum, Minister for Education The Council Chair of UniMAC, Emeritus Prof. Kwesi Yankah Members of the UniMAC Council The Pro-Vice Chancellor, Prof. Winston Abroampa The Acting Registrar, Mrs. Patience Sowah Nana Yim Awere Ababio, Toase Manhene The Rectors of UniMAC's Constituent Institutes **Deans and Directors** Heads of Department **Representatives from Sister Universities** Members of the Diplomatic Corps Alumni of UniMAC **Colleague Convocation Members** Senior and Junior Staff My Supportive Family **Distinguished Invited Guests** And all our distinguished guests joining us from far and near online IMUNICATION Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Morning

4 INTRODUCTION

Over the past few weeks, when it dawned on me that the time is nigh for my Investiture as the second Vice-Chancellor of UniMAC, I have been filled with an aura of responsibility that has put

me in a reflective mood contemplating on this calling and how I am going to be a shining example. Heavy is the head that wears the crown, but I know with God, all things are possible.

It is thus, with a deep sense of humility and gratitude that I stand here today, before God and man as your invested Vice-Chancellor of no less an Institution than the unique University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC). We are unique, not because we are extraordinary but because our story, experiences that we have gone through to be merged as one University with constituents Institutes, make us a rare case study for impactful research output.

Indeed, it is Grace that has brought me this far and I thank the Choir for the beautiful rendition of that song. I have been a part of this unique journey of UniMAC and I have seen with my eyes the monumental changes that have brought us this far to witness this day that marks an indelible stroke on the tablet of our history.

I joined a part of this Institution, then the Ghana Institute Journalism in August 2020 as the Vice Rector. It was a period of great uncertainty and I often questioned myself if I had made the right choice. This is not because I have no regard for the then GIJ but as an individual who started his career at the University of Cape Coast and has been made by the University of Cape Coast to become an Associate Professor, I often fought that internal battle between 'dedication and service' or 'discovery and adventure'. I contemplated often on whether I had betrayed UCC or I am on the right path to discover what lies beyond the curb of the University of Cape Coast.

As the resilient and the go-getter person I am, I took it in my strides to shine the light where I am and began a process of small incremental steps to turn the tide at GIJ by adjusting the sails to the direction of the wind. This I did by helping in the restructuring of teaching work of faculty to be in sync with Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) norms, drawing up new academic programmes to ensure increase academic offerings both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and building a strong research culture among faculty which culminated in increasing astronomically the total research output of the Institute. These, I did out of duty and passion, little did I know that all eyes were on deck. It was therefore a bit of surprise to me when I was approached to take up the Acting Rector position of UniMAC - Institute of Journalism (UniMAC-IJ) in October 2022 and later, a substantive Rector in 2023, when the merger of the three Institutes -Institute of Journalism, Institute of Languages and the Institute of Film and Television - by an Act of Parliament Act 1059 (2020) came into force to make these three institutes erstwhile and birth a new institution of Higher Learning called UniMAC. Then, in February this year 2024, I was given a mammoth responsibility by being appointed by the Governing Council as the Ag. Vice-Chancellor of UniMAC, upon the retirement of the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Kwamena Kwansah-Aidoo. In May 2024, after a comprehensive search for a new Vice-Chancellor, the Governing Council duly appointed me as the substantive Vice-Chancellor for a four-year term. Four years into the merger, it has been a long and tortoise journey one bedeviled with resistance, partisanship and fear of change; but we have travailed and have soldiered on and today, we make history and chart a new course; I'm adjusting the sails once again, so help me God.

GRATITUDE

I have woken up on numerous occasions at dawn thinking, how can I make a difference? And always, that small still voice has spoken to me saying, "relax, allow me to work through you".

Indeed, my deepest appreciation and gratitude today goes to the Almighty God who is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent and has brought me this far with His amazing Grace.

My enormous thank you goes to the President of the Republic of Ghana for the massive support his government has provided to this University and to the Minister for Education, our Guest of Honour today, for the great tutelage and backing for me personally and to the University. We just started crawling but I trust that, with the mass of support we are gaining, UniMAC will be flying soon.

I am still in awe at the UniMAC Council and especially the Chair, Emeritus Prof. Kwesi Yankah who has fathered me, given me support, encouraging and urging me on to implement change for the good of UniMAC and Ghana. Prof. Yankah and the able UniMAC Council members, thank you so much. The Confidence reposed in me is one I cherish and I promise to be an exemplary leader.

I am extremely overwhelmed by the support I have gained from past Rectors and Directors of the erstwhile Institutes, the University community and well-meaning individuals who are passionate to see UniMAC succeed and are ever-ready to go the extra mile for a positive change. UniMAC is unique and we are committed to make it great because my predecessors across the erstwhile Institutes built a strong foundation for me to build this unique mansion called UniMAC; indeed, this is just the beginning, thank you all.

One of our wise sayings in Ghana says, curse not the hands that feed you. I am who I am today because I have had great and supportive parents who provided for me and encouraged me to stand on the shoulders of giants so I can see and go far. Paapa, Opanyin Agya Poku, Old Soldier, 'me na me neiooo', Nyame Nhyira wo paaa and to my mother of blessed memory, Mama, Auntie Rose, wherever you are, smile and shine your light on me. To my extended and nuclear family, who have travelled from the Ashanti region and near to grace this occasion, I am grateful. You have been my support, my enabler, and my inspiration and I am grateful to you all.

Another family I treasure and have been my bedrock especially in times of turmoil and despair is my church. I have been fortunate to have fellowship in several churches, the Royal Family Church

in Kumasi, Assemblies of God Church, the University Interdenominational Church, UCC Campus and currently at the Legon Interdenominational Church, where I said my nuptial vows and where I fellowship today. I have always received support from the clergy and today, if I haven't said it enough, I am eternally grateful for all the prayers and care.

Professors and Tutors at both the Departments of English and Communication Studies, Mentors and Mentees who have guided my academic career, UCC mates and friends, University Teachers Association of Ghana's (UTAG) leadership and members at UCC and all my UCC and Cape Coast family, I am grateful for your nurturing, support and love that has guided me to be the person I am today, receive your appreciation - thank you.

You know, although we advance higher on the education ladder, we always have fond memories of our secondary school days, those experiences formed us. To my Antoa Secondary School (Ansec) and SDA Secondary School in Bekwai mates and teachers, we have been through thick and thin together and you have always provided a pillow for me to rest on. You are my backbone and I appreciate you so much.

To the Faculty and Administrative staff at UniMAC, I am humbled by your fervent support and dedication, commitment to our students and to our uniqueness that make us different. Together, we have challenged the status quo and broken boundaries set to make us small and we have risen up from the ashes like a phoenix bird to a UniMAC. UniMAC is indeed unique because you all have made it so and we continue to chart the path of greatness. To our precious students, as I keep saying, UniMAC is the place where dreams take flight and creativity, innovation, and academic excellence converge. I am delighted to see you here, especially the final year students who are preparing for graduation tomorrow. Keep lifting up the name of UniMAC where ever life positions you and let your uniqueness shine to the admiration of all. And to all the Alumni of UniMAC - from GIJ, IL and NAFTI – your support for your alma matter is admirable, thank you. We are in the news always because of a rare combination of journalism and creativity of the arts that is channeled through the media every day.

I cannot pay any less tribute of gratitude to our sister universities for joining in this celebration to mark history. Thank you to Vice-Chancellors Ghana, for your continued support. Also, to all government officials, regulators, traditional rulers, community leaders, Industrial partners, the business community and various stakeholders for being a part of this auspicious event, I am grateful.

Finally, my gratitude goes to all my fathers, mothers, aunties, uncles, mentors who have particularly impacted my life. I am eternally grateful to Prof. Naana Jane Opoku Agyemang, my teacher and academic mother who approved my scholarship the last hour for my doctoral studies at the University of Cape Town. Today, fresh from the 2024 elections, she is the first female Vice President Elect and I cannot be prouder for how far you have soared. I am still learning from you

every day Prof. Opoku Agyemang. Additionally, I am full of gratitude to my teacher and MPhil Supervisor, Prof Lawrence Kwadwo Owusu Ansah, Prof. Dora Francisca Edu-Buondoh, my official mentor as a lecturer and my first English Language teacher as an undergraduate, Prof. JBA Afful, my research guide and angel. You read my first and several drafts of my proposal for my doctoral admission and also the very final draft of my doctoral thesis before submission. Prof. K.T. Oduro, my university political mentor, referee and advisor, I'm grateful. Prof. Philip Ebow Bondzie-Simpson, my political, legal and management advisor, I own a depth of gratitude to you all. Indeed, the list is endless! If I failed to mention you by name, please know that it was inadvertent; I am truly grateful to everyone.

2025 sets the platform for our acceleration as UniMAC. As we prepare to grab the opportunities that a new year brings for our success, let me indulge you to reflect on a few of the challenges that confront us on our journey for success and how we can overcome as an Institution.

4 THE CHALLENGES THAT LIE AHEAD OF US

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, getting this far has taken a lot of hard work but what lies ahead of us to achieve our vision and mission as a unique institution is an uphill task, one that would require all hands on the wheel.

We just came out of elections and we stand here at the precipice of victory because Ghana has won and we are still enjoying the peace we so cherish. We were all able to do this because we listen to the cautions and wisdom shared through the power of media – traditional and online – to be selfish enough for peace. As a communication University, we have the onerous task of ensuring that we develop discerning media men and women who are bold for the good of our dear nation Ghana.

To do this, we have heeded to the wisdom of 'Who We Are' as UniMAC, as encapsulated in our logo. The elements of our logo are made up of three Adinkra symbols. The "Nkonsonkonson", a symbol of unity and human relations. This is beckoning to us that we must all, as three constituent Institutes for now, act, feel and work together as one body to realise our vision. Today, we confirm our identity to the world as one UniMAC. The "Dame-Dame" also signifies intelligence and integrity. Institutions of Higher learning in Ghana today, face a challenge of enrollment. As a young UniMAC, competing in the same space as the big boys means we have to be strategic in our approach to increase our student numbers. We must intentionally work with integrity – something we have prided ourselves in for eons – to raise above others. Finally, the "Akok) nan" in our logo represents nurturing/training and discipline. This is our core mandate as a university, to nurture young and inquisitive minds to be change makers in the world of media, arts and communication. Whilst doing that, we must nurture our young teaching and non-teaching staff to develop themselves

to take up places on the ladder of progress so that, we all can look back with pride and say, I was here and I made a positive difference. This, we must do with passion, excitement, confidence, authenticity, inspiring trust, supporting each other reliably, as our brand colours - burgundy, mustard brown and Prussian blue, symbolise.

The exciting thing is that we have embraced change and have begun the process of change. I am happy to smile at the fact that we have an appreciable level of teaching and non-teaching staff, totaling close to five hundred (500) in number, ever zealous to work for a positive change.

We have improved our undergraduate and post graduate programmes including our short courses to provide value to industries and Ghana at large. Today, walk into any media house and you would find an alumnus and/or alumna from UniMAC -IJ. Visit most embassies in Ghana and you would find the impact of UniMAC -IL on the operations of the embassy. And when it comes to the creative Arts sector, our screens are glaring beautifully with our local film celebrities and producers making movies and skits that keep us entertained because of UniMAC -IFT.

I'm excited to announce that we have launched and opened up admissions for our PhD in Media and Communication programme, this is a dream come true for me and I'm grateful to the team that work tirelessly to see this programme accredited and launched. A PhD in Media and Communication offers rare opportunities for distinguished professionals to become specialists in Media and Journalism, Political Communication, Public Relations, Marketing and Advertising, Development Communication and Film and Theatre Studies whilst bearing the prestigious titles of Dr. I entreat us all to take advantage of this programme as we work to build professionalism and scholarship in the media, arts and communication field.

Importantly, we have improved our research output and UniMAC is proudly part of academic citations on creditable sources. Faculty is on fire with relevant publication and this fiery passion must be blazing not just among a few but every member of UniMAC including our postgraduate students.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Nananom, history has taught us that, challenges are opportunities in disguise and that we must persevere and not rest on our oars and past glory. The Great Martin Luther King, Jnr. said and I quote, "the ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of convenience and comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy", and we must all begin to feel uncomfortable enough to change for the good of UniMAC.

4 MY VISION

As we get uncomfortable for a positive change, Honourable Minister, Nananon, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to share my vision for UniMAC. This vision, I have had the opportunity to share to the leadership of the University and it is my fervent prayer that it becomes our collective vision, so that hand in hand, we can work to achieve them for the realization of UniMAC's strategic objectives. I have encapsulated my vision in the acronym "HIRe PoFiS". My friends from sister universities would attest to the fact that we love acronyms. But as a student of English, acronyms can be poetic and also make recollection easier, hence my decision to use an acronym for my vision. The word "hire" inherently means a deliberate plan to employ someone with the right skills to perform a particular job. "Pofis" my research revealed, is a Spanish street jargon (word) used to refer to a best friend or a blood brother. My vision therefore, figuratively, is appealing to all at UniMAC (who are my friends and blood brothers and sisters by virtue of the fact that life has brought us together at UniMAC) to be intentional in our efforts in applying the right skills and resources in our quest to make UniMAC great. I, therefore, pledge your indulgence to allow me to explain the acronym briefly:

H – stands for Human Resource Development and Management: Without the right skill sets, all our quest for success is but a fleeting murmur. We must hire right, developed centralised bursary support for further education, reward hard work and develop capacities for subpar performance, institute a Performance Management System with clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that motivate and recognise staff for excellence. The past is gone, we must make the future great.

I - stands for Infrastructural Development and Management: Coming together as three Institutes means we lack the infrastructure needed to set up a university from the scratch. We must therefore prioritise the construction of lecture halls, libraries, and hostels to meet our ever-expanding student population. This we can do by consciously generating internal funds and going into Public Private Partnerships (PPP). We must also be innovative to use modern technology for operational efficiency whilst imbibing a culture of care and maintenance for our assets. Whilst building infrastructure, we must use the power of media and communication to build a visible and lovable UniMAC brand that is warm and affectionate, one that continues to attract more females to be professionals

professionals. SITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION

Re - stands for Research that Impacts: I am happy we have embraced the culture of research and outreach. But we must go beyond that to sharpen the skills of faculty members to source local and international grants. Senior Faculty must nurture and mentor junior staff in conducting and publishing cutting-edge research. And I dare you all to take up the challenge of "Project One Article Per Year" to contribute to academic progress and conference sponsorship.

Po - stands for Policy and Governance: We must work within the ambit of the rules and regulations that govern us, from the Act that established us and the guidelines of our regulators, Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC). Above that, we must work to interpret our act and rid it of ambiguities as well as develop policies and manuals to support us work efficiently as a Unique UniMAC.

Fi - stands for Financial Sustainability and Growth: We know resources have, since the time of Adam Smith, been scarce. We must therefore budget effectively and be disciplined in our spending. We must adapt innovative ways by deploying technology-driven solutions that reduces wastage and manual laborious work habits, whilst diversifying our revenue sources by establishing UniMAC Enterprise that generates revenue for our sustainable operations. We cannot totally be dependent on Government, we must at some point win ourselves from its apron strings.

S - stands for Stakeholder and Community Engagements: UniMAC has come this far as a result of partnerships and community. Our relationships with the diplomatic corps because of IL, our relationships with the Media because of IJ and our relationship with key influencers of society – arts, film and television personalities because of IFT have made us a rare blend. We have alumni who are great in their individual spaces and are proud of their alma mater. We will continue to leverage on these relationships and make them stronger and collaborate effectively. Additionally, Global Citizenship Education has taught us that we live in a global village. We will continue to broker enduring international relationships to position UniMAC as a unique University of great repute, internationally.

Underpinning my vision is a burning passion for UniMAC to be synchronizing our curriculum in media, arts and communication with 21st century skills which encompass Artificial Intelligence. In the ever-evolving landscape of higher education, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is gaining eminence. In the media, arts and communication space, we keep hearing of deep fakes, cloned social media accounts, impersonations, among others, impacting hard earned reputations. We must embrace the transforming power of AI to teach our students to use AI for good and guide them to use AI to deliver relevant information that promotes, protects and builds rather than destroy. And, I dare all my faculty members to start the discourse on AI, interrogate it and strategise how best to incorporate it into our curriculum.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Honourable Guest Speaker, Nananom, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I am confident in the future of UniMAC - a UniMAC where dreams take flight and creativity, innovation, and academic excellence converge; a UniMAC where students, Faculty and Administrative staff are passionate and proud to be associated with the University; a UniMAC where stakeholders troop in with one purpose of how we can make UniMAC great; a UniMAC that is blessed beyond measure because like the blessings of Genesis 1:28, we are fruitful, and multiplying and replenishing the earth of higher education, and subduing it, and having dominion over it.

I am eternally grateful to the University Council, my dear convocation family, and all staff of UniMAC for this honour of leading you as your Vice-Chancellor. Note that, if you follow me, I will not lead; be by my side so that together, we can walk side-by-side to victory and make an impact. I pledge allegiance to God Almighty and you as my witnesses, that I would serve with integrity, equity and respect.

As I prepare to take my seat, let us remember, Prof. Chair of Council, Honourable Guest of Honour, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, that we can achieve anything if we put our hearts, souls and minds to it. Today, we chart a new course for UniMAC as the first Investiture of a Vice-Chancellor, one that would be the yardstick for future investitures to come. Let us embody the significance of what it stands for and work in concert for the promotion of UniMAC. I leave you with this quotation by Oprah Winfrey, "the greatest discovery of all time is that a person can change his future by merely changing his attitude".

Long live Ghana

Long Live Institutions of Higher Learning

Long live the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC)

Thank you for your attentiveness, patience and support, God bless us all.

PROFESSOR ERIC OPOKU MENSAH VICE-CHANCELLOR, UniMAC DA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION 18TH DECEMBER 2024