

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC,**  
**NANA ADDO DANKWA AKUFO-ADDO,**  
**AT THE 66<sup>TH</sup> INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION, AT THE ADAKLU**  
**SPORTS STADIUM, VOLTA REGION, ON MONDAY, 6<sup>TH</sup> MARCH**  
**2023**

**“OUR UNITY, OUR STRENGTH, OUR PURPOSE”**

I must, first of all, welcome our Special Guest of Honour, the President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau and current Chair of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), His Excellency Umaro Sissoco Embaló, and members of his delegation to Ho, capital of the Volta Region, and to Adaklu, the venue for this ceremony. *Senhor Presidente, você é bem-vindo ao Gana.*

Ghana is proud of the strong ties of co-operation and friendship that exist between our two countries, and I am also happy that President Embaló succeeded me as Chairperson of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS. It is my hope that our two nations will continue to work together to build a sustainable future of progress and prosperity for our respective countries and populations, and to maintain healthy relations between our two nations.

Your Excellency, we are very glad that you accepted our invitation to share this special day with us. Even though you have been to our country on many occasions, your stay has largely been in Accra, our nation’s capital. Today, you are in Adaklu and, I dare say, in one of the most beautiful, and most serene parts of our country, and you are amongst a people who pride themselves on their sense of hospitality. I hope that, by the end of the visit, you will agree with this claim.

I extend the appreciation of the nation to the children from all across the nation who took part in the march, and I commend the cultural groups for their spectacular performances, which exemplified the greatest aspects of Ghanaian culture. It is always a delight also to watch personnel from our security services on parade, putting up spectacular drills. This year’s parade and display of drills are no exception, and, have become eagerly awaited aspects of our independence day celebration. Kudos to them!!

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is the part of Ghana that has produced, arguably, the nation's two greatest composers, Ephraim Amu, composer of that great anthem, **Mia denyigba lorlor la** (Yen ara asase ni), who taught us to take pride in our culture, and Phillip Gbeho, composer of Ghana's vibrant and much loved national anthem; Daniel Chapman Nyaho, one of Ghana's most eminent administrators who, at independence, helped ensure a seamless transition when the British left; the Reverend Ametorwobla, that powerful orator who proved you could be both a priest and a politician; and Esther Ocloo, née Nkulenu, trail-blazer and industrialist extraordinaire, whose entrepreneurial spirit lives on. This is the part of Ghana that also gave us Komla Agbeli Gbedemah, Ghana's first Minister for Finance and one of the founding fathers of our nation, and the charismatic Jerry John Rawlings, first president of the Fourth Republic and Ghana's longest serving head of state.

The greatest achievement of our independence is the fact that we have welded different ethnic entities into one nation. Although the Gold Coast was the precursor to our independent Ghana, it was a collection of disparate groups. It was the attainment of independence that gave us our common identity as Ghanaians.

An important historical fact is that, of all the different peoples that have formed our modern nation, it was only the people of the Volta, Oti and part of the current Northern Regions who had the unique opportunity to choose to join the territory that became Ghana at independence. I am referring, of course, to the 1956 plebiscite in which, on May 9<sup>th</sup> of that year, the people of the then British Togoland voted to join the Gold Coast on the attainment of her independence a year later. Without that significant historical event, we would not have Ghana as we know it today.

Today, we celebrate the anniversary of the day we achieved the enviable status of becoming the first country in sub-saharan Africa to be free of colonial rule, and, with this, came the weighty obligation to serve permanently as a barometer of the continent's progress.

Sixty-six (66) years down the line, we have worked hard to live up to this responsibility, even though we acknowledge that we have not fully realised our potential and the dreams and aspirations of our forebears, who fought for the independent Ghana we have today.

For well over a century, our forebears fought to liberate our nation from the chains of colonialism and imperialism. The several wars fought against the British by the Ashantis, the last of which featured the celebrated Yaa Asantewa; the successful mobilisation of public opinion by the Aborigines Rights Protection Society, whose leading spirits were Jacob Sey, Joseph Casely-Hayford, John Mensah Sarbah, Kobina Sekyi, against the sequestration of our lands by the British; the formation, in 1947, of the nation's first political party, the United Gold Coast Convention, UGCC of blessed memory; the triggering of mass resistance by Nii Kwabena Bonney (Boycott Hene) through the boycott of goods of European traders; the riots that consumed the nation following the senseless shootings of unarmed ex-service men at the Christiansborg Crossroads on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1948 and the killings of Sergeant Adjetey, Corporal Attipoe and Private Odartey Lamptey, which enraged the people and sparked riots across the country; the subsequent arrest of the UGCC leaders, who have gone down in history as the legendary "Big Six", JB Danquah, Emmanuel Obetsebi-Lamptey, Edward Akufo-Addo, Ebenezer Ako Adjei, William Ofori-Atta, Kwame Nkrumah, by the colonial authorities, who held them responsible for the disturbances; the establishment of the Watson Commission, which helped design the path towards independence in 1957; and the formation, in 1949, of the Convention Peoples' Party by Kwame Nkrumah, together with K.A Gbedemah and Kojo Botsio, which, thereafter, became the principal organ for the prosecution of the nationalist agenda.

Our forebears were united and strengthened in realising one common purpose – the attainment of independence. It did not matter where they came from; it did not matter which tribe they belonged to; it did not matter which religious persuasion they subscribed to; and their standing in society certainly did not matter. They recognised the fact that colonialism did not inure to our nation's collective benefit, and they were determined to end it. And, indeed, they did.

On that historic night of 6<sup>th</sup> March 1957, after decades of agitation by the pioneers and members of the nationalist movement, Kwame Nkrumah, our nation's first leader, made the momentous proclamation of Ghanaian independence at the Old Polo Grounds in Accra, which we celebrate with joy every year.

The theme for this year's celebration, "**Our Unity, Our Strength, Our Purpose**", should imbue in us the constant desire to seek for the progress, prosperity and development of Ghana, no matter the circumstances confronting us.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Republic represents the longest period of stable constitutional governance in our history. We should be united in the goal of protecting it, for it is only its free, democratic form of governance and the intelligent management of the economy that will bring the upliftment Ghanaians want and deserve.

We should continue to strive to ensure that no Ghanaian child is denied access to quality education, hence the groundbreaking and transformative Free SHS policy. We should continue to guarantee access to affordable healthcare for all in every part of our country, by continuously improving the National Health Insurance Scheme, expanding healthcare infrastructure and enhancing general health delivery; we should continue to work towards achieving food security, and the modernisation of our agriculture; we should continue to work to become a value-added, industrialised economy, which no longer depends on the production and export of raw materials, but on the things we make; we should continue to work to open up all parts of our country through the construction of roads, rail, ports and airports; we should continue to work to improve accountability, efficiency and transparency in the delivery of public services; we should continue with the process of digitalisation; we should continue the difficult but necessary task of ridding our environment of the menace of galamsey; and we should continue to pay our taxes, and demand that our leaders put them to good use.

Above all, we should continue to guard and protect jealously the security and integrity of our nation against dangers from outside and within our borders.

We cannot allow those who seek to divide us along the lines of ethnicity or religion to succeed. Let us deepen the cohesion that exists amongst us, and let us wear, with pride, the badge of being called Ghanaian. There is no better homage we can pay to the memories of all those who fought to free us from the shackles of colonialism and imperialism, than to dedicate this

66<sup>th</sup> independence anniversary to working even harder for the unity, strength and purpose of our dear Ghana.

Fellow Ghanaians, I am very much aware of the current difficulties confronting our nation, and we are working hard to resolve them. But, maybe, we should also count our blessings in how, together, we are managing the difficulties. We all see the images around the world. Here in Ghana, we have not had any fuel queues, we have not suffered shortages of food and essential items, or the catastrophe of **dumsor**. Undoubtedly, major global developments have had a negative impact on our domestic economic performance. We have witnessed historic highs in global inflation and food prices; rising global interest rates triggered by tightening of monetary policy of central banks across several advanced economies to tame rising inflation; an energy crisis with crude oil prices reaching unprecedented highs, at one point, above one hundred and twenty dollars (US\$120) per barrel; the strengthening of the US dollar against all other currencies; the tightening of global financing conditions especially for emerging markets and developing economies; and the largescale disruption of the global supply chain.

These phenomena have manifested in Ghana in the form of the depreciation of our currency, the decline in gross international reserves, high inflation, elevated debt burden, significant fiscal stress, constrained domestic and external financing, and reduced GDP growth. It is these that have brought hardships upon our people. Government has deployed a number of fiscal interventions to help bring relief to Ghanaians, and, I am confident that, sooner rather than later, we will see significant results of relief and recovery. In two days, on Wednesday, 8<sup>th</sup> March, I will, in the Chamber of Parliament, deliver a Message on the State of the Nation, where I will delve into much greater detail the entirety of the package of policies Government is implementing to bring back the days of rapid growth.

Fellow Ghanaians, there is one thing I want all of us to remember, and that is that, when I assumed office on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2017, I inherited a severely-challenged economy, whose rate of growth, at the time, was the lowest in over two decades. By dint of hard work, prudence and creativity, we managed to turn things around, creating an economy which, for the years 2017, 2018, and 2019, the years before the onset of COVID-19, was amongst

the fastest growing economies not only in Africa, but also in the world, recording an annual GDP growth rate of seven percent (7%). We were the best place to do business in West Africa, and, in 2021, we were described as the most attractive destination for investment in West Africa. The next twenty-two (22) months of my mandate will be focused on restoring the economy we had before COVID and the Russian invasion of Ukraine to the period of rapid growth. It is a solemn pledge I am making to you, my fellow Ghanaians, and one which I am determined to fulfill.

Before I take my seat, I want to inform you that, in fulfilment of the announcement I made at last year's Founders' Day Celebration, I will, on Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023, confer national honours on some citizens of our country, who distinguished themselves in the fight against the pandemic of COVID-19. By their actions, they helped protect and preserve our population, and won global acclaim for Mother Ghana. I will, also, on that day, express the nation's gratitude to the legal team of men and women who were charged with ensuring that the maritime boundary dispute with Ghana's immediate, western neighbour, the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, ended favourably for Ghana, thus ensuring that our western maritime resources, including their potential oil and gas reserves, remained legitimately in our possession.

I am sure we all saw the three (3) helicopters belonging to the Police Service joining this morning's celebration. It is the first time in our nation's history that the Police Service is employing the use of helicopters to improve its operational efficiency. The acquisition of these helicopters is to honour the pledge I made at the 2019 end of year Police WASSA, and I assure the officers, men and women of the Service of Government's continued support in helping them to discharge effectively their mandate.

Ladies and gentlemen, in choosing to celebrate this year's Independence Day in the Volta Region, I hope it affords all of us the opportunity to enjoy the beauty and breathtaking scenery that abounds here. This is the Region that has the highest mountain in Ghana, and other spectacular peaks from which to gaze at the surrounding splendour. This is the Region that has marvellous waterfalls and naturally occurring landscapes and historic monuments on its coast. It is the Region of spellbinding and beautiful music

and intricate dances. It is the Region with interesting cuisine. It is a tourism destination without compare. I urge you all to explore its unique attractions.

In conclusion, fellow Ghanaians, I want to assure you that my devotion to the Ghana Project is unwavering. The enemy we face is not each other. We can only win this battle if we stick together, and pull in the same direction, regardless of our divergent viewpoints. I am confident that we are on the right path, and I ask for your support so that we can continue the transformation of Ghana in peace.

Once again, on behalf of all of us, I thank President Embalo and his entourage for coming to join us on our special day.

Happy 66<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary Celebration to us all, and may God Almighty bless us all, and our homeland Ghana, and make her great and strong.

I thank you for your attention.