



26TH SWIFT AFRICAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE

WELCOME ADDRESS

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KEMPINSKI HOTEL, GOLD COAST CITY IN ACCRA,

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Your Excellency, President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo,

Honourable Ministers,

Directors and Management of SWIFT,

CEOs of Financial Institutions,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is an honour for me to officially welcome you all to Accra and the 26th Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) Africa Regional Conference. Before I proceed any further, let me first say that we are privileged to have H.E. President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo to grace the occasion. Your Excellency, we very much appreciate taking time off your busy schedule to join us today.
2. Let me also thank the management of SWIFT for choosing Ghana to host this year's session which has brought together more than 500 professionals from over 45 countries across Africa and beyond, including policy makers, industry leaders



and FinTechs to meet and shape market practices in Africa's financial services sector.

3. Your Excellency, digital innovation is creating unprecedented opportunities for Africa to grow its economy, create jobs and transform people's lives. New technologies and business models are opening alternative pathways to economic growth in emerging markets, offering opportunities to reshape our lives and improve economic growth. In this regard, I believe the chosen theme; **'Enabling the Digital Economy'** is most appropriate and timely.

4. Ladies and Gentlemen, the Government of Ghana's commitment to formalize the Ghanaian economy through digitisation is laudable. Digitisation is a key component of the "Ghana Beyond Aid Agenda" which is firmly anchored in leveraging technology to promote economic efficiency and inclusiveness for accelerated development and poverty reduction. Indeed, the President has shown keen interest and remains committed to building an inclusive modern society.



This drive has seen the roll-out of several digital initiatives such as, the digital property addressing system, the National biometric ID cards which will be linked to Government agencies to help ease identification processes and promote integrity and efficiency in business transactions.

5. Also, to enhance the ease of doing business in Ghana, the Government has introduced several other digital initiatives such as the paperless port operations to ensure smooth operations at the ports, and the E-Justice project or the paperless courts, which seeks to automate existing manual filing systems in the court's registry and improve efficiency of the justice system. These digitization processes will ultimately improve Ghana's business environment.
6. The Bank of Ghana recognizes the importance of the role digital innovations play in creating a financially inclusive economy. Consequently, the Government through Bank of Ghana is collaborating with stakeholders including



telecommunication companies and FinTechs to digitize the financial landscape and deepen financial inclusion.

7. Leveraging on mobile phone technology, Ghana made significant progress in improving financial inclusion. With the fastest growing market in Africa with an estimated voice subscriptions rising by 60.0 percent (25.6 million) to (40.9 million) between 2012 and 2018, mobile money accounts have also increased over nine - fold reaching 32.6 million from about 345,000 over the same period. At the end of 2018, active mobile money accounts were estimated at 13.1 million accounts.
8. In collaboration with payment service providers, financial technology companies (fintechs) have designed innovative products and services to promote digital savings, lending and investments to unbanked customers at affordable costs. Some of these products and services include online payment platforms, mobile banking services, Quick Response codes, money transfer services, deployment of Point of Sale devices,



termination of inward remittances into mobile wallets, and agency banking. More recently, mobile money processes have been integrated with the interbank payment systems infrastructure.

- 9.** As part of the broader strategy to create an enabling regulatory environment for convenient, efficient and safe retail payments and funds transfer mechanisms, the Bank of Ghana has consolidated all the various regulations and guidelines into the Payment Systems and Services Act.
- 10.** In March this year, the Payment Systems and Services Act 2019 (Act 987) was passed by Parliament as part of the continued efforts to establish a strong payment regulatory framework for the country. In May, the Act was subsequently assented to by, the President of the Republic, reflecting His Excellency's commitment to the establishment of a modern payments regulatory framework. This is another milestone in Ghana's strategy to develop an efficient payment systems framework to underscore the digitization process.



- 11.** Broadly, implementation of the Act is expected to liberalize the country's payment system further and allow for the entry of non-banks, direct licensing of fintechs by the Bank of Ghana, and ultimately promote financial inclusion to facilitate electronic means of payment. In the long-run, Ghana's new Payment Systems and Services Act is expected to help improve not only the payments system but also create an enabling environment for the on-going digitization processes in the economy.
- 12.** By and large, the SWIFT network provides data, reports and important information for regulators, banks and other financial institutions, as well as policy makers across the globe. For example, the 2018 SWIFT report on '*Africa Payments: Insights into African Transaction Flows*' indicated an increasing number of clearing payments are being routed through Africa, instead of banks outside Africa. The data showed that between 2013 and 2017, intra-African clearing payments increased from 10.2% to 12.3%. SWIFT also highlighted an emerging trend of increasing use of some local



African currencies for cross-border payments. This has the potential to moderate foreign exchange risks and lower transaction costs, which is a positive development for the Continent.

- 13.** To conclude my brief remarks Ladies and Gentlemen, let me say that leveraging on digital technology requires the commitment and collaboration of all stakeholders. And, I believe, the august gathering of policy makers, industry leaders and the broad financial community at this 26th SWIFT Conference provides the unique forum for networking, broader consultations, education and discussions, all within a collaborative environment. I wish you a successful three-day Conference and hope you will find time to visit some of our nearby tourist attractions.

Thank You.