

# GHANA



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**STATEMENT BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY**  
**MR. JOHN AGYEKUM KUFUOR**  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA

**AT THE 63<sup>RD</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY**  
**OF THE**  
**UNITED NATIONS**

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Mr. President,

Let me use this opportunity to congratulate you on your very inspiring statement yesterday. The vision and compassion of the statement should provide a framework for the deliberations of this Assembly, and into the future.

I should also thank the Secretary-General for his tangible resolve to use his tenure to give accountable leadership to this global institution. His call for increased support from all members to restructure and streamline the personnel he leads to ensure more flexible, efficient and effective tackling of the many global challenges confronting humanity is timely and must be heeded.

Mr. President, the unmistakable fact of the current times is that the world is in a state of flux, with unmatched challenges, aptly described by you yesterday as "a confluence of large scale inter-related crises." This is befuddling all nations, strong and weak, rich and poor. But, as observed also by your good self and others, there are tremendous opportunities as well.

Examples of the challenges which practically all previous speakers have alluded to, include the phenomenal climate- change with attendant snow-melts, tsunamis, floods and droughts; the difficult- to-explain turbulence in the crude oil market; the soaring prices of food; the upheavals in the world financial market, the massive trafficking in drugs and weapons; and the spate of harrowing acts of terrorism in many parts of the world. While some of these problems are natural, many of them are man-made.

On the other hand, the advent of ICT is effecting magical changes in awareness, and making time, space and boundaries virtually irrelevant in human inter-activity around the globe. Discoveries in medicine are improving the quality of living and life-expectancy. Fast transportation, dramatic feats in engineering and bio-science technologies, with promise of turning even deserts into productive lands, are unleashing unimaginable wealth among nations and individuals. These opportunities collectively, are diffusing power around the world, to such an extent as to negate any idea of hegemonistic sway of a few nations in human affairs.

Indeed, this era of knowledge explosion can be said to be fulfilling the biblical saying of "man created in the image of God". Man is increasingly showing limitless creativity which inspires a vision that mankind is, indeed, capable of overcoming the challenges of our times.

The problem, however, is, would we curb our self-centredness, greed, bigotry and petty inhumanities to allow for the sharing of the outcomes of this creativity? Left to our individual nations, the peoples of the world will not be high-minded enough. The main challenge then, becomes how the various peoples of the world will accept their common humanity as the centre-piece of their endeavours.

Mr. President, there must be leadership for which this organization seems to have been created. Instinctively, the founding fathers must have believed that, with time, the organization would evolve into a global government. For even as there were marked geo-political considerations in the UN's formation, it was also imbued with a powerful streak of morality; and with time, the moral streak is steadily overcoming the geo-political dimension. This perception is what must drive the entire membership to accept the call for reform of this global institution and its agencies, so as to make them accountable to members, and in return, make members accept their authority and direction.

Indeed, the UN is the only organization in view, with the potential to command respect across the board of the globe. Under its auspices, the strong and rich nations are showing increasing tendencies of sharing resources of knowledge and finance with the weak and poor. Fellow-feeling in international relations is also deepening. It is my belief, Mr. President, that it is by this organization that the world will eventually come by peace, stability and prosperity, after the menacing flux that engulfs all of us now.

Mr. President, it is this same moral streak embedded in the UN that is propelling the development of the various regional blocks around the world. In the case of Africa, dramatic improvements have been made in the last decade and a half. The African Union's Peer Review Mechanism shows great resolve on the part of the African nations to adhere to the rule of law and good governance. It is noteworthy that, as of now, close to a majority of the membership of the Union has signed up for review. It is also significant that now many more African leaders are acceding to power through the ballot box.

Meanwhile, under the auspices of NEPAD, Africa is trying to pool resources, among its members and in partnership with others outside the continent to exploit its huge potential to develop its markets, energy, telecommunication, transportation and agriculture among others. This is the way to solve the many problems of poverty, illiteracy, disease, ignorance and conflicts. This is Africa's initiative to mainstream itself into globalization which is receiving the support of the international community. The evidence is in the many shared conferences with Japan, China, Brazil India, as well as Africa's old allies in Europe and North America.

Mr. President, while appreciating support from our development partners, I must state that there is still room for improvement, especially in the continent's efforts

to achieve the UN's Millennium Development Goals. The various forms of assistance are uncoordinated and not substantial enough to achieve the goals by the target date of 2015. In this regard, the Secretary-General's call for review and quick delivery of support is timely. As observed in the UNCTAD XII's Accra Accord, the whole idea of aid is to empower beneficiary countries to stand on their own feet to become effective partners in the global market, from which neither the rich nor poor countries can abstain, given the increasing interdependence of the world.

Mr. President, in January 2001, I was sworn into office as President of Ghana on a liberal democratic constitution with the same strong streak of morality that I see in the Charter of the UN. The Constitution acknowledges the centrality of man in all endeavours; hence the provisions for the respect for human rights, the rule of law, gender balance, accountability and transparency in governance.

But, in 2001, the national economy was in a bad shape and Ghana had to sign up for the Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative in order to access funds for various projects of reconstruction for which credit lines were difficult to come by.

With national determination and great discipline, the HIPC Completion Point was achieved in record time to earn a debt forgiveness of about US\$8 billion from the bilateral and multilateral creditors. This success led to increased inflows of domestic and foreign investments which have enabled government to launch, among other social services, a Free and Compulsory Universal Basic Education programme, and substantial developments in both second cycle and tertiary level education. In the health sector, the first ever National Health Insurance Scheme, including free maternal care, has also begun.

Concurrently, heavy investments are being made in infrastructure in terms of transportation, energy and telecommunication in anticipation of accelerated growth of the economy. Meanwhile, a process to modernise the country's agriculture through mechanization has commenced to improve the welfare of the more than 60% of the society who are rural and depend on the sector for their livelihood.

By these policies among others, the nation has come in view of attaining its ambitious vision of a middle income status by 2015, which is also the target date for the Millennium Development Goals.

These developments have been crowned by the discovery of oil in commercial quantities which we are determined to make a blessing for the whole nation rather than a curse.

Mr. President, this is the Ghana story, as my term of office comes to a close at the end of the year. The moral I glean from the story is that development in freedom is possible. In other words, accelerated national development and good governance, including respect for fundamental human rights, are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, good governance should hasten development.

I thank you.