OPENING REMARKS BY EUPHEMIA UWANDU AT
WIKI-GREEN CONFERENCE 2024

My name is Euphemia Uwandu, and I'm joining you from the Wikimedia Foundation, where I have the privilege, every year, of working with Wikimedia communities to run the global Wiki for Human Rights campaign. This campaign is an annual initiative run by the Wikimedia Foundation in collaboration with the Wikimedia movement and the UN Human Rights Council to ensure that crucial information about climate change and sustainability is documented in the digital space through Wikimedia projects.

It is one of the projects that the Wikimedia Foundation uses to mobilize action for the current climate crisis, using reliable information to drive climate action. We understand that, in a time when the world is facing unpredictable events as a result of climate change and human activities, it is crucial that society has access to accurate information. This information helps people understand the nature of the problem, how it is being faced in different parts of the world, and the relevant actions that can help us adapt to the situation. This is why this campaign is such an important initiative; it helps us to surface some of the valuable knowledge that can be used to address the crisis. It also highlights crucial information about the topic in different spaces and times to ensure that people have access to the right information.

For example, in 2022, when the UN Human Rights Council adopted the right to a healthy environment as a human right, it was crucial for the Wikimedia movement to step up to the responsibility of ensuring that people curious about the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and air pollution could understand what these issues entail, the different realities surrounding them in various geographic locations, and how they can work collaboratively with others to address the challenge.

This was also the case during the 2022 Nigerian floods, which were said to be the worst in the country's history since 2012. The Wiki for Human Rights campaign was used to ensure that information about cities experiencing this episode of flooding—how it was affecting people, infrastructure, agriculture, and what actions were being taken to remedy the situation—was brought to the forefront so that the world could share in this knowledge, preserve it, and help people learn how to rise to the challenge.

But we also understand that it is not just about sharing this information; it is about presenting it in forms that people will find valuable. This is why the campaign uses formats like written articles available in hundreds of languages so people can read and understand in their native language.

The campaign also leverages the opportunity to ensure that climate change-related terms are documented in local vocabulary, helping local populations understand the topic in their language, including the native pronunciations of these terms. This brings a new perspective to how we understand climate change. Additionally, the campaign ensures that multimedia and data on this topic are properly documented on Wikimedia projects. This diversity in documentation helps people from different backgrounds access the type of information most important to them and use it for advocacy and action where needed.

Beyond building this information and ensuring access, it is vital that we start and grow communities that fuel education for tackling the climate crisis. We know that Wikimedia communities are the heart and soul of the Wiki for Human Rights campaign. These communities play a crucial role in mobilizing their local populations—people with lived experiences of climate change, those practicing and adopting relevant actions, and academics who can contribute critical research—to document this information and empower communities.

Last year, we saw a new community emerge in Libya as a result of the campaign, and this year marks their second time running the Wiki for Human Rights campaign. They are using this initiative to build a volunteer community dedicated to promoting climate knowledge in the digital space. These communities are championed by our incredible volunteers and organizers, and it is important to us that they have the right skills to mobilize and engage their communities in bringing every relevant piece of information to the table.

Through this campaign, we emphasize capacity building for organizers so they can learn how to use this campaign to become activists and advocates for free climate change information in the digital space. This has helped our community grow in diverse ways of addressing the climate crisis.

As you gather here today for these important conversations, we encourage you to reflect on the critical discussions that are important in the Ghanaian context. Where do these important conversations fit in your context? What kind of information is crucial for you to bring to the forefront, so the world can learn and share in it? What gaps exist in the conversations that are currently in the digital space? And how can you collaborate with Wikimedia communities to ensure that local communities in Ghana can access this critical information in their language?

Thank you for having me. I hope you can help us understand what the Ghanaian community needs to keep driving climate action. Thank you all once again, and I wish you a wonderful conversation. I'll now pass it back to you, Josephine.