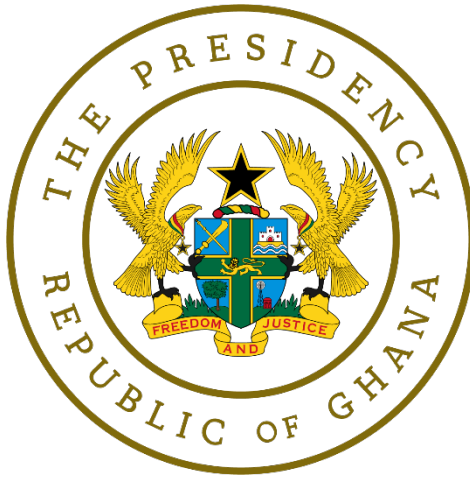




Special Keynote Address

**Remarks by the Chief of Staff, Hon. Julius Debrah,
Office of the President, Republic of Ghana**

**at the
2026 Evidence to Action Conference and Exhibition (E2A)**

**Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER)
University of Ghana, Legon
Accra, Ghana**

**on
Monday, 24 June 2026**

Protocol

- Rt. Hon. Alban Sumana Kingsford Bagbin, Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Ghana and our Guest of Honour;
- Rt. Hon. Fabakary Tombong Jatta, Speaker of the National Assembly of The Gambia;
- His Excellency Prof. Peter Anyang' Nyong'o, Governor of Kisumu County in Kenya;
- Hon. Isaac Mwaura, Government Spokesperson of the Government of Kenya;
- Excellencies and Honourable Ministers and Representatives of Government from Uganda, Tanzania, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and South Africa;
- Dr. David Ameyaw, CEO of the International Centre for Evaluation and Development
- Prof. Felix Asante, Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghana;
- Leaders of partner institutions, development partners, researchers, civil society actors, innovators, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen:

Good morning.

I bring warm greetings from His Excellency the President and the Office of the Chief of Staff, and sincere congratulations to the International Centre for Evaluation and Development (ICED) Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) and all partner institutions for convening this conference for the ninth consecutive year. That consistency of purpose — nine years of bringing together the evidence community to ask hard questions about how knowledge connects to action — is itself a statement about what matters. I am honoured to represent the Office of the President at this gathering and to affirm that the Executive shares the ambition behind this conference's theme.

I want to speak today not in the language of ceremony, but from inside government — from the room where decisions actually get made — because I believe that perspective is sometimes the one most absent from conversations about evidence and policy, and it is the one that matters most if we are serious about changing outcomes rather than just changing conversations.

Here is the honest picture from where I sit. When a Minister walks into Cabinet with a major policy proposal, the first questions are not about what the systematic review says or what the evaluation found. The questions are: what does this cost, who does it affect, what does the public think, can the institutions actually deliver it, and is there political will to sustain it beyond one budget cycle? Evidence is one voice in that room — and not always the loudest. I say this not to be dismissive of the research community, but because if we are serious about making evidence matter more, we must begin by understanding the environment in which decisions are actually made, rather than designing for the ideal environment we wish existed.

From my position coordinating policy delivery across Ministries, Departments, and Agencies, I observe three persistent gaps that this community has the expertise and the mandate to help close. The first is the gap of timing. The research cycle and the policy cycle operate at completely different speeds, and this mismatch has real consequences. A Minister facing a consequential decision next week cannot wait eighteen months for a full systematic review. Ghana needs rapid, credible, policy-timed evidence products — analytical summaries, rapid evidence assessments, decision briefs — that are designed for the rhythms of government rather than the rhythms of academic publishing. The second gap is translation. Too much of the most important evidence

produced in Africa is written for academic audiences, in technical language that senior civil servants and political appointees cannot readily interpret or act upon. A clear, well-structured two-page brief that says plainly — here is what we know, here is how confident we should be, and here is what it means for this specific decision — is worth more in a Cabinet room than a two-hundred-page technical report that no one with decision-making authority will read. The third gap is trust. Evidence is frequently dismissed not because it is wrong but because it is perceived as coming from institutions that are external, partisan, or disconnected from Ghanaian realities and priorities. Trust between the research community and government is not automatic — it is built over years of consistent, relevant, and honest engagement. Both sides must invest in it deliberately.

His Excellency the President has been unequivocal: this administration is committed to evidence-informed governance — not as a rhetorical commitment, but as a governance discipline embedded in how we plan, implement, and learn. We are taking deliberate steps to strengthen analytical capacity within key Ministries. We are working to institutionalise the expectation that major policy proposals be accompanied by evidence reviews. And we are creating feedback systems so that what implementation teaches us — including what fails and why — informs the next generation of decisions rather than being quietly set aside. These are not completed projects; they are works in progress. But they are genuine commitments, and we welcome the partnership of institutions like ICED and ISSER in accelerating them.

What we ask of this conference community is not agreement, and it is not deference. What we ask is genuine engagement — research that responds to the questions government is actually asking, evidence that is synthesised and delivered in time to be useful, and a sustained relationship built on mutual respect and shared purpose. The days of research institutions producing excellent work and then waiting for government to discover it must end. Equally, the days of government making major decisions without building in structured evidence support must end. The gap we need to close is not only between knowledge and action — it is between two communities that too rarely understand each other's constraints and incentives.

To the researchers, evaluators, and evidence practitioners in this room, I want to say something directly. Your work matters more than you may sometimes feel, particularly in those moments when you watch a major decision being made that seems to ignore everything you have carefully produced. But influence in government is rarely linear or visible. Evidence plants seeds that take time to grow. It shifts the frame of a conversation weeks or months after it was first introduced. It gives a reformist official the credible basis to challenge a bad idea. It lays the foundation for a better decision the next time the question arises, even if it could not change the outcome this time. Do not mistake absence from the headline decision for absence from the policy process. Keep producing rigorous work. Keep translating it into forms that decision-makers can use. And when evidence genuinely shifts a decision and a programme works better for citizens as a result, document that story carefully — because those stories of demonstrated impact are what build the case for sustained investment in evidence, in your institutions, and in the ecosystem this conference exists to strengthen.

On behalf of His Excellency the President, I wish you a productive, honest, and impactful conference. The questions you are wrestling with here — how evidence is generated, how it is communicated, how trust is built, and how it ultimately changes what governments do — are among the most important questions in African governance today. I commit that the Office of the President will be a serious and engaged recipient of what you produce, and I look forward to continuing this conversation well beyond the walls of this conference.

I thank you.