

Republic of Ghana

**Statement by His Excellency Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor,
President of the Republic of Ghana at the twelfth session
of the United Nations Conference on Trade and
Development (UNCTAD XII), Accra, Ghana,
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**OPENING ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY JOHN AGYEKUM KUFUOR,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA AT THE TWELFTH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT
(UNCTAD XII), ACCRA, GHANA, 20 APRIL, 2008**

Mr. President of the Conference;

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government;

Your Royal Highness, Crown Princess of Thailand, Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Mahidol;

Your Excellency, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon;

Your Excellency, Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Mr. Supachai Panitchpakdi;

Your Excellency the Director-General of the WTO, Mr. Pascal Lamy; Esteemed Delegates;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is with the greatest pleasure and honour that I welcome you all to Accra for the Twelfth Session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XII).

The Government and people of Ghana are particularly pleased to have with us here today the President of Brazil, His Excellency Mr. Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, who hosted the Eleventh Session of UNCTAD in Sao Paulo in June 2004, and Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Mahidol whose country Thailand hosted the Tenth Session of UNCTAD in February, 2000.

It is also my singular honour to acknowledge the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Ban Ki-Moon, who indeed, is the ultimate host of this important gathering.

Your Excellencies, Ghana values UNCTAD, a forum which gives voice to all nations whether rich or poor to deliberate on issues of trade and development in an atmosphere of equal partnership. Ghana therefore salutes all those who have laboured so hard, over the years, to map out its direction and course of action for the realisation of a truly open and credible global economy.

**Mr. President of Conference,
Excellencies,**

It is of great significance that UNCTAD XII is taking place in Africa - a continent whose chequered history has dogged its development efforts for decades. Today, most countries in Africa are still classified among developing nations, inhabited by some of the poorest populations of the world. It is instructive that former British Prime Minister Tony Blair describes Africa as “a scar on the conscience of mankind,” while UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon has called it “the epicentre of a development emergency”.

Our hope, Excellencies, is that the deliberations of this Conference will result in policies and actions within the global community to will help improve conditions on the continent and give it a more positive image.

Immediate measures should aim at reversing the dwindling fortunes of Africa in the global trade regime. The continent’s share of export trade fell from 5.5% in 1960 to about 2.1% in 1995. Recent improvements in commodity raw prices are helped to raise the level to 3.0 % since 2006.

Significantly, Africa’s share in world service exports which was 3.4% in 1980 dropped to 2.4% in 2006. With respect to investment, Sub-Saharan Africa attracted barely 0.8% of global Foreign Direct Investment Flows (FDI) in 2007. Undoubtedly, Africa remains deeply marginalised in the expanding global trade.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the theme for this conference is: ***“Addressing the Opportunities and Challenges of Globalisation for Development.”***

Some have termed the era of colonialism as the first wave of globalisation. The truth however is that, it was a skewed globe. It was a world that was sharply divided between the masters, in other words the colonial powers, on one side, and the servants, in other words the colonies, on the other, with the former freely exploiting the latter. It is no secret that while colonialism helped to build the economies of colonial powers, it seriously worsened and compromised the development of Africa. It inflicted such deep-seated psychological and disruptive wounds on the continent as still defy some of the best laid plans for healing them; hence, Mr. Blair's description of the continent as a scar on the conscience of mankind.

Therefore, at the threshold of this second wave, globalization must be driven by a high moral imperative to ensure it does not leave in its trail any losers. It should prove beneficial to all and detrimental to none. This Conference must therefore be seen as a unique opportunity firstly to give a boost to the fight against poverty and human indignity and secondly to strategise to assist Africa and other developing nations of the world to overcome under-development and reap the full benefits of globalisation.

Mr. President of Conference,

Excellencies,

When the first session of the Conference was convened in Geneva in 1964, its overarching mandate was to help developing economies and economies in transition to integrate fully into the global economy. Trade was to become a tool for development, to reduce poverty, improve the quality of life of peoples and close the income and welfare divide between developed and developing economies.

It was recognised right from that early period that a situation where global trade rules were skewed against developing countries called for redress. Special provisions such as Official Development Assistance (ODA); Foreign Direct Investment (FDI); Domestic capital accumulation; and building the production and trade capacities of developing countries were to be explored for such redress. Sadly, past efforts aimed at attaining this

noble objective have been far less than wholesome. The developed world has displayed half-hearted commitment and cynicism, while the developing world also exhibits resignation and scepticism. To achieve the needed advancement, both sides must shake themselves out of the gripping doubts to be able to share in a common vision of a HUMAN-CENTRED GLOBAL VILLAGE.

Mr. President of Conference,

Development goals set by a nation and the policies adopted to achieve them are highly influenced by the global economic landscape. Ghana and other African countries, for example, are subject to the vagaries of a savagely competitive global system which leaves them with no control over the pricing of their commodities and denies them the opportunity to protect their farmers and infant industries. This is why both domestic and international economic policies need constant adjustment to enable them to respond to unique or emerging challenges, address new development goals, and define mechanisms for achieving them. Conferences such as this UNCTAD XII must be seized upon as opportunities to review the processes of empowering nations to meet the ever-changing challenges and conditions of globalization.

The Conference is also expected to look more critically at the development impact of globalisation, including its effect on poverty reduction, wealth and employment generation and income distribution. It should also provide lessons from those economies in transition that are displaying such prowess in exploiting the benefits of globalization.

Mr. President of Conference,

Your Excellencies,

At this Conference, we must be guided by the outcomes of previous UNCTAD conferences as well as landmark meetings such as,

- The Millennium Summit of 2000 and the resulting Millennium Development Goals, (MGDs);
- The International Conference on Financing for Development of 2002 and its Monterrey Consensus and, last but not least,

- The Doha Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations launched in December 2001. Unquestionably, the issues to be debated in UNCTAD XII do mirror some of the concerns of Monterrey and Doha which are yet to be resolved.

Mr. President of Conference,

The Doha Negotiations, for instance, were launched to mark a major shift of priorities in the multilateral trading system, a shift from focusing only on market access and tariff issues to the inclusion of an explicit development agenda. This was why it was appropriately dubbed the Doha Development Agenda (DDA). Unfortunately, these negotiations which were to have been concluded not later than 1st January, 2005 are still going on. Clearly, further progress on the DDA can help enhance the trade aspirations of developing countries.

Factors such as the following deserve attention:

- Fair Market Access through Special and Differential Treatment, especially progressive reduction and eventual elimination of subsidies by the developed nations,
- South-South Cooperation,
- Aid for Trade,
- Official Development Assistance and
- Foreign Direct Investment.

These factors which impact directly on the productive and trade capacities of developing countries, and enable them to participate meaningfully in the world economy, must each be accorded its place in our scale of priorities.

This must be done in a spirit of purposefulness, tolerance and flexibility, in the light of the general acceptance that mankind is fated to live in an inter-dependent global village.

It is also certain that if the international community continue to defer finding credible solutions to long-standing problems and unfinished businesses, it will be condemning

itself to facing even more complex and intractable issues on development in the future. For developing countries like Ghana which are anxious to improve the quality of life of their peoples, the belief is that there has to be a greater sense of urgency in resolving these outstanding issues. And in this regard, they endorse the UN Secretary-General's statement that "Africa is the epicentre of a development emergency." The current turbulence in the international petroleum and food market, for instance, must be tackled by the global community under such and emergency footing.

Mr. President,

This conference must emphasize the symbiotic relationship that must exist between the WTO and the UNCTAD. Hence UNCTAD XII must be used as an opportunity to review the situation of WTO and urge moderation of positions of its members and prevail on them to accelerate the progress of the negotiations to ensure early conclusion.

Mr. President of Conference,

The accelerating phenomenon of globalisation has provided hope that an open and more interconnected world will increase opportunities for trade, wealth creation, improved welfare situation of peoples and nations and in the process promote development. Countries like Brazil, China and India have made great strides in this regard. This gives hope that with appropriate set of policies the circumstances of other developing countries would be equally improved.

Your Excellencies,

There are important lessons to be learned from the tremendous impact which Brazil, China, India and other economies in transition are having on global trade and investment flows. Most significant of all, it is a clear pointer to the fact that the full integration of developing countries into the world economy will, indeed, benefit everyone. The prospects for win-win outcomes in trade and investment are real and we must not relent in our efforts to achieve that goal.

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

The same political will that led world leaders to assemble in Geneva, in 1964, at the founding session of UNCTAD, and a much clearer vision of the rapidly emerging global village of today, are the key requirements to meet the challenges and take up the opportunities presented by globalisation. There already exists a huge body of knowledge, gathered through both our shared experience in development cooperation and painstaking research, which can be used effectively to create the sort of fair and equitable rule-based, global trading system that will accelerate the full integration of developing countries into the world economy. I am aware that since November 2007, member States have been working assiduously to come out with a text that will address key trade and development issues and outline the mandate and work priorities of UNCTAD for the next four years.

I wish to commend the Chairman of the PREPCOM, His Excellency Mr. Petko Draganov, the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bulgaria and his very able team of facilitators from France, Uganda and Mexico for the excellent work they have done in guiding the negotiations.

We also acknowledge the contribution of the spokespersons of the various regional groupings for their dedication and determination to achieve a consensus. Having covered so much ground, I am confident that they have the wisdom to resolve all outstanding issues and the courage to make the compromises necessary for achieving the required consensus to make UNCTAD XII a success.

Mr. President of Conference, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

The world expects from UNCTAD XII fresh ideas to influence development policy thinking and formulation in the years ahead, to address the changing paradigm of trade and development. The peoples of the world, especially the millions of deprived populations of developing nations, expect definitive time-bound actions that will impact positively on the quality of their lives. This Conference must therefore come out with credible proposals to empower UNCTAD to deliver on its very challenging mandate.

Mr. President of Conference,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

The Government and People of Ghana have endeavoured within the limitations of our resources to provide modest facilities for this conference. We hope that the warmth and sincerity of our welcome will make up for where we fall short. Please enjoy your stay with us.

I wish you every success in your deliberations and thank you most sincerely for giving Ghana the honour of hosting UNCTAD XII. Thank you and may God bless us all.