

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS FOR THE HONOURABLE MINISTER HON. SAMUEL
NARTEY GEORGE**

**NATIONAL DATA PROTECTION CONFERENCE 2026 THURSDAY 26TH
FEBRUARY 2026 - ALISA HOTEL, NORTH RIDGE -ACCRA.**

**ARCHITECTING GHANA’S DIGITAL FUTURE WITH TRUST AND PERSONAL
DATA PROTECTION AT ITS CORE**

**Your Excellency,
The Right Honourable Speaker of Parliament,
Governor of the Bank of Ghana,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Heads of Regulatory Institutions,
Captains of Industry,
Academics and Innovators,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good morning.

It is a privilege to address this distinguished gathering under a theme that speaks directly to the realities of our time: **“Your Data, Your Identity – Building Trust in Ghana’s Digital Future.”**

Throughout history, nations have been shaped by how they managed their most valuable resources. Gold once defined economic strength. Oil reshaped

global power and industry. Today, data has taken its place as a defining resource of the modern economy.

Unlike gold buried in the ground, data is created every day by people, through mobile payments, biometric systems, banking transactions, health records, and the countless digital services that now form part of everyday life. Data is no longer just a technical matter. It has become closely tied to identity, economic participation, and access to opportunity. If managed responsibly, it can also become a source of national advantage.

Ghana stands at an important point in its digital journey. Over the past decade, we have seen remarkable progress. Mobile money has transformed financial inclusion. Interoperable payment systems have strengthened efficiency. Digital public infrastructure continues to expand. Open banking is advancing, and artificial intelligence is gradually being introduced across multiple sectors.

Every day, millions of Ghanaians contribute to this digital ecosystem, generating value through the data they create. Yet experience around the world shows that rapid growth without strong governance creates vulnerabilities. A system that expands without trust eventually slows, because citizens and businesses become cautious.

Trust, therefore, is not an abstract idea. It is a form of economic infrastructure. Without trust, participation declines, investment hesitates, and innovation

loses momentum. With trust, systems grow, markets deepen, and confidence strengthens.

In the digital era, that trust rests fundamentally on protecting personal data. When we say, **“Your Data, Your Identity,”** we are recognising that personal information now influences access to credit, insurance, public services, and automated decision-making systems. If personal data is not handled responsibly, the consequences go beyond financial loss. They can affect fairness, dignity, and public confidence in institutions.

This is why Ghana must move beyond simply expanding digital services. We must focus on deliberate digital architecture. Consent must be meaningful and transparent. Artificial intelligence systems must be understandable and accountable. Application interfaces must be secure. Identity platforms must be resilient. Cross-border data flows must be governed in ways that protect both citizens and national interests.

Across the world, assumptions about technology and digital dependence are changing. Countries are paying closer attention to resilience, sovereignty, and the long-term implications of how data is stored, processed, and shared. Ghana must respond thoughtfully, guided not by fear, but by foresight and careful planning.

As a Ministry, we are taking concrete steps in this direction. Work is underway to reform our legislative and institutional framework for data protection. A new

Data Protection Bill is being developed to respond to modern realities, including artificial intelligence, automated decision-making, and increasingly complex cross-border data ecosystems. The objective is to strengthen enforcement, clarify international transfer rules, and enhance citizens' rights, ensuring that our governance framework remains relevant in the years ahead.

We are also advancing a Data Harmonisation initiative to reduce fragmentation and align standards across financial services, telecommunications, and the public sector. A resource as important as data cannot be governed through disconnected rules. Coherence and consistency are essential.

At the same time, Ghana's Artificial Intelligence Strategy has been developed to build local capability while embedding fairness, transparency, and accountability in the design and deployment of these systems. Innovation must always serve people. It must strengthen dignity, not weaken it. The National AI Strategy has been approved by Cabinet and will be launched in the next few weeks by His Excellency, President John Dramani Mahama.

In addition, work is progressing on an Emerging Technologies Bill that will provide structured oversight for artificial intelligence systems, advanced analytics, digital assets, and new digital platforms. The aim is not to slow innovation, but to guide it responsibly so that progress remains aligned with public interest.

Yet laws and policies alone are not enough. Digital systems do not build themselves. They require skilled people who can design, secure, and improve them.

This is why we have launched the **One Million Coders Programme**, an initiative to equip young Ghanaians with skills in coding, artificial intelligence, data protection and digital engineering. If data is a valuable resource, then human talent is what allows that resource to be refined and used productively. A nation that generates data but cannot design and manage its own systems remains dependent. A nation that develops digital expertise shapes its own future.

Digital sovereignty, in this sense, belongs to every institution that collects or processes personal data. Compliance with the Data Protection Act is both a legal obligation and a moral duty. Any organisation that has not yet registered with the Data Protection Commission should do so without delay.

Registration reflects accountability, and compliance builds trust. The data entrusted to you by the people of Ghana must be protected in full accordance with the Data Protection Act 2012 (Act 843). Leadership should begin voluntarily, not after enforcement.

Strong data protection should not be seen as a barrier to innovation. On the contrary, it can become one of Ghana's greatest strengths. As we position

ourselves as a regional hub for fintech and digital services, trust can become a defining feature of our digital economy.

Speaking of our digital economy, the key unique identifier for all Ghanaians today is the Ghana Card. The Ghana Card has become the single source of truth for identity verification across platforms. For example, when a citizen applies for government healthcare or seeks to open a bank account online, the Ghana Card enables seamless authentication across these diverse systems. As more and more public services move online, the need to link physical identity to digital identity through a standardised biometric protocol is critical. Unfortunately, this was a missed step in the last SIM card registration, as there was no biometric verification against the NIA database.

This has left us with the difficult but necessary decision, after extensive Cabinet deliberations, begin the processes for a new SIM Card registration exercise. This exercise will be the first to have live verification against the NIA database and provide biometric verification for every registration. Let me state upfront: this exercise will prioritise customer comfort. We are putting in place measures to avoid long queues, including self-service portals and a seamless process for completing the process.

The regulator, the National Communications Authority, is engaging stakeholders on the rollout. The Data Protection Commission must be central to ensuring that, even as biometric data is collected and processed, it is done

with the principal consideration of protecting the customers. Trust must be elevated above all other considerations.

But safeguarding this trust is not the responsibility of the government alone. Financial institutions must integrate privacy and security into system design from the beginning. Telecommunications providers must strengthen encryption and infrastructure resilience. Startups must consider privacy and data governance from their earliest stages. Universities and research institutions must continue advancing work in artificial intelligence safety and digital ethics. Corporate boards must treat data governance as a matter of accountability and long-term risk management.

Trust must be built deliberately. It does not happen automatically.

This conference, therefore, is an opportunity to reflect on whether the systems we are building are worthy of public confidence, whether our governance structures are keeping pace with technological change, and whether the digital economy we are shaping is grounded in dignity and fairness.

In the years ahead, history will not judge us by how quickly we digitised, but by how wisely we governed.

When we protect personal data, we protect identity.
When we protect identity, we protect dignity.
And when we protect dignity, we strengthen the Republic.

Let this conference mark a renewed national commitment to building a digital future anchored in trust, responsibility, and respect for the rights of every Ghanaian.

Thank you.