

MEDIA RELEASE

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CIMG ADVOCATES REGULATION & ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR AI DEVELOPMENT IN GHANA

Accra, Ghana: March 20, 2024 – The Chartered Institute of Marketing, Ghana (CIMG) recently marked the occasion of World Consumer Rights Day with a panel discussion at the Coconut Grove Hotel in Accra.

The theme for the discussion was “**Fair and Responsible AI for Consumers**”, which focused on raising awareness of consumer rights in the age of Artificial Intelligence (AI), empowering consumers, and for corporate organisations to know their responsibilities in safeguarding consumer rights.

In his welcome address, the National President of CIMG, Dr. Kasser Tee, reflected on the journey that led to the recognition of March 15 as a pivotal moment for consumer advocacy globally and CIMG’s consumerism agenda.

“Last year, we celebrated by focusing on "Empowering Consumers Through Clean Energy Transitions". This year, our attention turns to "Fair and Responsible AI for Consumers," recognising the indispensable role that AI plays in today's digitised world. From personalised recommendations on e-commerce platforms to automated customer service chatbots, AI has become ubiquitous, particularly in urban centres with internet connectivity”, said Dr. Kasser Tee.

CIMG’s National President encouraged stakeholders to “ensure the ethical use of AI, with consumer protection at its core, despite its novelty and the absence of comprehensive regulatory frameworks on AI”. He also charged the public to “commit to advancing the cause of fair and responsible AI through dialogue to obtain the knowledge and tools necessary in navigating the evolving world of AI, harnessing its potential while safeguarding the rights of consumers”.

Offering insight into the intricate development process of AI, Chief Technology Officer at AIDEC Digital, Mr. Emmanuel Gbeve, highlighted that “developers engage in a process known

as Machine Learning, where the system is fed with processes and tasked to reproduce outcomes". This process, he explained, "sits atop another layer called Deep Learning, mirroring the complexity of the human brain". Mr. Gbeve underscored the potential risks associated with AI if consumer protection measures are not diligently implemented.

Explaining the development process of AI, Chief Technology Officer at AIDEC Digital, Mr. Emmanuel Gbeve stated that developers feed the system with processes and ask the system to reproduce, what is called Machine Learning. This sits on another layer called Deep Learning creating a technological brain akin to the human brain. Thus, you can perceive how dangerous it can be if we do not protect consumers.

Addressing the level of regulation required, President of Academic City College, Prof. Fred Mcbagonluri contended that "AI will revolutionise our way of life the same way the smart phones did. We need to consider its impact of AI on fields like medicine, agriculture, education and set boundaries wisely. Our nation should focus on homegrown solutions and avoid signing protocols without understanding the full effects on our way of life. How can we make AI work for us and what boundaries can we set around it?"

He further stated that "the problems advanced countries are going to have with AI in the next 10 years are not going to be the problems we are going to have with it. They are trying to win wars; we are trying to survive. Overregulation at this early stage may hinder our technological advancement."

Representing the Chief Executive Officer at the Cyber Security Authority was the communications lead in charge of Capacity Building and Awareness Creation, Mrs. Mary Ama Bawa. She spoke on Ghanaians' understanding of AI: "from 2018 until now, the Cyber Security has been at major grassroots. This year, as part of what we are doing, is to ensure that we touch every region. The notion is to let people understand that Internet of Things is available, AI is very close to our doorstep. While these technologies offer opportunities, they also pose threats".

According to Mrs. Bawa, "although we have a mandate to fulfill, our priority is addressing immediate needs. If we look at technology developers like OpenAI and other complex innovations ongoing, we are not able to regulate the activities in the first place. So, let us look at what we can do with our people. Currently, Ghana lacks a policy on AI guidelines, while the EU has recently passed theirs in November 2023. While there is urgency, we must also proceed cautiously", she added.

Speaking on behalf of the Data Protection Commission was the Deputy Director, Tech and Ethics, Mr. Maxwell Ababio. He revealed that "since 2019, the commission has been working

with the UN Global Pulse through the Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation and have been tasked to develop Ethical Guidelines of AI. We are done with the draft awaiting approval. Once approved, there will be a national sensitisation programme”.

CIMG, as stewards of the marketing profession, and guided by its mandate under section 3e of the Chartered Institute of Marketing, Ghana Act 2020 (Act 1021), will continue to observe this day and use it as a platform to lead discussions in advocating the rights of consumers for and increase the awareness levels. It is imperative that all organisations, including civil and public service entities and central government, recognise and uphold these consumer rights.

The five-member panel comprised representatives from the Data Protection Commission, Cyber Security Authority, three technology and marketing experts.

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MEDIA CONTACT

Clarence Pappoe
CIMG Project Office
Rev J. J. Martey Block
UPSA Campus
Digital Address: GM-036-8313
Tel: 0242 307 801
Email: communications@cimghana.org

A BRIEF ABOUT CIMG

The Chartered Institute of Marketing, Ghana (CIMG) is a Marketing Professional body established on July 3, 1981, with the vision to be the voice of marketing practice in Ghana under the Professional Bodies Registration Act 1973 (NRCD143). In 2020, the CIMG was granted a Parliamentary Act 1021, which gives it the mandate to regulate the standard in marketing practice and the training of marketing professionals in Ghana. The Institute aims at promoting the interest of both individual and corporate members through various interventions; the provision of marketing professional advice and services to corporate bodies and the promotion of marketing excellence through the prominent CIMG President’s Ball.

CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY IN GHANA

CIMG seeks to organise a panel discussion event to raise awareness of consumer rights amongst consumers, businesses, and the government. This is an important step in establishing consumer rights and for consumers to be recognised as essential players in the market.