OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

MTN GHANA TƐKYERƐMA PA HACKATHON AND AI SUMMIT 2026

ADDRESS BY:

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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2026
GREAT HALL
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
LEGON

Protocol

Honourable Ministers,

Distinguished representatives of MTN Ghana

Our partner organisations,

Colleagues, researchers, students and innovators,

Persons with disabilities and representatives of disability organisations,

Invited guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Good morning.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the University of Ghana for the 2026 Tɛkyerɛma Pa Hackathon and AI Summit.

I am particularly delighted that this initiative, which began last year, continues to grow through the collaboration of academia, industry, government and the communities whose needs we seek to address.

This year's theme, **"Shaping an Inclusive and Accessible AI Future in Ghana: Perspectives from Industry, Academia, Government and**

Persons with Disabilities," speaks to an issue I consider essential to the development of artificial intelligence. Who are we developing these technologies for, and who is being left behind? As a linguist, I am particularly interested in the relationship between language, technology and inclusion.

We know that many African languages remain inadequately represented in existing AI systems. And when we add the challenges faced by persons with speech impairments, the barriers to accessing digital technologies become even more significant.

Imagine being unable to communicate effectively with a digital assistant, not because you lack the knowledge or ability to use it, but because the system has not been designed to recognise how you speak.

This is the kind of problem that Tɛkyerɛma Pa seeks to address.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Last year's inaugural hackathon built on important research by colleagues at the University of Ghana, who developed the first open-source dataset of impaired speech in Akan.

Participating teams used this resource to explore practical applications that could improve communication for persons with speech impairments. I am pleased that the work has continued.

Through the Human–Computer Interaction Lab in our Department of Computer Science, researchers are expanding the Ghanaian language resources needed to develop more inclusive speech technologies. The Lab has also collaborated with the Centre for Digital Language Inclusion, led by University College London's Global Disability Innovation Hub, to develop a dataset of impaired speech in Ga. These developments are significant because they address a gap in the representation of Ghanaian languages and speech patterns in digital technologies.

But I want to emphasise something. The real value of this research will be seen in the difference it makes to people's lives. Can it improve communication? Can it make education, employment and public services more accessible? Can it help people participate more fully in society? These are the questions that should guide our innovation.

At the University of Ghana, this approach is consistent with our 2024–2029 Strategic Plan.

Our commitment to Impactful Research calls on us to pursue scholarship that responds to societal needs. Our priority of Transformative Student Experience encourages students to apply their knowledge, work across disciplines and develop solutions to real problems.

And through Engagement and Partnerships, we recognise that universities cannot address these challenges alone. And that's why we are excited to have MTN on board as a partner. Tɛkyerɛma Pa brings these priorities together. It provides opportunities for students and researchers to innovate while working with industry, government and persons with disabilities.

I am particularly pleased that persons with speech impairments and other members of the disability community are contributing their experiences and knowledge to this work. We must be careful not to design solutions for people without involving them in determining what those solutions

should be. Inclusion must begin at the design stage, not become an afterthought when the technology is ready.

Honourable Ministers, distinguished guests, I wish to acknowledge MTN Ghana, the principal sponsor of this year's Hackathon and AI Summit, for its partnership and continued commitment to supporting Ghanaian talent and inclusive digital innovation.

I also appreciate the contributions of Thrive & Shine, Google Research Ghana, Petroleum Hub, Goivents, NCR Business Hub Limited, Automobiles Ghana Limited and AB Automobiles.

We recognise the support of Google and the Ministry of Communication, Digital Technology and Innovations for the Lab's ongoing work in Ghanaian language technology. I commend our Department of Computer Science, the HCI Lab, the organising team, mentors and judges for their dedication.

And I extend particular appreciation to the individuals and communities who have contributed speech recordings and shared their experiences to

make this research possible. Their contributions are invaluable.

To our finalists, congratulations on reaching this stage. I encourage you to listen carefully to the feedback you receive today and continue refining your innovations. A promising prototype is a good beginning, but our ambition should be to develop solutions that are reliable, accessible and useful in everyday life.

I also hope that our partners will continue supporting these innovations beyond the hackathon. Some of the ideas developed here may require further research, testing and investment before they can be deployed more widely.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Before I conclude, I am delighted to introduce another innovation from our Human Computer Interaction Lab. Today, we will officially launch Nana Aba AI, a voice and text assistant developed to help prospective and current students, faculty, staff and the general public access information about University of Ghana programmes, admissions, policies and campus life.

I must say, it is rather interesting to have an AI assistant bearing my name. I hope she will be as helpful as the developers promise, and perhaps answer some of the questions that currently find their way to my office!

But beyond the name, this initiative reflects our commitment to making information more accessible and improving the experience of those who engage with the University.

It is therefore my pleasure to officially launch Nana Aba AI.

[Video demonstration]

Thank you, and I wish us all a productive and inspiring Hackathon and AI Summit.

Prof. Nana Aba Appiah Amfo

Vice-Chancellor

October 30, 2026