

Rwanda has passed a new privacy law aimed at protecting personal data, the Ministry of ICT and Innovation reported.

The new law will bring Rwanda in line with international data protection standards, vital for the modern digital economy to facilitate services such as e-commerce, international financial transactions, and various online services.

The law was officially gazetted on 15th October 2021, it came into enactment after an all-inclusive, multi-stakeholder consultative process that started in January 2020 by the Rwanda Information Society Authority and supported by the Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution Rwanda (C4IR Rwanda).

The primary goals of this law include; empowering citizens with agency over their personal data to enable trust and secure data flows, domestically and internationally.

In addition, provide regulatory certainty for existing businesses and prospective investors, and an enabling environment for SME growth and to accelerate Rwanda's ambitions towards a technology enabled and data-driven economy.

Commenting about the law Hon. Paula Ingabire, Minister of ICT & Innovation, Rwanda said that accelerated digital transformation that we are witnessing in both the public and private sectors requires a progressive and inclusive approach to data protection.

"This law provides the necessary foundation to transform Rwanda into a data-empowered society, by ensuring all critical stakeholders, starting with government institutions, are attaining the gold standard in personal data protection and privacy." She added.

One of the tenets of this law is the clear and unambiguous consent of an individual to the collection, storage, and processing of personal data, which is a fundamental right.

With the advancement of technological and cross-border digital trade, Rwanda believes adequate personal data protection legislation is essential to fully harness the benefits of the global digital economy while safeguarding the privacy of individuals.

However, non-compliance with data protection legislation, in Rwanda and

internationally, could impede Rwanda based organizations from participating in cross-border business.

Crystal Rugege, managing director of C4IR Rwanda, underlined that this law is an important step for Rwanda to compete in the global digital economy.

“Having strong data governance frameworks in place that promote innovation and enable cross-border data flows are essential to maximize the socio-economic benefits of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, that heavily rely on massive amounts of data.” He notes.