

**IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF
THE FOURTH REPUBLIC OF GHANA**

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS

ON THE

**ANNUAL BUDGET ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTRY OF
COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITALISATION FOR THE 2024
FINANCIAL YEAR**

DECEMBER 2023

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DIGITALISATION FOR THE 2024 FINANCIAL YEAR**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Hon. Minister for Finance, Mr. Ken Ofori-Atta, on 15th November, 2023, presented the Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana for the 2024 Financial Year to Parliament in accordance with Article 179 of the 1992 Constitution.

Pursuant to Orders 140(4) and 182 of the Standing Orders of Parliament, the Rt. Hon. Speaker referred the 2024 Budget Estimates of the Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation to the Select Committee on Communications for consideration and report.

2.0 DELIBERATIONS

The Committee met with the Hon. Minister for Communications and Digitalisation, Mrs. Ursula Gifty Owusu-Ekuful and Officials of the Ministry to consider the Budget Estimates. Officials of the Ministry of Finance were in attendance to assist in the deliberations.

The Committee is grateful to the Hon. Minister and the Officials for attending the meeting to assist in the Committee's deliberations.

3.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

The Committee referred to the following documents during the deliberations:

- i. The 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana;
- ii. The Standing Orders of Parliament;
- iii. Cybersecurity Act, 2020 (Act 1038);
- iv. Postal and Courier Services Regulatory Commission Act, 2003 (Act 649);
- v. The 2023 Annual Budget Estimates of the Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation;
- vi. The Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) of the Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation for 2024-2027;
- vii. The Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana for the 2023 Financial Year; and

- viii. The Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana for the 2024 Financial Year.

4.0 VISION, MISSION AND GOAL OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITALISATION

4.1 Vision of the Ministry

The vision of the Ministry is to ensure the convergence of communication technologies to facilitate the promotion of a viable integrated national development process within a global setting.

4.2 Mission of the Ministry

The mission of the Ministry is to facilitate the development of a reliable and cost-effective world-class Communications infrastructure and services, driven by appropriate technological innovations and accessible by all citizens to enhance the promotion of economic competitiveness in a knowledge-based environment.

4.3 Goal of the Ministry

The goal of the Ministry is to promote the development of Ghana into a knowledge-based society and a smart economy through the use of ICT.

5.0 CORE FUNCTIONS OF THE MINISTRY

The core functions of the Ministry are as follows:

- i. Initiate and formulate ICT policies taking into account the needs and aspirations of the people;
- ii. Coordinate, monitor and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the performance of the Communications and Digitalisation Sector;
- iii. Develop appropriate regulations to protect consumers and stimulate competition in the communications sector; and
- iv. Build capacity for the ICT sector.

6.0 AGENCIES UNDER THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITALISATION

The following are the Agencies under the Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation:

- i. National Communications Authority (NCA);
- ii. Cyber Security Authority (CSA);

- iii. Postal and Courier Services Regulatory Commission (PCSRC);
- iv. National Information Technology Agency (NITA);
- v. Ghana Investment Fund for Electronic Communications (GIFEC);
- vi. The Ghana-India Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence in ICT (GI-KACE);
- vii. Data Protection Commission (DPC); and
- viii. Ghana Meteorological Agency (GMet).

7.0 POLICY OBJECTIVES OF THE MINISTRY

The policy objectives in line with the Ministry's Medium-Term Development Plan are outlined as follows:

- i. Enhance application of ICT in national development;
- ii. Expand the digital landscape; and
- iii. Enhance Climate Change Resilience.

8.0 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE OF THE MINISTRY IN 2023

An amount of Seven Hundred and Eighty-Seven Million, Seven Hundred and Forty-Two Thousand, Two Hundred and Eight Ghana Cedis (GH¢787,742,208) was approved for the Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation and later revised to Eight Hundred and Twenty-One Million, Nine Hundred and Fifty-Three Thousand, Three Hundred and Ninety-Five Ghana Cedis (GH¢821,953,395). The details of the 2023 financial performance of the Ministry are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Details of the Financial Performance of the Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation as at end of September 2023

Economic classification	Approved Budget (GHC)	Revised Budget (GHC)	Releases as at end of September 2023 (GHC)	Actual Expenditure (GHC)	Variance (GHC)
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(b-c)
Compensation	38,869,417	51,507,040	36,416,149	32,619,557	15,090,891
GoG	37,331,203	49,968,826	34,549,598	31,238,867	15,419,228
IGF	1,538,214	1,538,214	1,866,551	1,380,690	(328,341)
Goods and Services	37,480,134	46,721,432	28,843,900	21,088,794	17,877,532
GoG	11,140,241	20,381,539	4,267,183	3,457,707	16,114,356
Other Releases (GPCL & DPC)	-	-	9,526,051	6,460,959	-
GoG	26,339,893	26,339,893	15,050,666	11,170,128	11,289,227
Capital Expenditure	5,562,350	17,894,616	6,259,759	1,292,224	11,634,857
GoG	985,760	10,985,760	3,655,012	-	7,330,748
IGF	4,576,590	6,908,856	2,604,747	1,292,224	4,304,109
Sub-total	81,911,900	116,123,084	71,519,808	55,000,575	44,603,276
National Communications Authority (State-Owned Enterprise)	400,890,307	400,890,307	280,761,892.89	279,461,792.89	120,128,414
Dev't Partner (ETransform Project)	304,940,000	304,940,000	330,000,000	330,000,000	(25,060,000)
Goods and Services	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Expenditure	304,940,000	304,940,000	330,000,000	330,000,000	(25,060,000)
Total	787,742,208	821,953,395	682,281,701	664,462,368	139,671,690

9.0 OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF THE MINISTRY IN 2023

9.1 Headquarters of the Ministry

The Headquarters of the Ministry achieved the following in 2023:

- i. Trained 3,000 girls and 300 ICT Teachers in the Savannah and Northern and Eastern regions in line with SDGs 4 and 5 and under the Girls-In-ICT Project;
- ii. Completed the Digital Skills training of 170 Civil Service Staff under the DigSmart Programme;
- iii. Registered 30,790,227 SIM Cards under the SIM Card registration programme;
- iv. Trained 50 Staff in Budget Preparation, and Policy Development and Analysis;
- v. Built 4 solar sites in Kumasi, Adjangote, Axim and Kanda to support the DDT network platform;
- vi. Successfully ensured Ghana's implementation of the ECOWAS Free Roaming initiative with Cote d'Ivoire;
- vii. Built six (6) Community Information Centres at Tolon District in the Northern region;
- viii. Trained 4,335 individuals in computer literacy, IoT and social media management with the support of Digital Transformation Center - ITU, under the GIFEC capacity building agenda; and
- ix. Developed and submitted the Ghana Digital Economy Policy (GDEP) to Cabinet for review and approval.

9.2 Cyber Security Authority (CSA)

In 2023, CSA achieved the following:

- i. Organised 58 Public Awareness events on cyber security issues;
- ii. Undertook capacity-building training on cyber security issues for 115,200 children, 94,000 adults, 708 institutions and 1,253 public sector workers;
- iii. Regularised staff of CSA;
- iv. Implemented a comprehensive framework for the licensing of cybersecurity service providers, accreditation of cybersecurity establishments, and the certification of cybersecurity professionals;

- v. Developed a framework for the Accreditation of Sectoral Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERT) to bolster sector-specific cybersecurity capabilities;
- vi. Successfully organised National Cyber Security Awareness Month (NCSAM) 2023;
- vii. Reviewed and tested the National Response Assessment Model (NRAM);
- viii. Developed and adopted Scheme of Service and Organisational Manual;
- ix. Commemorated Africa Safer Internet Day (ASID); and
- x. Responded to a total of 9,769 contacts through the Point of Contact (PoC).

9.3 Postal and Courier Services Regulatory Commission (PCSRC)

PCSRC achieved the following in 2023:

- i. Licensed 36 new postal and courier operators and renewed 109 licenses;
- ii. Conducted monitoring activities on 66 courier operators;
- iii. Organised 6 capacity-building programmes;
- iv. Organised 18 consumer outreach programmes; and
- v. Organised a workshop to train 129 operators in good standing on the use of digital technology.

9.4 National Information Technology Agency (NITA)

Among others, NITA achieved the following in 2023:

- i. Onboarded 20 MDAs and 7 MMDAs onto the Smart Workplace Platform;
- ii. Enrolled 6 MDAs onto the Ghana.Gov platform;
- iii. Trained 3000 individuals in Digital Skills;
- iv. Completed the assessment of the Ministry of Youth and Sports to ascertain the state of Government IT infrastructure;
- v. Completed the draft Ghana Government Enterprise Architecture and eGovernment Interoperability Framework documents;
- vi. Commenced the implementation of the Traffic Management System;

- vii. Engaged stakeholders in the ICT sector on the draft subsidiary L.I. for NITA Act 771 and Electronic Transactions Act, Act 772; and
- viii. Attained Management Systems Certifications in ISO/IEC 20000-1:2018, ISO/IEC 27001:2022, and ISO 22301:2019.

9.5 The Ghana-India Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence in ICT (GI-KACE)

GI-KACE achieved the following in 2023:

- i. Developed two new programmes namely, the Robotic Automation Process and Data Analytics using PowerBI;
- ii. Operationalised a Memorandum of Understanding signed with University of Energy and Natural Resources;
- iii. Provided hands-on training to 400 students from the University of Energy and Natural Resources (UENR) in Python and Mobile Application Development;
- iv. Established the first Robotics Laboratory in Ghana with support from AISECT and completed training for first batch of 27 participants in Robotic Automation Process;
- v. Trained 3850 people in regular programmes;
- vi. Trained 205 corporate professionals in special programmes;
- vii. Engaged 500 women in IT professions and academia on a common platform for knowledge sharing through FEMITECH;
- viii. Exposed 2250 basic school children to IT and IT careers;
- ix. Sensitised 2000 students from basic and second cycle schools around Cyber Security threats; and
- x. Completed the prototype Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence Content Access Point (KACE-CAP) to make educational content readily available offline for pre-tertiary schools.

9.6 Data Protection Commission (DPC)

In 2023, DPC achieved the following:

- i. Registered 1331 data controllers and renewed 776 licences of existing Data Controllers;
- ii. Certified 257 Data Protection Supervisors;

- iii. Trained 6 Professional Trainers;
- iv. Accredited 2 additional training institutions;
- v. Improved registration, renewals and arrears payment; and
- vi. Developed the Regional Blue-Print Data Governance Strategy.

9.7 Ghana Meteorological Agency (GMet)

GMet achieved the following in 2023:

- i. Installed twenty-two (22) Automatic Weather Stations and refurbished one (1) Automatic Weather Observatory System;
- ii. Inspected and maintained forty-two (42) meteorological stations;
- iii. Achieved 100% certification for Quality Management Systems;
- iv. Maintained lead time of 4 hours;
- v. Won the 2023 Public Enterprise League Table (PELT) award as the “Most Efficient State-Owned Enterprise”;
- vi. Launched the National Framework for Climate Services (NFCS) as part of the activities for the Meteorological Awareness Month;
- vii. Piloted the Nowcasting Flood Impacts of Convective storms in the Sahel (NFLICS) Early Warning System over the Gulf of Guinea, particularly in Ghana;
- viii. Launched the Ghana Meteorological Society under the guidelines of the African Meteorological Society; and
- ix. Established Green Climate Club in 10 Senior High Schools in Northern Ghana to increase the interest and awareness in climate change.

10.0 OUTLOOK FOR THE 2024 FINANCIAL YEAR

10.1 Headquarters of the Ministry

In furtherance of its activities, the Headquarters of the Ministry plans to undertake the following activities in 2024:

- i. Train 3,000 girls and 300 ICT Teachers in the Ashanti, Greater Accra and Volta Regions under the Girls in ICT initiative;

- ii. Build remaining 1,006 sites, integrate and activate all 2,016 sites under the RURAL telephony and Digital Inclusion Project;
- iii. Build five (5) Community Information Centres;
- iv. Complete the digital skills training of 1000 civil service and public service sector workers as part of the DigSMART programme;
- v. Complete the construction of the Digital Youth Village at the University of Ghana Campus and establish the governance and management structures to fully operationalise the Digital Youth Village;
- vi. Complete the renovation and retooling of the regional Innovation Centres to establish them as Regional Digital Centres to support the youth and technology entrepreneurship;
- vii. Finalise digital economy Studies on energy, tourism, hospitality & leisure, transportation & mobility and local government;
- viii. Deploy Wi-Fi to Parliament;
- ix. Scale up eJustice; and
- x. Upgrade and deploy Health Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT).

10.2 Cyber Security Authority (CSA)

Among others, CSA plans to carry out the following in 2024:

- i. Implement Legislative Instruments;
- ii. Implement Framework for the CSPs, Accreditation of Cybersecurity Establishment and CPs;
- iii. Implement Accreditation of Sectoral CERTs;
- iv. Complete the facility to host CSA;
- v. Deploy Technology Solutions as part of the operationalisation of CSA;
- vi. Deploy Regulatory Management System for CSA;
- vii. Develop and implement Risk Management Framework; and Crisis Management Framework;
- viii. Implement Sectoral Directives for key CII Sectors (Energy, Health and Finance);

- ix. Develop Information Sharing System; and
- x. Implement Condition of Services.

10.3 Postal and Courier Services Regulatory Commission (PCSRC)

PCSRC intends to undertake the following programmes and initiatives in 2024:

- i. Commence the amendment of the Postal and Courier Services Regulatory Commission Act, 2003 (Act 649) to meet current world standards;
- ii. Continue to work on the Commission's Scheme of Service and strategic plan for the sector;
- iii. Engage strategic partners such as AfCFTA and Afro champions in the digitisation/digitalisation of its operations;
- iv. Extend operations to Tamale and Sekondi-Takoradi;
- v. Intensify public education on the Postal and Courier Services Regulations and the need for license registration and renewal; and
- vi. Continue to carry out clampdown exercises on illegal operations.

10.4 National Information Technology Agency (NITA)

In 2024, NITA plans to undertake the following:

- i. Upgrade the National Government Cloud Infrastructure (G-CLOUD);
- ii. Continue the onboarding of MDAs and MMDAs onto the Smart Workplace Platform and automate workflows for agencies already onboarded;
- iii. Enrol government agencies responsible for revenue collection onto the Ghana.gov platform;
- iv. Organise six (6) ICT stakeholder engagements;
- v. Implement the Enterprise Architecture and eGovernment Interoperability Framework;
- vi. Initiate the process of acquiring and deploying an integrated registration and regulatory platform;
- vii. Partner with Kofi Annan ICT Center of Excellence to roll out a Software Testing Lab for the Public Sector;

- viii. Develop and adopt a framework for adopting new and emerging technologies;
- ix. Procure the services of consultants to help draft five (5) major regulations for specific domains within the ICT ecosystem; and
- x. Institute the ICT Regulation Awareness Month.

10.5 The Ghana-India Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence in ICT (GI-KACE)

GI-KACE has planned to carry out the following activities in 2024:

- i. Develop new course offerings in emerging technology (Robotics, Deep Learning, Artificial Intelligence, IoT and Block Chain);
- ii. Work with Development Partners (World Bank, GIZ, UNICEF)
- iii. Develop digital inclusive skills programmes for the marginalised and vulnerable groups;
- iv. Train 4300 individuals in digital skills and regular courses run by the Centre;
- v. Train 350 professionals in their most sought-after special courses;
- vi. Accommodate 3000 young people from the Primary, JHS, SHS and tertiary schools who request to tour the Centre; and
- vii. Spearhead the training of 2800 individuals under the Ghana Digital Acceleration Project (GDAP).

10.6 Data Protection Commission (DPC)

DPC intends to undertake the following in 2024:

- i. Train 6 Professional Trainers and 400 Data Protection Supervisors;
- ii. Register 1540 data controllers and renew 824 licenses of existing data controllers;
- iii. Collect registration and renewal arrears from 450 institutions;
- iv. Review 17 Data Protection Impact Assessments; and
- v. Create bespoke awareness for 500 individuals.

10.7 Ghana Meteorological Agency (GMet)

GMet plans to undertake the following in 2024:

- i. Focus on research in climate analysis and projections with support from donor partners;
- ii. Refurbish the only radar and install an additional X-band radar under the Greater Accra Resilient and Integrated Development (GARID) project;
- iii. Install 15 additional Automatic Weather Stations (AWS);
- iv. Procure and install up to 12 buoys across Ghana's coastal waters to aid accurate marine meteorology;
- v. Procure two coaster buses, eight saloon cars, three pickups and twenty-two motorcycles to service the Headquarters, district and regional offices; and
- vi. Undertake renovation of the Head Office, regional and district offices and bungalows.

11.0 ANNUAL BUDGET ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTRY FOR 2024

The sum of **One Billion, Two Hundred and Thirty-Seven Million, Two Hundred and Sixteen Thousand, Six Hundred and Twelve Ghana Cedis (GH¢1,237,216,612)** has been allocated to the Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation for the implementation of its activities for the 2024 financial year. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the 2024 budgetary allocation to the Ministry.

Table 2: Budgetary Allocation by Economic Classification

Expenditure Item	Sources of Funding			Total (GH¢)
	GOG (GH¢)	IGF (GH¢)	DP Funds (GH¢)	
Compensation	51,288,681	148,198,886	-	199,487,567
Goods and Services	174,798,008	152,717,984	209,515,082	537,031,074
Capital Expenditure	360,753,009	139,944,962	-	500,697,971
Grand Total	586,839,698	440,861,832	209,515,082	1,237,216,612

Source: The Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government for the 2024 Financial Year.

12.0 OBSERVATIONS

The Committee made the following observations during the deliberations:

12.1 Implementation of the Rural Telephony Project

The Committee noted that an amount of Two Hundred and Ninety Million, Seven Hundred and Fifty-Three Thousand and Nine Ghana Cedis (GH¢290,753,009), which has been provided in the Ministry's 2024 allocation for the Rural Telephony Project, is the first allocation of its kind for the project. Officials of the Ministry informed the Committee that since the inception of the project, 1,010 cell sites have been constructed while the remaining 1006 are still in the warehouse awaiting construction. Out of the 1,010 constructed, only 556 sites have been connected to electricity, are live and passing traffic while the remaining 454 sites are inactive. The Officials further indicated that the implementation of the project has stalled as a result of delayed payment to the contractors since July, 2022, and that an amount of Sixteen Million and Thirty-Three Thousand, One Hundred and Sixty-Three Euros and Twenty-Eight cents (€16,033,163.28) was required to get the full complement of the 1,010 cell sites live.

In view of the fact that an allocation of GH¢290,753,009 has been made for the project, vis a vis a possible delay in the release of the amount, the Committee strongly advocates for an inter-agency agreement whereby the National Communications Authority, in accordance with its mandate, provides immediate financial support to Ghana Investment Fund for Electronic Communications (GIFEC) to commence the operations on the 454 cell sites pending the release of the budgetary allocation of GH¢290,753,009.

12.2 Increase in 2024 Budgetary Allocation to GMet

The Committee observed that the approved budget for the Ghana Meteorological Agency (GMet) for the 2024 financial year witnessed a significant increase from Twenty-Nine Million, One Hundred and Fifty-Four Thousand and Fifty Ghana Cedis and Ninety-Nine Pesewas (GH¢29,154,050.99) in 2023 to Fifty-Four Million, Three Hundred and Twenty-Five Thousand, Seven Hundred and Seventy-Five (GH¢54,325,775.56). The Committee was informed that the increase in the 2024 allocation has been largely occasioned by a huge projected IGF of Twenty-Nine Million, Four Hundred and Fifty Thousand Ghana Cedis (GH¢29,450,000) over the 2023 IGF figure of Eight Million, Three Hundred and Eighty-One Thousand, Two Hundred and Thirty-Six Ghana Cedis and Ninety-Nine Pesewas (GH¢8,381,236.99). Officials of GMet explained that the huge IGF projection for 2024 was done in anticipation of expected receivables from its 5% share of the Airport Tax collected by the Ghana Airport Company Limited (GACL).

The GMet Act, as amended in 2019 make provision for GMet to receive 10% of all landing charges and 10% of overflight charges collected by the Ghana Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) as well as 5% of Airport Tax collected by the Ghana Airport Company Limited (GACL). GMet indicated, however that since the coming into force of the Act in 2019, it has been difficult getting the two Agencies to comply with this aspect of the law, despite several engagements with these entities. Following a complaint filed with the International

Air Transport Association (IATA), GACL has, on their part complied with the provision and authorised the International Air Transport Association to directly release to GMet, its portion of Airport Tax, as stipulated by the Act. Accordingly, the expected IGF for 2024 takes into account the expected revenue from the 5% Airport Tax. The Committee expressed grave concerns regarding the Ghana Civil Aviation Authority's reluctance to adhere to the terms of the Act to release GMet's portion of revenues from landing and overflight charges to GMet. The Committee requests the House to direct the Hon. Minister of Aviation to take the necessary steps to ensure that GCAA complies with the law.

12.3 Technical Operationalisation of the Cyber Security Authority (CSA)

The Officials of CSA informed the Committee that the operationalisation of the Cyber Security Authority is a fully funded Government of Ghana project with a total contract amount of \$58,710,326. \$12,398,419.85 out of this contract sum has been paid, leaving an outstanding payment of GH¢46,311,906.15. The Officials further stated that the Authority requires a sum of \$25,159,542 to facilitate the implementation of the Cyber Security Authority building project for the 2024 financial year.

The Committee is of the view that in light of the nation's overall digitalisation agenda, the absence of a fully operational Cyber Security Authority in the country will undermines any advancements the state may be making and poses a huge cyber security risk. In this regard, the Committee strongly urges the Ministry of Finance to prioritise the completion of the project by allocating funds from the contingency vote or other sources to ensure its completion in 2024.

12.4 IGF Retention of PCSRC

The Committee noted that as at November, 2023, the Postal and Courier Services Regulatory Commission (PCSRC) had generated an amount of One Million, Two Hundred and Thirty-Five Thousand, Two Hundred and Ninety-Four Ghana Cedis and Ten Pesewas (GH¢1,235,294.10), which is more than its 2023 IGF projection of One Million, One Hundred and Nineteen Thousand, One Hundred and Ninety-Three Ghana Cedis and Eighty Pesewas (GH¢1,119,193.80). Officials PCSRC explained that the Commission was able to internally generate huge funds as a result of trainings organised for operators with the underlying prerequisite that operators who had not renewed their licences would not be allowed to participate.

The Committee commended the Commission for exceeding its projected IGF and urges the Ministry of Finance to reconsider and allow the PCSRC to retain all of its IGF, instead of the present 66%, retention ceiling, as this will enable the Commission to carry out its intended operations, including expanding to two additional regions.

12.5 2023 Compensation Vote of PCSRC

The Committee observed that in 2023, an amount of One Million, Two Hundred and Seventy-Two Thousand, Six Hundred and Thirty-Five Ghana Cedis (GH¢1,272,635) was approved for the Postal and Courier Services Regulatory Commission (PCSRC) as

Compensation for Employees, but an amount of GH¢676,833.21 had been released to the Commission as at November, 2023. Officials of the Commission informed the Committee that the 2023 approved Compensation was in anticipation of recruitment four (4) additional staff. The Ministry of Finance, however, failed to grant the necessary financial clearance even after the Commission had received technical clearance from the Public Services Commission for four (4) new recruits.

The Committee finds this unacceptable because once the Ministry of Finance raises the Compensation vote to cater for recruitment, financial clearance must be provided accordingly. The Committee therefore urges the Ministry of Finance to release the outstanding financial clearance for PCSRC to resolve the issue of the Commission's low staff strength. The Committee further entreats the Ministry to ensure that this issue doesn't come up again in 2024, especially in light of the increased ceiling for 2024 Compensation vote (GH¢1,461,741).

12.6 Smart Workplace Payment Challenges

The Committee was informed by officials of the National Information Technology that the Agency is having difficulty maintaining the Smart Workplace system due to delays in payment of Microsoft 365 licensing subscriptions as well as nonpayment of support and maintenance fees and delays in payment of deployment fees by MDAs and MMDAs.

Upon inquiry, the Committee was informed that the Agency pays Eight Million US Dollars (US\$8M) annually for Microsoft Licence Subscriptions for the Smart Workplace platform. The Committee expressed the concern that this enormous sum is spent yearly on Microsoft licences when the funds could be given to local experts to build a government operational office suite that the Public Service could utilise. The Committee made specific reference to the Nyansapo Operating System Solutions developed by the Ghana-India Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence in ICT (GI-KACE). Further deliberations with officials of GI-KACE revealed that the Nyansapo Operating System currently has an office suite functionality. The Committee requested NITA to collaborate with GI-KACE to strengthen the security features of the Nyansapo OS so that this locally built OS can be presented to the Ministry of Finance as a more affordable and suitable substitute for Microsoft 365, which is being implemented on the Smart Workplace platform.

12.7 Over Spending of 2023 Goods and Services Vote

The Committee observed that the Data Protection Commission (DPC) spent an amount of One Million, Four Hundred and Forty-Seven Thousand, Seven Hundred and Sixty-Three Ghana Cedis and Ninety-Nine Pesewas (GH¢1,447,763.99) as against an approved amount of One Million, Three Hundred and Forty-Five Thousand, Nine Hundred and Thirty-Four Ghana Cedis (GH¢1,345,934), representing 8% overspending.

Officials of DPC clarified that in 2018, the Commission hosted the first-ever Regional Data Protection Conference in Ghana. Due to a power outage which occurred, some tickets were not sold resulting in a shortfall in the Conference budget and a debt of GH¢1,000,000 payable to Activate Africa, the event organiser. Even though the Commission had cleared

the debt up to an outstanding GH¢840,000, the organiser insisted on going to court because they were not satisfied with the amount DPC had been able to pay off. To avoid Activate Africa from suing DPC and adding additional interests, the Commission gave them GH¢100,000, resulting in the overspending of the Goods and Services component.

12.8 Status of High Electricity Bill Challenge of GI-KACE

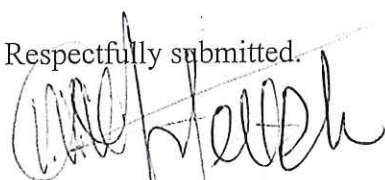
The Committee asked Officials of the Ghana-India Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence in ICT (GI-KACE) about the Center's issue with excessive electricity bills. Officials of GI-KACE informed the Committee that they had engaged the Electricity Company of Ghana and discovered that the Centre had been receiving estimated electricity bills over the period and after thorough discussions, GI-KACE now pays GH¢50,000 per month instead of the previous GH¢90,000, and there are currently no outstanding arrears.

13.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation's role, particularly, in the area of digitalisation is very fundamental for the socio-economic transformation of the country. The Committee has critically examined the Annual Budget Estimates of the Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation for the 2024 Financial Year, and is of the view that the Estimates are justified. The Committee, however, urges the Ministry of Finance to source additional funding for the Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation and its Agencies to undertake all their critical operations in 2024, particularly, the Rural Telephony Project and the technical operationalisation of the Cyber Security Authority.

The Committee accordingly recommends to the House to adopt this Report and approve the sum of **One Billion, Two Hundred and Thirty-Seven Million, Two Hundred and Sixteen Thousand, Six Hundred and Twelve Ghana Cedis (GH¢1,237,216,612)** for the programmes and activities of the Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation for the 2024 Financial Year.

Respectfully submitted.



HON. SYLVESTER TETTEH
VICE CHAIRPERSON, COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS



ANTHONY AGYEKUM (MR)
CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

