

GHANA



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STATEMENT

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY
PROFESSOR JOHN EVANS ATTA MILLS
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA**

ON THE OCCASION OF

**THE 64TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

NEW YORK, 24TH SEPTEMBER, 2009

Mr. President,

Permit me to join previous speakers in congratulating you on your election as President of the 64th Session of the General Assembly. Your long and distinguished service to your country and Africa gives us the confidence that we are in experienced and capable hands.

I also wish to express my delegation's appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, for the able manner with which he presided over the 63rd Session of the General Assembly.

Mr. President,

This year marks the centenary of the birth of an illustrious son of Ghana and Africa, our first President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, under whose leadership Ghana became a member of the United Nations on March 8, 1957, only two days after achieving Independence. We recall Dr. Nkrumah's proclamation before this august body on 23rd September, 1960, during the 15th Session, that "the United Nations was the only organization that holds out any hope for the future of mankind." It was at the same session that he also called for the reform of the Security Council in order to bring it in line with a rapidly changing world. More than forty years have since passed and those views remain relevant.

Mr. President,

Then, as now, Africa faced deep crisis with profound and far-reaching implications for international peace and stability. Today, the combined effects of climate change, high food and energy prices and the current financial and economic crisis threaten to erode the modest but hard earned economic growth and democratic achievements of the last two decades. Africa remains volatile and violent conflicts still persist.

Therefore, we must all support the United Nations and its regional allies, such as the African Union, to live up to these and other pressing challenges facing the international community.

Mr. President,

We acknowledge that globalization has expanded and accelerated economic interdependence among states. In contrast, the benefits of globalization have been negligible in the majority of developing countries and their economies have not been transformed in any significant manner. Despite almost a decade of impressive growth of about 5 percent, only a few countries have been able to reduce the proportion of their population living on less than US\$1 per day.

Consequently, most of the countries remain susceptible to various external shocks which continue to pose threats to their growth.

In fact, the over-reliance on high commodity prices and mineral exports has not lessened but rather exposed the structural impediments to food security. This is particularly true of sub-Saharan Africa where the on-going world financial and economic crisis threatens to erode decades of modest growth and thereby make the Millennium Development Goals unattainable in any meaningful way. Ghana, therefore, reiterates her support for a global integration that ensures inclusive and equitable development and effectively contributes to substantial poverty alleviation, including full and productive employment as well as broad access to social services.

A number of developing countries, including those in Africa, have taken various steps to mitigate the impact of the financial crisis on their economies, including interest rate reductions, recapitalization of financial institutions, increasing liquidity to banks, trade policy changes, and regulatory reforms. In Ghana, fiscal restraint has been exercised in response to the crisis, including cutting all low priority public spending and shifting the balance from recurrent expenditure to infrastructure investment.

In addressing the impact of crisis on their economies, African countries will like to see:

- Rich countries making more effort to meet existing commitments on aid and debt reduction
- Accelerating disbursements and improving access to existing financial facilities
- Urging the International Monetary Fund to put in place a new facility with relaxed conditions to support African economies during this crisis period
- A capital increase for the African Development Bank to enable it to scale up its interventions in support of African development
- Sale of International Monetary Fund gold reserves to release additional resources to help developing countries deal with the financial crisis and
- Issuance of new special drawing rights

Mr. President,

International trade carries enormous potential for reducing poverty and driving economic growth that can lift millions of people out of poverty. The ongoing Doha Trade Round is committed, at least in principle, to improve market access

for poor countries. This commitment is very important, especially in low-skill and labour-intensive sectors such as garment manufacturing where most African exports come from.

Sustained economic growth requires that poor countries increase their exports to the rich countries. Unfortunately, the current global trading system discriminates against developing countries, hinders their participation in the global economy and damages the earning opportunities of farmers and rural communities in poor countries. Trade-distorting subsidies, as well as tariff and non-tariff barriers instituted by most advanced countries have denied market access to African products. For developing countries like Ghana a meaningful liberalization must be accompanied by predictable access to markets, eliminating abuse of anti-dumping measures and the reduction of tariffs and non-tariff barriers.

Mr. President,

In face of all these developments, Africa acknowledges that our efforts at achieving sustainable, social and economic development essentially depend on our commitment to good governance. In spite of the difficult challenges, leaders across the continent have embraced democratic values except in a few cases where narrow self interests of leaders are threatening the commendable gains of the last decade.

Mr. President,

We are also confronted with grave risks posed by climate change to environmental, social and economic development. The need for concrete, timely and decisive measures to enable us to cope with this largely man-made problem is obvious and must not be deferred any longer.

As we proceed to the UN Climate Change Conference scheduled for December 2009 in Copenhagen (COP-15), the issue of financing mitigation and adaptation to climate change in developing countries will remain central in the deliberations, and in fact, progress on these issues will be significantly crucial in determining any outcome in Copenhagen.

Mr. President,

The intricate link between security and development has been generally recognized by the international community. Despite the pivotal role played by the UN in identifying the threats confronting the world and marshalling international support for requisite measures to address these challenges, humanity's hope and aspiration for a peaceful and prosperous world, continue to be weaned by a litany of failures and unfulfilled promises.

Rather than being discouraged by these shortcomings, Ghana remains unwavering in the conviction that though daunting, the challenge to the Comity of Nations could be surmounted through innovative, bold, realistic and achievable decisions.

Mr. President,

Peacekeeping operations have undoubtedly played a pivotal role in the organization's efforts to fulfill its core obligation of promoting international peace and security. Ghana, as one of the oldest and consistent troop contributing countries, deems it a matter of honour and privilege to be associated with this success story of our Organisation. We equally acknowledge that increasing demands have placed further strain on an already overstretched system.

It is for this reason that we applaud and renew our support for the reform process which has so far yielded fruitful dividends, although further improvements are required if we are to achieve the ultimate goal.

Ghana cannot but commend the growing cooperation between the UN and regional organizations, and calls for its intensification to make the best use of the cooperative strength of the UN and regional arrangements in a mutually complementary manner.

Mr. President,

Next year marks the fifteenth year after the adoption of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. However, the huge gap between policy and practice and the uneven progress in implementing the international commitments on gender equality and empowerment of women heightens the importance of creating an enabling environment, through a more coherent, integrated and multi-sectoral approach.

Over the years, Ghana has spared no effort in implementing the Beijing Platform goals and has amply demonstrated its commitment to promoting and ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment through concrete administrative, legal and constitutional means.

In our efforts to achieve full and accelerated implementation of these goals and objectives, the Government is actively pursuing an Affirmative Action Policy which seeks to ensure 40 percent representation of women in decision-making positions. We have made gains to this end as lucidly testified by the appointment of the first female Speaker of Parliament, female Ministers with responsibility for Women and Children Affairs, Justice and Attorney-General, Trade and Industry, Environment and Science, Information and Tourism as well as many Deputy Ministers.

Mr. President,

At the 63rd Session, this Assembly adopted a resolution that requested that we improve our efforts and join together in backing the international initiative against human trafficking and protection of victims. We concur with those who view the elaboration and adoption of a United Nations Global Plan of Action as an effective and practical way to give this resolution life and strengthen international efforts against this despicable crime.

Our expectation is that the President of the General Assembly will make this an urgent and priority issue for the 64th Session of the General Assembly and I assure you of Ghana's full commitment and support to this cause.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I would like to note with regret that conflicts, particularly in the developing world, have robbed us of the opportunity to improve the circumstances of our people. Sustainable development can only be achieved in an international environment characterized by peace and security.

Ghana, therefore, wishes to reiterate her commitment to the ideals of the United Nations and will continue to live up to its charter obligations and together with member states assist this organization in its task of maintaining global peace and security. Ghana believes that the United Nations remains the ideal multilateral instrument available for maintaining international peace and security and for promoting fruitful international cooperation. We must, therefore, strengthen our resolve and muster the necessary political will to allow the UN to function more effectively in redeeming the majority of our people from wars, disease and poverty.

I thank you.

