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STATEMENT ON INFORMATION PRIVACY PROTECTION ISSUES IN GHANA'S e-GOVERNMENT

Mr. Speaker, our personal information is a private and valuable commodity and it is not only the key to our Financial and Medical identity, but also to our Online identity **indeed our very being and identity. For this reason**, knowing how to protect our information, our identity and ensure sustainable development in Ghana's e-Government is a must in the 21st century. Recent reports of The Data Protection Commission of breaches by some Government agencies as Collectors and Processors need us as a House to investigate further **to ensure** that the e-Government services, e-citizens information and privacy are protected, safe and secure.

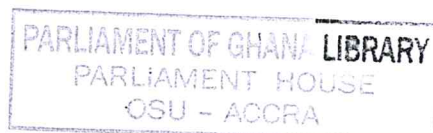
The escalating public attention to e-Government and data collection underlines the huge privacy implications of and increasing public concerns on government's handling of citizens' personal data in this digital age.

One of the greatest innovations in our public sector is e-Government. The innovative services enabled by information technology not only offer the potential to improve administrative performance, but also significantly transform our institutional and organizational structures and processes, interactions and the inner workings of a transparent government. Further, personal information in government's hand is often very sensitive and **has gotten all of us thinking.**

Mr. Speaker, on 21st June 2017 the Data Protection Commission reported via www.gbcghana.com that institutions, comprising 25 airlines, 89 hotels, 50 hospitals and 13 shopping centers, have violated the Data Protection Act, 2012 (Act 843) which makes it obligatory for institutions that perform functions as data controllers to register, in accordance with Section 27 (1) of the act. Of most concern are the government's agencies.

If government institutions (ministries, departments, agencies) are in breach of the law, Mr. Speaker, who is currently holding my medical data illegally and how safe is it? Where do I report or inquire from and **seek redress.**

~~Common questions that have also arisen are: Are there guidance document that addresses privacy protections when Ghanaians interact with their e-government? Have Agencies (Ministry of Finance, Health departments, Passport office & ECOWAS passports, Births and Deaths registry, National ID CARD, Immigration at the ports), or political parties membership cards been directed to describe how the government handles the electronic version of their information that individuals provide? Do these agencies conduct privacy impact assessments for electronic information systems and collections and make them publicly available so that the Ghanaian public has~~



assurances that personal information is protected? What about digital surveillance? How long can an agency keep or store electronic information? Who do Juaben Constituents report to when their identity is stolen electronically? Is there a national identity theft site? How do individuals review such information, request corrections, and be informed of any disclosures? To answer these questions and best address the problem, it is crucial to first examine the current state of the privacy protection framework.

Mr. Speaker, there are three types of information privacy problems arising from e-Government applications: Collection, Use and disclosure, and Security problems

With regard to Collection problems, every time a person visits a government website for browsing, information seeking, or conducting an online transaction, his/her personal information is purposely or unknowingly (using cookies) collected and/or retained by government agencies as well as relevant private parties such as internet service providers. Requirements hence should be provided against unnecessary/unlawful data collection at the 'front office' (government portals).

Other than data collection and retention at the front office, there are also possible unlawful use and disclosure problems in the 'back office' of e-government, where files are handled and the required services aren't provided (European Union, 2003). One such privacy issue is the increasing cross-referencing and sharing of personal data, which is encouraged in many countries for economical and efficiency purposes.

There is also the data security issue. The growing use of personal information online and the open (and therefore vulnerable and insecure) nature of the internet as a globally connected and easily accessible network increase the possibility of loss, theft, and errors of such data, which heightens data security concerns. Simon Cullen and Eric Levenson of CNN reported of a cyber-attack on UK parliament on 24th June 2017. The British security services believe that responsibility for the attack is more likely to lie with another state rather than a small group of individual hackers.

Mr. Speaker, there is no specific e-government law in Ghana. The Data Protection Act 2012 is the primary law regulating personal data processing in the context of e-Government. Privacy has been largely protected indirectly under scattered provisions of different laws and regulations.

Implementing a successful e-Government requires a level of trust and assurance from all transacting parties on protection of our information. The Data Protection Commission should tell us where and who has our information in all e-Government activities. Mr. Speaker, What I seek to draw this House's attention to is to ensure that, government agencies responsible for data collection are made to strictly adhere to the 8 principles of Data Protection in its e-Government activities. Our data privacy regulator needs to assure citizens how it is respecting our privacy of our digital information within the data protection laws of Ghana.

