

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY DR. EDWARD K. OMANE BOAMAH, MINISTER FOR
COMMUNICATIONS AT THE LAUNCH OF THE DATA PROTECTION
COMMISSION ON 18TH NOVEMBER 2014 AT THE INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE CENTRE**

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Representatives of the Diplomatic Missions in Ghana,
Distinguished Members of the Judiciary and Parliament,
Representatives of Law Enforcement Agencies,
Chief Directors, Heads of Institutions and or their Representatives,
Invited Guests,
Friends of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to join you this morning for the launch of the **Data Protection Commission**, its Website and Registration System . Let me commend the Board and Management of the Data Protection Commission for making this possible.

Mr. Chairman,

Mr. Eric Schmidt, the CEO of Google (Dec. 2009) once said and I quote :

**“If you have something you don’t want anybody
to know, maybe you shouldn’t be doing it.”**

Mr. Mark Zuckerberg, co-founder and CEO of Facebook (January 2010)

Once said and I quote “Privacy is dead.”

These were the striking remarks that gave insight to some of the assumptions shaping the Internet in 2010 and they had come from the offices of the two most visited sites in 2010. Today however, their position on privacy is different.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

On 15th February 2014, a newspaper in Ghana had this headline - **Level 100 student commits suicide over poor exam results.** The news reported suicide by a 24-year-old first-year student of the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) who was pursuing a degree. There was no reason assigned for his action, but according to the sources, it may have been due to his name being published on the notice board as having failed in three subjects.

Campus Sex Tape Leaked; Ghanaian Girl, Commits Suicide After Sex Tape Leaks. These are some of the many headlines on violations of privacy that have made news in our country lately.

Mr. Chairman;

The development of an enabling legal and regulatory environment is imperative in this era of information age. Today, computers, web applications, mobile applications, software, etc - all seek to promote efficient services, higher productivity and greater convenience by reducing the gap in both space and time to bring the world closer. Indeed the relevance and utility of Information Technology in our modern day lives cannot be underestimated. Unfortunately, the information and communication technologies are also being misused by

anti-social elements in aid and furtherance of their illegal and nefarious activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In line with this the Ministry of Communications has been particularly instrumental in the passage of key legislations to improve competition and transparency in the ICT sector, the Data Protection Act, 2012 (Act 843) being one of such. The Data Protection Act guarantees specific rights and obligations to the processing of one's information in order to protect the sacred precincts of personal life and dignity in the information age – that is our PRIVACY.

Mr. Chairman;

The Act gives meaning to Article 18(2) of the 1992 Constitution. The underlying notion behind the codification of data protection is the ever growing need to process personal data today. Every Ghanaian has the right to the privacy of his or her communications and such right must be guaranteed in the processing of his or her personal data irrespective of the medium used.

Given the strong linkage between issues relating to personal data and privacy, the potential for personal data to be used in ways that can violate one's right to privacy therefore informed Government to develop this Act.

From the time of the first enactment of a legally binding data protection instrument to date, the risks posed by computers is no more

hypothetically conceived as a technical subject that is best confined to experts managing specialist systems in large-scale public and private organisations.

The World Economic Forum in 2011, estimated that individuals around the world send about 47 billion non-spam emails, submit 95 million tweets on Twitter, and share 30 billion pieces of content on Facebook every day.

You will all agree with me that, the power of computers, both for good and for ill, has become not only immense but also diffuse. An individual today with access to an ordinary laptop has vastly more processing power than those who owned the most advanced industrial machines thirty years ago. Moreover, through information technology, one can spread information about others instantly and irrevocably, sometimes with dire consequences.

The case for real and effective protections for individual data has never been stronger. Ghana is no exception as this continues to grow. The theme for this morning, 'Know Your RIGHT, Protect Your INFORMATION' cannot therefore be more appropriate as the knowledge by all of their rights under the Data Protection Act is the driving force for the recognition and enforcement of such rights.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Launch of the Data Protection Commission; its website and registration could not have come at a more opportune time than when the country and its citizens need answers and solutions to challenges that confront our right to privacy and personal data protection.

Mr. Chairman,

The Ministry recognizes that a thriving information-rich economy is essential for enhancing competitiveness and driving economic growth. It is in the light of this that Government is making it necessary to make the internet available for the use of everyone in Ghana, and more importantly, allow its use for governance, education, health service delivery, commerce, agriculture, environmental monitoring among others.

With the new technologies, new business models, and increased affordability therefore, we are certain to make a fast transition towards a fully-connected Information-rich and knowledge-based society in Ghana.

To achieve this, President Mahama's Government is laying emphasis on ICT development and the rapid deployment of national ICT infrastructure nationwide. Government appreciates that the benefits of the Internet cannot be realized without a high-speed internet connection, and **it is therefore pursuing massive investment in broadband infrastructure to cover the entire country and ensure access to the Internet as a human right.** The development of the 780 km fibre optic infrastructure which is to expand the broadband internet connectivity for

data transmission in the country from Ho to Bawku with a link to Tamale through Yendi are major investments by Government.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen , Government has deployed 4G LTE network that provides access to key government services to all regional and some district offices of MDA and MMDAs. A 10 Gbps fiber ring inter-connect all government Ministries and the seat of Government in Accra. **Eleven e-service applications for services such as business registration, tax administration and birth and death registration were unveiled on the e-service portal (www.eservices.gov.gh) in 2013 as a channel for citizen and businesses accessing government services and sending feedback on the services.**

Mr. Chairman, as part of Government's broader commitment to bridge the infrastructure gap to enable broader participation in the information age, **Government is building a National Data Center infrastructure that will serve the public and private entities in the country. This is comprised of a Primary Data Center in Accra and has over 500 rack space estimated to be the largest in West Africa is estimated to be fully completed by March 2015.**

There is a **Secondary Datacenter located in Kumasi which has been completed. The datacenter will provide services such as web hosting, cloud Infrastructure as a service solutions and dedicated servers to all and sundry. The over 2 Pentabytes storage which will be available at these datacenters will usher the country into an era where more and more local companies and start-up businesses will create local content and Ghana will truly embrace the Information society.**

- Distinguished Guests, ladies and Gentlemen, the future for the Information Society in Ghana is very bright. A lot is being done to ensure that the citizenry will not only have access to the internet and its related applications but also an **assured confidence and growth in the use of ICTs for development** and that is why we are here today to place building blocks firmly to enhance how your personal information will be used by organisations, businesses or the government and above all the awareness that everyone responsible for using data has to follow strict rules called 'data protection principles', which include making sure that the information is: used fairly and lawfully
 - used for limited, specifically stated purposes
 - used in a way that is adequate, relevant and not excessive
 - accurate
 - kept for no longer than is absolutely necessary
 - handled according to people's data protection rights
 - kept safe and secure
 - not transferred outside Ghana without adequate protection

In line with this I wish to urge the Commission to ensure that its independence is not compromised in the discharge of its duties.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I will end by calling on all stakeholders to ensure the smooth and successful implementation of the Act. Whiles at it I also call on you as individuals to ***know your right and protect your information.***

On this note, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I hereby declare the Data Protection Commission, its Website and Registration System duly launched

Thank you.