Sunday, November 1, 2026

CLOSING REMARKS BY THE HON. SAMUEL NARTEY GEORGE (MP), MINISTER OF COMMUNICATION, DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATIONS, AT THE 2026 AFRICAN SCHOOL OF INTERNET GOVERNANCE

GHANA-INDIA KOFI ANNAN CENTRE FOR EXCELLENCE IN ICT, ACCRA

Protocols.

Good afternoon. Akwaaba. And welcome to the finish line.

I stand before you wearing two hats. The first is that of Ghana's Minister for Communication, Digital Technology and Innovations. The second, which I wear with equal pride, is that of an AfriSIG alumnus.

In September 2023, I sat where you sit today. Abuja, Nigeria. AfriSIG 2023.
I was then a Member of Parliament and a member of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Communications. I thought I knew a thing or two about digital policy. AfriSIG humbled me. Then it equipped me.

I remember the debates. Long. Heated. Brilliant. I remember being challenged by people who saw the internet very differently than I did. I remember the assignments and teamwork that dragged us late into the night because we had to present them the next morning. That is the point of AfriSIG. It does not confirm what you know. It tests it.

What I learned in Abuja did not stay in Abuja. It came with me to Parliament. It came with me to Cabinet. It is with me today.

Let us be honest about what you have just been through. AfriSIG is not a conference. It is not a workshop. It is a school. It is a bootcamp! And a demanding one.

Early mornings. Late nights. Readings before breakfast. Assignments after dinner.

You went from how data travels across a network to who decides the rules for that network. From infrastructure and the domain name system to data protection and cybersecurity. From national regulation to the global debate on artificial intelligence.

You sat in multistakeholder groups. Government beside civil society. The technical community beside the private sector. Academia beside the media. You did not always agree. You were not meant to. You found common ground anyway.

That is rare training. It is intense by design. Because internet governance itself is intense and complex, it is contested. And the stakes could not be higher.

Few programmes on this continent pack so much into so few days. Fewer still produce so many leaders. Look around this room. Look at the alum network you have just joined. Ministers. Regulators. Parliamentarians. Engineers. Activists. Journalists. That network is now yours. Use it.

Ghana is proud to host AfriSIG 2026.

We do not see the internet as a luxury. We see it as infrastructure. As essential as roads. As essential as electricity.

It drives our economy. It powers our classrooms. It delivers our public services. It carries our democratic conversations.

That is why this government is investing in people, not just pipes. Through the One Million Coders Programme, we are equipping young Ghanaians with the skills to build, not merely to browse.

Here is a hard truth. The internet was not designed in Africa. Its rules were not written in Africa. Many of its standards were set before most Africans ever went online.

That must change. And it is changing.

Africa is the youngest continent on earth. By 2050, one in four people on this planet will be African. Our young people are online. They are creating. They are coding. They are building businesses.

The future users of the internet are African. The future rule-makers must be African too.

But connectivity alone is not enough. An unaffordable internet excludes. An insecure internet endangers. An internet that ignores our languages silences. An internet that disregards our rights oppresses.

We need an open internet. Secure. Affordable. Inclusive. Rights-respecting. And African in its outlook.

None of that happens by accident. It happens through governance. Through policy. Through people like you, in rooms like this.

Africa must not remain a consumer of technologies, standards and policies made elsewhere. We must help make them.

Now, let me turn to artificial intelligence.

AI is not coming. It is here. In our phones. In our banks. In our hospitals. In our elections.

So let me ask some hard questions. Whose data trains these systems? Whose languages do they speak? Whose values do they reflect? Whose problems do they solve?

Too often, the answer is: not ours.

AI trained without African data will misread African realities. Systems built without African voices will make decisions about Africans, without Africans. That is not progress. That is a new form of exclusion.

Africa must not become the data mine of the AI era. We cannot export raw data and import finished algorithms. We have seen that story before. With cocoa. With gold. With oil. We will not repeat it with data.

So what must we do?

We must build capacity. Skills. Compute. Data infrastructure. Local innovation.

We must protect our people. Strong data protection. Clear accountability when algorithms cause harm.

We must act together. The African Union's Continental AI Strategy and Data Policy Framework give us a common direction. Fifty-five countries acting alone are weak. One continent acting together is formidable.

And we must show up. At the Internet Governance Forum. At the ITU. At ICANN. At the African Union. In the standard-setting bodies. In the global AI negotiations. Wherever the rules are written, Africa must have a seat. A voice. And a vote.

As Chair of the African Union Specialised Technical Committee on Communication and ICT, I carry that conviction to every table.

In the age of AI, the question before us is simple. Will the internet serve the people of Africa? Or will the people of Africa serve the internet?

Our answer must be clear. The internet must serve Africa.

To the class of AfriSIG 2026: your certificate is not a trophy. It is a responsibility. Do not let this week fade into a memory. Do not file your notes and forget them. Use them.

Go back to your ministries and draft better policies. Go back to your regulators and ask harder questions. Go back to your parliaments and pass smarter laws. Go back to your newsrooms, your companies, your universities and your civil society organisations. And lead.

Stay connected to one another. Call each other. Challenge each other. Collaborate across borders. The friendships formed here will outlast the sessions.

Join your national and regional IGFs. Contribute to the Africa IGF. Mentor the next cohort. Bring others into this work.

Take full advantage of what you have learned. It was not easy to earn. Do not make it easy to lose.

Your real work begins today. You are now among the custodians of Africa's digital future.

Permit me to thank the convenors of AfriSIG: the Association for Progressive Communications, the African Union Commission, and Research ICT Africa. Thank you for your vision and your persistence.

I thank our Ghanaian partners who worked alongside you: my Ministry, the Ghana Domain Name Registry, and the National Communications Authority.
Our sincere appreciation also goes to the Africa IGF Secretariat, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the Media Foundation for West Africa, the Ghana-India Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence in ICT, Luminate, the

Internet Society, ICANN, GIZ, Identity Digital, the Global Network Initiative, Public Private Interest, and all our other partners. You made this convening a resounding success.

To the winner of the Makane Faye Award: congratulations. You have set the standard.

To every graduate: congratulations. You have earned this.

Now go forth. Challenge the status quo. And lead Africa boldly into the digital future.

Thank you. Asante sana. Merci. Shukran. Medaase