

# GHANA



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## **STATEMENT**

**BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY**

**MR. JOHN DRAMANI MAHAMA**

**PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA**

**ON THE OCASION OF**

**THE 67TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

**NEW YORK, 26TH SEPTEMBER 2012**



**Mr. President,  
Mr. Secretary General,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In accordance with Ghanaian tradition and custom, I would like to begin with a basic but essential courtesy - to express, on behalf of the government and people of my beloved country, our deepest gratitude and most profound appreciation to the United Nations and to the numerous world leaders who mourned with us following the sudden and untimely death of our former president, Professor John Evans Atta Mills.

Ghanaians were touched by the many heartfelt messages of condolence and the many glowing tributes that poured in from all over the globe. Those messages of goodwill strengthened us and enabled us to transcend the adversities of an occurrence that was unprecedented in the history of Ghana.

Professor Mills was a dedicated and honourable statesman. He committed himself to bringing about an improvement not only in the lives of Ghanaians but also in the lives of all other Africans and indeed the lives of individuals throughout the world. His death was a significant loss and I am certain that he will be sorely missed by the international community.

With the first-hand knowledge of what it means for a nation to lose its leader, I want to also take this opportunity, on behalf of all Ghanaians, to extend condolences to the people of Ethiopia, Malawi and Guinea Bissau who also suffered the untimely demise of their sitting presidents. May the souls of these great men who gave so selflessly and helped to move our nations forward rest in perfect peace.

One of the lessons that I learnt from the tragedy of Professor Mills' death - and it is a lesson worth sharing - is that it is during times such as these, times of great sorrow and pain, that we often reveal the very essence of who we are. This is as true of nations as it is of individuals. Over the past few months, Ghanaians have shown ourselves to be resilient, to be respectful of the values that promote peace and the institutions that safeguard the stability of our democracy. In our process of healing, we have become more united and more determined to stay the course that we began in 1957 when we became the first sub-Saharan African nation to gain independence. In the process of healing, we have become more confident than ever before in our ability to create a Better Ghana for our children.

Today's assembly of heads of state is being held at a most critical time. Our world is being confronted with a number of significant challenges. War, conflict and strife are very much features of human existence. Poverty, disease, and famine continue to cripple the lives of many. Oppression, discrimination, illiteracy and unemployment still stifle the potential and shatter the hopes of millions.

Though examples of such conditions can be found on every continent, for a while, whether rightly or wrongly, they seemed to be automatically and primarily associated with Africa. Perhaps this is why it gives me such great pleasure to lead my address to the 67<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly with news of progress from Ghana, and stories of success from the African continent.

Today, Africa boasts of some of the fastest-growing economies in the world, with Ghana being one of them. The number of countries engaged in conflict is steadily decreasing year after year. And as that happens, we are also witnessing a steady increase in the number of countries that are governed along democratic lines. As is true of all new democracies, these systems are not without their flaws. And while they may not be perfect, they are promising.

In fact, three of the African countries that lost their leaders this year - Ethiopia, Malawi and, of course, Ghana - experienced seamless and peaceful constitutional transitions of power to their new leadership.

You see, today, right now, there is something spectacular happening in Africa. Growth is taking the place of stagnation; tranquility is taking the place of turmoil; democratic governance, founded on the rule of law, is taking the place of dictatorship.

There is no denying the visibility and the viability of these significant developments. At the very least, they require an examination of long-held views and misconceptions about the African continent. These developments must also find expression in the manner in which developed nations relate to Africa. In many ways this is already taking place, but the shift has only just begun. There is still much room for improvement, but I am inspired by what I see, which are limitless possibilities for Africa and its engagement with the rest of the world.

As the United Nations Human Development Index will attest, we in Ghana have made tremendous strides in a number of areas with the aim of improving the living conditions of our people.

Ghana is on track to achieve the targets set under the Millennium Development Goals. Significant progress has been made in the following areas: reducing extreme poverty, gender parity in school enrolment, universal primary education, provision of safe drinking water and the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Unemployment is a challenge that exists on a global scale. Nearly all nations, be they developed or developing, are grappling with finding ways to tackle this potential threat to their economic stability. In Ghana, we are attempting to deal with this problem as aggressively and as effectively as possible by finding solutions that are long-term and sustainable.

In Africa, to say that the youth are our future is slightly misleading. Nearly 65% of the continent's entire population is below the age of 35. Our youth are not only our future; they are also our present. In Ghana, we have been working assiduously to empower and support our youth to ensure that they will not be left behind in the fast-changing global economic, educational and social priorities.

Government is implementing several social protection programmes across various sectors to cushion the poor and vulnerable and to ensure that the fruits of our economic growth are distributed equitably. Under these programmes, massive investments have been and are still being made in education; health; modernisation of agriculture; social infrastructure and direct payments to poorest households.

In furtherance of our battle against HIV/AIDS, a new 5 year national strategic plan has been launched to consolidate the gains that have already been made in reducing the prevalence of the disease. Under this new plan our target is to achieve a virtual elimination of mother-to-child transmission and to expand access to anti-retroviral therapy for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Government has committed 150 million Ghana cedis (the equivalent of 80 million dollars) as its contribution to the financing of this new strategic plan. That is not enough. We are now finding ourselves in a rather ironic situation, one that is threatening the advances we've made thus far.

Ghana, like several other developing countries that have made remarkable headway in combating this disease, is becoming a victim of its own success. As the numbers associated with the disease-- rates of infection and mortality--, go down, so too do the figures in the global funding for HIV/AIDS programmes. This leaves a considerable financing gap for many African countries, such as Ghana, that are trying not only to maintain their progress, but also move closer to complete eradication.

In 1992 under the constitution of its fourth republic, Ghana established itself as a multi-party democracy. Since then, we have held five successful elections that have resulted in the smooth transfer of power from one democratically chosen leader to another. When it comes to transparency in the electoral exercise, Ghana is, in fact, held up as an example of excellence.

We are just a few weeks away from conducting our sixth successive presidential and parliamentary election. As president, I wish to assure the international community that this election will be free and fair and peaceful. I am so certain of our stability through this process that I extend a warm welcome to any individual or organization that would like to come and monitor our elections.

This commitment to peace that I have pledged in the past and am pledging anew today is in keeping with a longstanding tradition that Ghana has established domestically and internationally.

In the 1960s when Ghana deployed 8,800 soldiers to the former Congo Leopoldville, now the Democratic Republic of Congo, it became the first African country to participate in a UN Peacekeeping mission.

Since then Ghana has continued to be an active and key partner in the UN's Peacekeeping programme and was recently ranked among the top ten largest contributors of personnel to peacekeeping operations over the years. Currently we have troops in 5 peacekeeping theatres throughout the world.

Ghana's consistent championing of peace is neither accidental nor coincidental. Rather, it is by design and by determination. We have always recognized that peace is critical to development and to the overall improvement and enrichment of people's lives. It's no wonder then that in 1961 when U.S. President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps, its very first mission was in Ghana.

In the past two decades, Ghana's position on peace has been tested again and again as the West African sub-region was ravaged by one civil war after another. However, we have held firm to that position and will continue to do so.

Because Ghana wishes to co-exist harmoniously with all of our neighbours, when legislating policy we are ever-conscious of the importance of peace; when offering asylum or a safe haven to refugees, we are ever-protective of our borders, making certain that political conflicts and ethnic tensions do not cross over onto our soil. The unfolding tensions in Cote d'Ivoire and Mali have been, and continue to be, of particular concern.

Ghana will not allow its territory to be used to destabilize other nations. We will not be the storehouse of any resources or weapons that will be used to disrupt the peace and development of another nation. We will not harbour any individuals or groups whose intent is to utilize Ghana as a base of operation to undermine the safety and security of another nation.

We will work under the ECOWAS protocol and utilise whatever other tools of diplomacy are at our disposal to ensure that security is restored to Mali and Côte d'Ivoire and that they find a place alongside their fellow African countries in the continent's forward march towards prosperity.

Ghana has a strong belief in the universal declaration of human rights. Under the principle of self-determination of people, Ghana was the first sub-Saharan country to emerge from colonial domination. "The independence of Ghana is meaningless," proclaimed Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, our nation's founding father, "unless it is linked with the total liberation of the African continent."

In keeping with this right of self-determination, we wish to restate our support for an independent, prosperous Palestinian state, co-existing peacefully with a free, stable Israeli state.

We also reiterate our opposition to the continuous blockade on Cuba and call for an immediate lifting of the embargo.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is fast being described as the century for Africa. Last year, of the 10 fastest growing economies in the world, 6 were African. Ghana, my own country, posted one of the highest GDP growth rates, with a final outturn of 14%. Foreign direct investment amounted to some 1.5 billion dollars in various sectors.

This type of sustained growth, in combination with security and democracy can only ensure an Africa that will bear no economic resemblance to the ghost of its former self. This new Africa

will not be burdened with the heavy-handed conditions and limitations of loans, nor will it fall prey to corruption and the decision of one despot to pilfer the coffers until the entire country has been deeply plunged into poverty.

This new Africa will stand on the world stage as a mutual partner.

True partnership, of course, must be based on equality. When the founding fathers of the United Nations established the Security Council some 66 years ago, it was based on the reality of the time. Almost seven decades later, the paradigms and dynamics that existed then have shifted dramatically. The lines that divided our world and categorized it into hierarchies of first and third, the lines that were drawn by settlers transforming once-sovereign lands into colonies and territories, all of these boundaries have now been blurred.

Technology has made information more immediately accessible to the general public, and individuals more accessible to one another. The world that we know today is not the same world our fathers and grandfathers knew. Our world is smaller, more integrated and familiar.

The current realities call for greater inclusion to consolidate our common security. They inform Ghana's stand for an expansion of the Security Council to admit more members in order to make a meaningful impact on the many challenges that we all face.

Africa is ready for that true and sincere partnership. Our time has come.

**Thank You, Mr. President.**

