



**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNMENT
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**SPEECH BY THE GOVERNMENT SPOKESPERSON, HON.
SEN. (DR.) ISAAC MWAURA, CBS, DURING THE
EVIDENCE TO ACTION CONFERENCE AND
EXHIBITION**

**AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON
ACCRA, GHANA**

ON

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It is both an honour and a privilege to address this distinguished gathering here in Accra, Ghana.

Allow me, first and foremost, to bring you warm greetings from His Excellency Dr. William Samoei Ruto, CGH, the Fifth President of the Republic of Kenya, and from the forty-plus million Kenyans who wake up every day believing in the promise of a better Africa.

I also wish to express my profound appreciation to the International Centre for Evaluation and Development, the Government of Ghana, and all partners who have made this important continental conversation possible.

For many years, Africa has often been viewed as a consumer of knowledge generated elsewhere. Today, that narrative is changing. African institutions, universities, governments, civil society organizations and communities are producing knowledge that is relevant to our realities and responsive to our aspirations. The challenge before us is not merely generating evidence; it is ensuring that evidence translates into action, impact and transformation.

As I travelled from Nairobi to Accra, I found myself reflecting on the remarkable journey of our continent. A continent rich in knowledge, rich in innovation, rich in talent and rich in ideas. Yet perhaps the greatest question before us today is not whether Africa has ideas. It is whether we have the courage, the institutions and the leadership to translate those ideas into action.

And perhaps there is no better place to have this conversation than Ghana.

This is a nation whose history reminds us that ideas can shape the destiny of a people. This is a nation that helped shape Africa's political imagination. It is a nation that reminds us that ideas matter, that leadership matters, and that when vision is matched with action, nations can transform and continents can rise.

It was here in Accra that Kwame Nkrumah challenged Africa to imagine a future that many thought impossible. It was here that a bold vision helped inspire a continent's march toward self-determination.

It is therefore fitting that we gather here today not merely to discuss evidence, but to examine how evidence becomes action, how knowledge becomes policy, and question how policy improves the lives of our people. That question sits at the heart of this conference. And it is why I find the theme, "Reimagining the Evidence-Informed Policy and Decision-Making Ecosystem in Africa," both timely and necessary.

Because reimagining suggests that we are not merely looking for better reports, better statistics or better research papers. We are looking for better outcomes.

We are asking ourselves whether the knowledge we generate is truly changing the lives of our people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I travelled from Nairobi to Accra, I found myself reflecting on a simple question: How does change actually happen? Does change happen because somebody writes a report? Does change happen because Parliament passes a law? Does change happen because Government announces a policy? Or does change happen because, over many years, evidence, advocacy, leadership and political will finally converge?

For more than twenty years, I have had the privilege of viewing this question from different vantage points.

As a disability rights advocate, I saw evidence used to expose exclusion, discrimination and inequality.

As a Member of Parliament and later as Senator, I took part and experienced firsthand evidence debated, challenged and translated into legislation.

Today, as Government Spokesperson, I see evidence shaping public communication, public trust and public accountability. These experiences have taught me a simple lesson: Evidence matters. But evidence alone is not enough.

In fact, I remember attending meetings as a young disability rights advocate where we would present study after study demonstrating barriers faced by persons with disabilities.

The evidence was clear; Children with disabilities were being left behind, public services were inaccessible, Employment opportunities were limited. The challenge was never whether the evidence existed. The challenge was whether institutions were prepared to act on it.

Years later, when I entered Parliament, I discovered something profound, Evidence and politics do not always operate on the same timeline.

And that is when I began to understand Kwame Nkrumah differently. Many of us know his famous words: "Seek ye first the political kingdom and all else shall be added unto you." For many years, I viewed those words through the lens of Africa's struggle for independence.

Today, I understand them differently. Evidence can tell us what is wrong. Research can tell us what works. Communities can tell us what they experience. But unless that evidence finds its way into the spaces where decisions are made, change remains elusive. In other words, evidence must eventually find its way into the political kingdom.

I know this because I have lived that journey. Last year, when His Excellency President William Ruto assented to the Persons with Disabilities Act 2025, replacing the 2003 law, many people saw a signing ceremony. I saw twenty years. I saw the first drafts. I saw committee meetings and stakeholder consultations. I saw researchers generating evidence and organisations of persons with disabilities documenting lived experiences. I saw advocates refusing to give up despite setbacks and disappointments. Most importantly, I saw people who dedicated years of their lives to this cause, some of whom did not live long enough to witness that historic moment. The evidence existed. The arguments were compelling. The need was undeniable. Yet meaningful reform required something more. It required leadership. It required representation. It required persistence. And ultimately, it required political will.

That experience reinforced a lesson I have learned throughout my public life: evidence influences change when institutions listen, evidence creates impact when leaders act, and evidence transforms lives when it is translated into policy. In fact, this lesson remains as relevant today as it was twenty years ago.

Just last week in Kenya, I had the privilege of speaking at a national forum that brought together policymakers, researchers, development partners and civil society actors to discuss

a similar question—how evidence can be better leveraged to promote inclusive policymaking. What struck me during those discussions was that regardless of whether we are having the conversation in Nairobi or Accra, the challenge remains largely the same: not the absence of evidence, but how we ensure that evidence reaches decision-makers and ultimately improves the lives of citizens.

In Kenya, we continue to apply this principle through the implementation of the ambitious Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda, popularly known as THE BETA PLAN. The BETA Plan is anchored on a simple but powerful idea—that development interventions must be informed by the realities, aspirations and needs of ordinary citizens.

Whether it is transforming agriculture and moving from subsidizing production rather than consumption, strengthening universal health coverage, expanding affordable housing, empowering micro, small and medium enterprises, or investing in the digital economy, the Plan seeks to respond to challenges identified through evidence, public engagement and lived experience.

It is our recognition that sustainable development cannot be built on assumptions; it must be grounded in data, informed by citizens and translated into action.

The Kenyan experience is not unique. Across Africa, we are witnessing a growing appreciation that evidence must not remain confined to research institutions, conference halls or policy documents. It must find its way into the systems where decisions are made and resources are allocated.

Across our continent, there are encouraging examples of evidence informing action. From community health innovations in Rwanda, to agricultural transformation efforts in Ghana, to regional integration through the African Continental Free Trade Area, we are increasingly seeing evidence shape policy choices that improve lives and expand opportunities.

As Government Spokesperson, I have witnessed firsthand the growing importance of strategic communication in the evidence-to-action journey. In an era characterized by misinformation, disinformation and information overload, evidence must compete for attention in increasingly crowded information spaces because we are in an information warfare. Facts alone are not enough; they must be communicated effectively, transparently and consistently. Evidence is no longer simply a policymaking tool; it is also a public trust tool.

Citizens increasingly want to know not only what governments are doing, but why they are doing it. Evidence helps answer that question. It strengthens accountability, improves communication, and reinforces trust between governments and the people they serve.

As I reflect on the future of evidence-informed policymaking in Africa, I strongly believe that we are at an inflection point in our continent's journey. We must recognize that Pan-Africanism served its purpose. It united us in the struggle against colonialism. It gave us identity, dignity and political liberation. It taught us that despite our diversity, our destinies are interconnected.

But the question before our generation is different. The challenge before us is no longer simply political liberation. It is economic transformation. It is competitiveness. It is

innovation. It is job creation. It is ensuring that Africa's vast human and natural resources translate into prosperity for our people.

That is why I believe we must now take the next step—from Pan-Africanism to what I call Afro-Pragmatism. Afro-Pragmatism is not a departure from the ideals of Pan-Africanism. Rather, it is the evolution of those ideals. It is about repositioning Africa deliberately and strategically for the future. It is about recognizing Africa, a continent of more than 1.5 billion people, not as a continent of potential, but as a continent of possibility. The next frontier for human growth, innovation and development.

This is extremely important because we cannot afford to celebrate Pan-Africanism only in rhetoric. Pan-Africanism gave us freedom. Our responsibility is to convert that freedom into shared prosperity.

Afro-Pragmatism therefore demands action. It demands that we integrate our markets. It demands investment in infrastructure, science, technology and innovation. It demands stronger regional value chains and coordinated policy frameworks. It demands that we move from aspiration to execution; from solidarity in speeches to solidarity in strategy. And this is where evidence becomes indispensable.

Afro-Pragmatism asks a simple but profound question: What works for Africa?

Not what worked somewhere else.

Not what looks good in a report.

But what works in our context, what works for our people, and what works within our institutions.

Because evidence without context can mislead, just as context without evidence can limit progress.

Afro-Pragmatism therefore challenges us to combine rigorous research with lived experience, innovation with local knowledge, and global lessons with African realities. It challenges us to generate African solutions to African challenges, while remaining open to global partnerships and learning.

If Pan-Africanism gave Africa a political voice, then Afro-Pragmatism must give Africa an economic engine. And evidence-informed policymaking must be one of the instruments that drives that transformation.

Africa's challenge today is not a shortage of evidence. Our universities are producing evidence. Our researchers are producing evidence. Our communities are generating knowledge every day.

Therefore, as we reimagine Africa's evidence ecosystem, let us ensure that it is not confined to universities, think tanks, government offices or conference halls.

Let it include communities.

Let it include young people.

Let it include women.

Let it include persons with disabilities.

Let it include indigenous knowledge holders and those whose lived experiences rarely appear in datasets, yet whose voices are essential to meaningful development. Because ultimately, the purpose of evidence is not to fill libraries. It is to improve lives. The purpose of policy is not to produce documents. It is to solve problems. And the purpose of leadership is not merely to govern. It is to create conditions under which people can thrive. Because The question before us is whether we can build institutions capable of listening. If we do that, Africa will not merely participate in the future of evidence-informed policymaking. Africa will help define it.

As I conclude, our collective mission must be to nurture an evidence ecosystem that is dynamic, inclusive and embedded within governance frameworks. This ecosystem should enable continuous learning and adaptation, drawing on both successes and failures to inform future policy directions. Key priorities should include strengthening data infrastructure and research institutions; promoting interdisciplinary and cross-sector collaboration; ensuring transparency and accountability in the use of evidence; and investing in capacity building for policymakers to critically interpret and apply research findings effectively.

Kenya's pioneering digital financial inclusion efforts, such as the M-Pesa mobile money platform, underscore the importance of regulatory environments that foster innovation grounded in evidence of socioeconomic impact.

I envision a future where governments, researchers, civil society and the private sector operate in seamless partnership guided by empirical evidence and a shared commitment to equitable and sustainable development. The European Union's climate policies, rooted in scientific consensus from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, set a global example of how evidence can inform ambitious and coordinated environmental action.

In this vision, policies are not static decrees but living frameworks that evolve in response to new knowledge and societal needs. Such governance systems will not only enhance policy effectiveness but also deepen democratic accountability and social inclusion.

This ambitious vision is attainable, but it requires bold leadership, unwavering commitment and collaborative spirit from all stakeholders represented here today.

Let this forum serve as a catalyst for renewed dedication to embedding evidence at the heart of policymaking. And perhaps generations from now, people will look back at gatherings such as this one in Accra and say: this was the moment Africa stopped asking for a seat at the table and started helping to design the table itself.

I thank you.

HON. SEN. (DR.) ISAAC M. MWAURA, CBS

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