

INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF HIS EXCELLENCY, NANA ADDO DANKWA AKUFO-ADDO, ON THE OCCASION OF HIS SWEARING IN AS PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE GHANA ARMED FORCES.

DATE: 7TH JANUARY, 2017

Mr Speaker,

The Ghanaian people give thanks to Almighty God for the blessings, favour and grace He continues to bestow on them. Exactly a month ago, that is 7th December last year, 2016, we, the people of Ghana, in all serenity and dignity, exercised our democratic franchise freely to elect a President and Parliament of our Republic. We are met here today to give effect to the outcome of that exercise.

In accordance with our republican custom, I, having been declared the winner of the presidential contest on 9th December, 2016, by the returning officer, the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission, Charlotte Osei, have taken the oath of the high office of President of the Republic, in the presence of the newly sworn Vice President, His Excellency Alhaji Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, and the newly elected Speaker of Parliament, the Rt. Hon. Prof. Michael Oquaye, an oath administered by the Chief Justice, Her Ladyship Georgina Theodora Wood, before the elected representatives of the people assembled in this 7th Parliament of the 4th Republic. This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Our nation is honoured by the presence, at this solemn ceremony of investiture, of leaders and representatives of friendly countries across the globe, in particular those of the sister nations of our regional body, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and of our continental body, the African Union. I salute the Chairperson of the Authority of Heads of State and Governments of the AU, His Excellency Idriss Déby, President of the Republic of Chad.

I salute the Chairperson of the Authority of Heads of State and Governments of ECOWAS, the historic figure, Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia; our special guest of honour, His Excellency Alassane Dramane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, and we thank him for his excellent speech; His Excellency Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of mighty Nigeria; His Excellency Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal; His Excellency Faure Gnassingbé, President of the Republic of Togo; His Excellency Alpha Condé, President of the Republic of Guinea Conakry; His Excellency Patrice Talon, President of the Republic of Benin; His

Excellency Ernest Bai Koroma, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone; His Excellency Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, President of the Republic of Mali; His Excellency Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, President of Burkina Faso. We are grateful also for the presence of His Excellency Teodoro Obiang Nguema, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea; His Excellency Ali Bongo, President of the Republic of Gabon; and His Excellency Edgar Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia. To them and the representatives of all the other friendly nations who are here, and former presidents and leaders, I say 'akwaaba', our famous word of welcome.

I have, at the outset, to thank sincerely our departing President, His Excellency John Dramani Mahama, for his service to our nation. He stepped into the breach of national leadership at a delicate moment in the country's history, with the death in office, for the first time, of a sitting president, the late Prof. John Evans Atta Mills. He has since steered the ship of state with conviction.

His elegant, dignified acceptance of the verdict of the people on 7th December, 2016, will, without doubt, receive the approval of history, for it has contributed significantly to the process of democratic consolidation in Ghana. I wish him and his family well.

For myself, I am in the unique position of being able to draw on the wisdom and experience of three former Presidents of the Republic, their Excellencies Jerry John Rawlings, John Agyekum Kufuor and John Dramani Mahama. They represent the continuity of the institutions of our Republic, for which we thank God.

Mr. Speaker, I am deeply humbled by the exceptional mandate and extraordinary show of confidence that the Ghanaian people have conferred on my party, the New Patriotic Party, and on my modest person. I am determined to do all in my power to accomplish the tasks of the mandate and justify their confidence. I will not let you, the people of Ghana, down.

We have a proud heritage. We are the heirs of John Mensah Sarbah, Joseph Caseley Hayford, George Pa Grant, R.S. Blay, Joseph Boakye Danquah, Emmanuel Obetsebi Lamptey, Edward Akufo-Addo, William Ofori-Atta, Cobbina Kesse, Ernest Ako Adjei, Kwame Nkrumah, Komla Agbeli Gbedema, Kojo Botsio, S.D. Dombo, Kofi Abrefa Busia, Baffuor Osei Akoto and others, who taught us that fidelity to principles, courage, patience, resilience and collective action do yield results.

They fought with intelligence, guts, steely determination and patriotism to liberate our land and reclaim our worth as human beings. Their love for country continues to inspire generations of us to commit our lives to the search for an enduring democratic legacy for Ghana. It is not for nothing that when our forebears established the Ghanaian nation, they chose “Freedom and Justice” as our motto. Our generation has to give meaning to this motto.

On March 6, in a few weeks’ time, Ghana will attain 60 years as an independent nation. I suspect that those early nationalists would be disappointed, if they came today and saw the level of development we have achieved in 60 years of independence.

Our journey has had some highs and unfortunately many lows. Since we accepted a consensus on how we should be governed with the onset of the Fourth Republic, we have performed more creditably. It is within this period of 24 years that Ghana has witnessed a consistent period of development.

Sixty years after attaining nationhood, we no longer have any excuses for being poor. I stand here today, humbled beyond measure for the opportunity to lead this country at this time and take us to a higher level in our development.

The words of JB Danquah, one of the founding fathers of the Ghanaian nation, are compelling. He said as far back as 1960 that the duty of government should be “to liberate the energies of the people for the growth of a property owning democracy in this land, with right to life, freedom and justice, as the principles to which the government and the laws of the land should be dedicated in order specifically to enrich life, property and liberty of each and every citizen.”

We have an exuberant and young, growing population that wants the best of what the world has to offer and will not settle for “Third World” or “developing world” standards. We have an adventurous people who are in a hurry for success. I have no doubt that the talents, energies, sense of enterprise and innovation of the Ghanaian can be harnessed to make Ghana the place where dreams come true.

It took us a while, but the consensus on multi-party constitutional rule has been established, and, for the third time, we have had a peaceful transfer of power from a governing party to an opposition one. We have done it without any fuss and it is now part of what we do as a people.

Kofi Abrefa Busia, Prime Minister of the Progress Party government of the 2nd Republic, and one of the great Ghanaians, said in these eloquent words: “We regard politics as an avenue of service to our fellow men. We hold that political power is to be exercised to make life nobler and happier.

Our success or failure should be judged by the quality of the individual, by his knowledge, his skills, his behaviour as a member of society, the standard of living he is able to enjoy and by the degree of harmony and brotherliness in our community life as a nation.”

We should move on to deepen our democracy. It is time to make sure that we have a true separation of powers between the various arms of government. Our Parliament, the legislative arm of government, must grow into its proper role as an effective machinery for accountability and oversight of the Executive, and not be its junior partner.

The Ghanaian Parliament, the Ghanaian Member of Parliament, must stand out as institutions that represent all that we hold dear and citizens can take pride in.

Our judiciary must inspire confidence in the citizens, so we can all see the courts as the ultimate arbiters when disputes arise, as they would. A Ghanaian judge must be a reassuring presence and the epitome of fairness.

We have worked with our national constitution for 24 years and we now know the areas that require change. I believe a consensus is emerging that we must decentralize more. We must devolve more power with corresponding resources to the base of our political system and to our people, in the regions and communities. We must trust the individual and collective wisdom and good sense of our people.

We must restore integrity in public life. State coffers are not spoils for the party that wins an election, but resources for the country’s social and economic development. I shall protect the public purse by insisting on value-for-money in all public transactions. Public service is just that – service and not an avenue for making money. Money is to be made in the private sector, not the public. Measures will be put in place to ensure this.

We must create wealth and restore happiness to our nation. We can only do this when we have an educated and skilled population that is capable of competing in the global economy. We must expand our horizons and embrace science and technology as critical tools for our development.

We believe that the business of government is to govern. Ours is to set fair rules. We will provide vision and direction and shine the light down the path of our entrepreneurs and farmers. We are, indeed, counting on a vibrant private sector to drive growth and create jobs.

We will stimulate the creative juices of innovators. We will bring back to life the adventurer in you. It is time to imagine and to dream again; time to try that business idea again. We will reduce taxes to recover the momentum of our economy. The doors of Ghana are open again. The shutters are up again. There could not be a better opportunity to “Make in Ghana”, and to make it in Ghana. **GHANA IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS AGAIN!**

We will build a confident Ghana which is united, at peace with itself and takes pride in its diversity.

We will rekindle the spirit that made Ghana the leading light on the African continent, and make our conditions deserving of that accolade. We will work with our neighbours and friends on the continent to enhance peace, democracy and political stability in our part of the world. We will reassert vigorously the Pan African vocation to which our nation has been dedicated. Integration of our region and of our continent will be a strategic objective of Ghanaian policy.

It will not be easy. We have no illusions whatsoever about the enormity of the task that we face, but I know that Ghanaians at home and abroad will rise to the occasion; they always do.

It will require sacrifice, but it can be done. Others have done it. So can we. Our best days still lie ahead. Though our challenges are fearsome, so are our strengths. Ghanaians have ever been a restless, questing, hopeful people. And we must bring to our task today the vision and will of those who came before us.

The Ghanaian people have summoned the change we celebrate today. They have raised their voices in an unmistakable chorus. They have cast their votes without equivocation and have forced the change. Now we must do the work the season demands. To that work, I now turn with all the authority of my

office. I ask the Legislature and Judiciary to join with me. But no President, no Parliament, no Government can undertake this mission all by itself.

Fellow citizens, you must be at the centre of the change. The change we have voted for will have to start with each of us as individuals. We can start with little changes in our own individual attitudes and practices. The change can and should start now and with us as individuals.

I ask you to be citizens: citizens, not spectators; citizens, not subjects; responsible citizens building your communities and our nation. Let us work until the work is done. Holy Scripture in Galatians 6:9 says "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

I assure you, my fellow citizens, who have entrusted me with this mandate, that I will advance my convictions with civility, I will serve the public interest with courage, I will speak for greater justice as well as compassion, and I will call for responsibility and I will live it, as well.

This is my solemn pledge.

I see exciting times ahead. The rule of law will be the underlying tenet of our lives; and the law will be applicable to all of us, and not just some.

We will have to work hard, harder than we have ever done before; and the hard work will be done by all of us, and not just some. There will be discipline in all sectors of our lives; and this applies to all of us, not just some.

Our public service will be accorded the dignity and respect it deserves, and be made to attract the bright young people it needs.

We acknowledge there will always be the need for a safety net for the vulnerable in our society, as in all other societies. Our nation will work when the marginalised and vulnerable are catered for and treated with respect.

Our elderly people will be recognised for their roles in building Ghana and assured of care in the dusk of their lives.

We should all recognise the danger we face by the alarming degradation of our environment and work to protect our water bodies, our forests, our lands and the oceans. We should learn and accept that we do not own the land, but hold it in trust for generations yet unborn and, therefore, have a responsibility to take good care of it and all it contains.

Ghana's first President, Kwame Nkrumah, Osagyefo, said at the end of 1957, the year of our independence: "We shall measure our progress by the happiness which our people take in being able to manage their own affairs."

Since March 6, 1957, we all say as a matter of routine that we are Ghanaians. It is time to define what being a Ghanaian ought to mean.

Being a Ghanaian must stand for something more than the holder of a birth certificate or a certain passport.

Being a Ghanaian must put certain responsibilities on each one of us.

Calling yourself a Ghanaian must mean you have signed up to a certain definable code and conduct. Being a Ghanaian puts an obligation on each one of us to work at building a fair, prosperous and happy nation.

And calling yourself a Ghanaian must mean we look out for each other.

There should be no higher praise than to be able to say I AM A GHANAIAN.

I thank the Almighty that I am able to say with pride, I am a Ghanaian. A new dawn has arisen in Ghana, which will enable us to build a new Ghanaian civilization which will be the beacon of Africa and the

wonder of the world. I thank you all, my fellow citizens, for making me the president of this beautiful country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and may God bless our homeland Ghana and make her great and strong. And may God bless us all and Mother Africa.