



Opening Speech by Dr. David S. Ameyaw, President & CEO, International Centre for Evaluation and Development (ICED)

**Evidence to Action Conference and Exhibition 2026
24–26 June 2026 | ISSER Conference Hall, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra**

Protocol

- Rt. Hon. Alban Sumana Kingsford Bagbin, Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Ghana and our Guest of Honour;
- Hon. Julius Debrah, Chief of Staff of the Office of the President of the Republic of Ghana and our Special Keynote Speaker;
- Rt. Hon. Fabakary Tombong Jatta, Speaker of the National Assembly of The Gambia;
- His Excellency Prof. Peter Anyang' Nyong'o, Governor of Kisumu County, Kenya;
- Hon. Isaac Mwaura, Government Spokesperson of the Government of Kenya;
- Her Excellencies and Honourable Ministers and Representatives of Government from Uganda, Tanzania, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and South Africa;
- Mr. Ouseynou Ngom, representing the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation;
- Our distinguished keynote speakers — Ms. Caroline Fiennes, Dr. Julius Muia, and H.E. Mohamed Béavogui, Former Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea;
- Prof. Felix Asante, Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghana;
- Prof. Robert Darko Osei, Director of the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER);
- Leaders of partner institutions, development partners, researchers, civil society actors, innovators, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen:

Good morning.

1. It is my great honour and privilege to welcome you all to the 9th Evidence to Action Conference and Exhibition, here in Accra, Ghana.
2. On behalf of the International Centre for Evaluation and Development, I extend our deepest appreciation to our host institution, the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) at the University of Ghana, and to our strategic partners—including the Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR); Policy, Advocacy and Communication for Knowledge Systems Africa (PACKS Africa); eBASE Africa; the Africa Centre for Development Impact (ACDI); Oxfam; Afrobarometer; and the Parliamentary Network Africa (PNAfrica)—as well as the many governments, institutions, and collaborators whose commitment has made this convening possible.
3. We are deeply grateful to the Government of the Republic of Ghana for its continued support of and partnership with the Evidence to Action (E2A) convenings over the years. We acknowledge Ghana's ongoing commitment to strengthening evidence-informed policymaking, enhancing public institutions, and fostering constructive engagement between government, academia, civil society, and development partners. In addition, the International Centre for Evaluation and Development (ICED) is collaborating with the Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy, and Religious Affairs to strengthen monitoring and evaluation capacity and enhance the use of evidence in local governance and service delivery.
4. This conference is more than a gathering of experts and institutions. It is a statement of intent. It is a declaration that Africa's evidence ecosystem is maturing

and that the continent is ready to move from being a recipient of externally defined paradigms to becoming a global producer and shaper of evidence-informed policymaking.

5. We meet at a defining moment for our continent. By 2050, one in every four people in the world will be African, a demographic transformation that positions Africa at the center of the global future—economically, politically, and socially.
6. Across Africa, governments and institutions are navigating increasingly complex and interconnected challenges that demand urgent, evidence-driven responses. Today, the continent is home to over 1.4 billion people, with more than 60% under the age of 25. Each year, Africa must generate between 10 and 12 million new jobs simply to keep pace with labour market entry, yet formal job creation continues to fall short of this demand. Despite progress in several economies, nearly one in three Africans still lives in extreme poverty, while inequality continues to constrain inclusive development and opportunity.
7. In agriculture—which supports between 40% and 60% of Africa’s workforce—productivity gaps remain significant, and the continent continues to spend tens of billions of dollars annually on food imports, reflecting persistent food insecurity and structural inefficiencies.
8. Climate change further intensifies these pressures. Africa contributes less than 4% of global emissions, yet it faces some of the most severe climate impacts in the world, including recurrent droughts, flooding, and extreme weather events that undermine livelihoods and strain national budgets. At the same time, rising debt burdens in several countries are limiting fiscal space for investments in health, education, infrastructure, and innovation—precisely the foundations required for long-term transformation.
9. In this context, evidence is no longer optional. It is indispensable. Yet, we also know that the journey from knowledge to action remains uneven. Too often, evidence is produced but not used. Too often, decisions are made without sufficient grounding in local realities. And too often, indigenous knowledge, citizen experience, and community-led innovation are treated as peripheral rather than central to policymaking.
10. That is why the theme of this conference, “Reimagining the Evidence-Informed Policy and Decision-Making Ecosystem in Africa”, is both timely and urgent. This urgency is amplified by Africa’s demographic trajectory. A continent that will represent one quarter of humanity within a generation cannot afford weak evidence systems or fragmented decision-making. The scale of transformation required demands stronger institutions where evidence consistently informs policy choices, resource allocation, and development pathways.
11. Over the next three days, we will hear from outstanding thought leaders and practitioners who will challenge us to think more boldly about the future of evidence in Africa.
 - Ms. Caroline Fiennes will help us reflect on what works in evidence-informed policymaking across the continent.
 - Dr. Julius Muia will guide us through the systems, incentives, and institutional conditions that enable evidence to translate into sustainable impact.
 - And H.E. Mohamed Béavogui, former prime minister of the Republic of Guinea and ICED Board Member, will challenge us to rethink what must fundamentally change if Africa is to build a truly Africa-led evidence-to-action ecosystem.
12. We are especially honoured by the presence of senior leaders, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners from Uganda, Tanzania, Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire, Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and many other African countries, alongside partners and representatives from the United States, the United Kingdom, and other parts of the world. Your presence affirms that evidence-informed governance is not merely a technical exercise; it is a leadership imperative and a shared global responsibility.

Call to action:

My call to all of us is simple:

Let this conference be not only a space for reflection but for commitment.

- Let us document what works, confront what has failed, strengthen partnerships, and co-create practical pathways for institutionalizing evidence use across governments, parliaments, academia, civil society, and the private sector.
- Africa has the ideas, experience, institutions, and talent. What is required now is the courage and coordination to translate evidence into action at scale.
- A key outcome of this conference will be a communiqué and declaration, as well as a synthesis report/book of policy insights and outcomes. This will be shared with governments, regional bodies, and development partners as a practical roadmap to strengthen the uptake of evidence in policies and programmes across the continent.

Closing

Welcome to the 2026 Evidence to Action Conference and Exhibition.

May these deliberations be productive, inspiring, and transformative.

Thank you very much and God bless you all.