

**INTERVENTION ON “DEMOCRACY AND  
DEVELOPMENT” DELIVERED BY HON. AKWASI  
OSEI ADJEI, GHANA’S MINISTER FOR FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS, REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND NEPAD  
AT THE NEW DELHI IDEA ROUNDTABLE FROM  
17<sup>TH</sup> – 18<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 2008**

**Dear Participants**

**I deem it a great honour and privilege to have been given this opportunity, to address you on the nexus between Democracy and Development.**

**I am particularly thrilled that my presentation coincides with the auspicious occasion, of the accession of my country Ghana, as the 25<sup>th</sup> Member State of IDEA. Ghana values its membership of this organization which has been established on sound democratic values and principles. My country stands ready to share its democratic experiences with IDEA member states, in order to advance the noble objectives of the organisation.**

**I wish, at the outset, on behalf of my delegation, to convey our sincere thanks and deepest satisfaction to the Organisers of this meeting who, together with the Government of India, have gone to great lengths to extend a warm welcome to us. We recall that this beautiful and historic capital of New Delhi, blazed the trail of non-violent independence movements in the search for democracy during the colonial era. It would therefore be remiss of me, if I do not pay glowing tribute to the memories of the founding fathers of democracy in this great nation, that has come to be known and respected as the “largest democracy on earth”. Indeed, the democratic credentials of India’s stalwart leaders, fuelled the cause of liberty in Africa, including Ghana. In like manner, I hope that this roundtable will fire the imaginations of participants, to fight continually for justice, freedom, peace and democracy. We need to live up to the saying that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance.**

## **INTRODUCTION – SOME BASIC FACTS**

**Mr. Moderator,**

**Ghana became independent in 1957 as the first country south of the Sahara to gain political freedom. Last year, in 2007, as part of the celebration of 50 years of political independence, the country embarked on a year-long activities of commemoration. Perhaps, the opportunity offered the country, also to examine its innermost strengths and weaknesses, has proved the most crucial. Ghana's illustrious son, Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General, was invited to address Ghana's Parliament as part of the celebrations. Hear him:**

**“Ghana and Malaysia started out on a similar path fifty years ago. Both countries looked to the future with excitement, certain that a future of freedom, justice and prosperity would be theirs. We had a lot in common: natural resources, significant gold and foreign reserves, strong legal system, established political institutions, similar educational standards. The per capita income was roughly the same. Now let's fast forward to the turn of the century. We could not be more surprised at the**

**difference between the two, with Malaysia attaining a per capita income 13 times greater than Ghana, and distancing themselves from us in every single social and economic indicator. Today, Malaysia is a highly industrialized country with state of the art infra-structure”**

**So what went wrong?**

**To put it bluntly, Ghana’s developmental process has suffered largely as a result of frequent political interruptions in its democratic process.**

**The good news is that since the early 90s, however, the country has embarked on a renewed sustained process of democracy. After 4 successful elections, including one which saw the exit of the ruling party and its replacement by the party then in opposition, Ghana will, in December 2008, go again to the polls to choose the next President and a new crop of 230 Members of Parliament.**

**In the meantime, greater economic stability has**

**been achieved with a lot of the macro-economic indices recording acceptable levels, with growth rates of around 6% a year in a virtuous cycle that has reduced poverty incidence from 52% in 1992 to 35% in 2003. At this rate, Ghana is set to surpass the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty by 2015.**

**Dear Participants,**

**In offering these thoughts about the interdependence between democracy and development in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa, I operate on the basis of two fundamental assumptions. The first is that Africa cannot develop without democracy and that democracy in Africa cannot be sustained without development.**

**Secondly, it is my position that without strong, vigilant, transparent and highly resourceful civil society organizations, Africa cannot attain development; nor can it sustain and strengthen democracy. However, this crucial role of civil society must be buttressed by a strong,**

**independent, fearless, and highly professional judiciary, with pronounced sense of honesty and integrity, that gives hope for enhancing and protecting democratic values in Africa.**

**As we all know, the “Democracy-Development” nexus presents a complex range of issues for discussion. Permit me to quote what our first President, Kwame Nkrumah said almost 50 years ago in this regard:**

**“We shall measure our progress by the improvement in the health of our people; by the number of children in school, and by the quality of their education; by the availability of water and electricity in our towns and villages and by the happiness which our people take in being able to manage their own affairs. The welfare of our people is our chief pride, and it is by this that we ask to be judged”**

**In achieving these targets, therefore, what have been the contributing roles, respectively, of the**

**political society in ensuring sustainable development and good governance; of the international community in contributing to the opening of broader spaces for political society towards development in freedom; and of the impact of globalization on democracy?**

**By posing such questions, I recognize implicitly that we can assign roles to each of the foregoing stakeholders. Ultimately, however, the far bigger role devolves on African governments which are expected to champion both the pace and quality of the democratization process.**

### **THE ROLE OF THE POLITICAL SOCIETY**

**Indeed, the Constitutive Act of the African Union (2001) and the framework of the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD) both underscore the centrality of good governance to addressing the crises of poverty, underdevelopment and resource leakages from Africa. One conclusion that emerged from a report prepared in 2002 for the African Union estimated that corruption costs the**

**continent about U.S. \$148 billion annually.**

**It is against this backdrop that the NEPAD vision was launched as an African-owned development strategy and a transformative agenda that seeks to make African Governments more accountable to their citizenry, through the entrenchment of universal standards of democracy and good governance. This vision is based on the core elements of political pluralism, free and fair elections. The NEPAD blueprint seeks to foster effective integration in Africa and to place African countries, individually and collectively, firmly on the path of sustainable growth and development. The strategy calls for constructive partnership between Africa and its development partners.**

**Ghana has totally embraced the flagship of the NEPAD initiative, namely the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which aims at enhancing all aspects of governance in Africa. Accordingly, Ghana has played a lead role in the APRM implementation process in Africa and was among**

**the first six countries to officially declare the intention to accede to the Mechanism when the subject was raised by African Heads of State and Government in 2002. Living up to its pioneering role in many continental endeavours, Ghana became the first country in Africa to publicly volunteer to accede to the APRM mechanism and was among the first twelve (12) countries to sign the Memorandum of Understanding to officially accede to the APRM.**

**On the whole, the Peer Review of Ghana brought out a number of best practices for which the country was seen to offer lessons worthy of emulation by other African countries. Among these best practices were: the prevailing peace in Ghana, which is located in a sub-region of conflicts; the Annual Peoples Assembly concept which provides a forum by which the President engages in direct interaction with ordinary Ghanaians and freely allows himself to be questioned on any issue of public concern; the Meet-the-Press Series by which Government**

**Appointees, especially (Ministers), routinely face media scrutiny about Government performance in their various sectors; and the National Governance Forum, organized annually as a platform for civil society organizations, MDAs, the private sector, Constitutional bodies and other stakeholders to discuss and find solution to problems, the removal of which will improve the state of governance in all institutions of the state.**

**Other best practices in participatory democracy in Ghana include: the role of the National Commission for Civic Education, and the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice, for awareness creation on civic rights and responsibilities; the promotion and protection of human rights and the encouragement of a citizen's complaint procedure for curbing impunity and Administrative excesses. Moreover, a solid foundation has been laid for private sector participation in development. These include incentive packages for companies, facilitation of access to credit, etc.**

**A National Economic Dialogue is also held annually to provide an avenue for Government, the Business Community and Civil Society organizations to exchange views on how best to adopt policies and programmes that will propel growth in both the economy and the private sector.**

**Perhaps one area in which Civil Society participation has been very pronounced is in the preparation and implementation of the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS), which focuses on private sector development, good governance and civic responsibility, as well as human resource development, anchored by macro-economic stability and infrastructural development. The process involves cross-sectoral planning groups which meet with stakeholders such as Parliament, Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, Donor Partners, and Civil Society Groups. It may be noted that this approach of development planning and programming is supported by the Multi-Donor Budget Support System (MDBSS) of**

**Ghana's Development partners, in conformity with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The purpose of this broad consultative forum is the harmonization and alignment of 'donor aid' to national development strategies.**

### **THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

**Mr. Moderator,**

**It is significant, to state the contributory role of the international community, notably the Bretton Woods Institutions, in the opening up of broader spaces for effective participation of "political society" in Africa's development. Ghana is no exception in this new process of forging consensus on the country's development strategy.**

**Donors will however, have to give more policy space to African countries in the shaping of their developing priorities and strategies. Encouraged by the commitment of African Leaders to good governance, development partners in 2005, cancelled the foreign debts of some 18 African countries, including Ghana, which pursued the**

**path of sustained democratic and accountable governance. Again, in recognition of the efforts to achieve good governance, the Government of the United States of America has, through its Millennium Challenge Account, committed resources to some African states, including Ghana, towards achieving poverty reduction and the attainment of other Millennium Development Goals.**

**However, mindful of the adverse impact of the conditionalities of its donor-partners on the local populations, Africa now seeks to own her own development processes and setting out its Developmental agenda in collaboration with her development partners. Thus the concept of good governance espoused by Africa's development partners, has become complementary to the NEPAD vision, thereby reinforcing the inextricable link between good democratic governance and holistic development.**

**Mr. Moderator, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**It is regrettable that not all governments keep their promises to the electorate to actually promote the general welfare of the people. To redress such unfavourable situations, the electorate has the mandate to remove such governments from power, and hold corrupt officials accountable for their actions and inactions. Fairness and greater transparency in the affairs of governance, call for the establishment of Governance institutions that uphold the inalienable rights of the individual, check abuse of power and corruption. So also must the electorate hold their representatives / parliamentarians accountable for their stewardship.**

**Parliament, in turn, has to exercise oversight responsibility over the Executive and ensure that resources are spent in approved areas of governmental activities and on priority projects. It is gratifying to note that Ghana has brought the work of its National Assembly closer to its populace. Besides routine outreach programmes of Law Makers in their Constituencies, the Ghanaian**

**public is constantly informed of the work of Parliament through the Media coverage of Parliamentary proceedings. The Appointments Committee of Parliament also makes public, the vetting of persons nominated by the President for official positions. Proceedings of Public Accounts Committee on the Financial Administration of various Ministries, Departments and Agencies were also openly covered recently by the media. The publicity shook the whole nation and forged consensus on the need for greater transparency and financial accountability of public office holders and public servants.**

### **THE IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION ON DEMOCRACY**

**Mt Moderator,**

**I would now like to share some thoughts on the impact of Globalisation on Democracy. The process has resulted in the further blurring of the line between international and domestic affairs of states. Human Rights promoters and defenders have hailed this development in relation to the promotion of world peace, human rights and**

**prosperity. Other analysts view this phenomenon as constituting the principal threat to democracy, freedom and economic well-being. Arguably, globalization strengthens the state and global governance, as it extends its influence via the international system and inter-state co-operation. Because of the twin processes of globalization and mutual interdependence, states undertake to preserve the oceans, eradicate disease, subdue the contagion effects of financial shocks, and counter global warming. Viewed from that perspective, globalization presents three major benefits: in the areas of the promotion of national interests, equity and good governance.**

**Moreover, with regards to the real purposes of governance – securing the peace; alleviating poverty; creating equitable social harmony; and protecting the environment-globalization endows states with new capacities and legitimacy for action for beyond national borders. As indicated earlier, the wave of globalization and economic intervention by the West, via multilateral financial**

**institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, have made profound impact on the system of governance in Africa, for the past two and half decades.**

**However, the impact of globalization on democracy is mixed and will continue to be so for sometime. Obviously, when democratic ideals sweep or even trickle across borders into authoritarian states, globalization makes democratization inevitable. Perhaps the most tangible evidence of globalisation's impact on democratization has been the infusion of democratic norms, and principles of human rights that support them, into the operations of many international and regional institutions. To forestall further conflicts in Africa, for instance, the African Union and Sub-regional Organisations such as the Economic Community of West African states (ECOWAS) have adopted Protocols on Democracy and Good Governance to complement mechanisms for conflict prevention, resolution and management on the continent. Most member states of the AU and**

**ECOWAS have incorporated the provisions of these Protocols into national laws.**

**Of equal significance is the fact that human rights abuse is no longer shielded by national borders and not even the notion of “sovereign immunity” can protect bad leaders from being hauled before the International Criminal Court in The Hague, for “crimes against humanity”. Satellite images on television screens, made possible by modern revolution in telecommunications technology, also provide gory evidence of any abuse of the human rights of innocent citizens, leaving no room of escape, for the perpetrators of heinous crimes.**

**In spite of its benefits, globalization presents some serious challenges to democratization and development. Foreign Governments, especially donors, International Financial Institutions, Inter-Governmental Organisations and even some NGOs have acquired such influence and power in relation to African Governments, that some countries have**

**become mere implementers of policies dictated from outside. Moreover, among the un-intended consequences of globalization, is the exclusion and disempowerment of certain segments of the population, with far-reaching consequences for newly emergent states. Indeed, globalization, accompanied by the neo-liberal ideology of the market economy, has transformed not only the system of governance, but also the social, economic, political, cultural and ethical lives of people around the world.**

**CONTROLLING THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF GLOBALISATION ON DEMOCRACY.**

**Mr. Moderator,**

**Claude Ake, an African thinker, argued in 1995, that the contemporary form of globalization, driven by economic power, clearly promotes the hegemony of Western culture and corporations; puts jobs and communities at risk in the rich countries; and exploits cheap labour in the poorer**

**countries, including those in Africa. It also increases threats to the environment; undermines the foundations of democracy and social stability, by subjecting national political institutions to forces of economic change beyond their control.**

**Since the phenomenon of globalization is a trend that cannot be wished away, the way forward appears to be active engagement with the international community, to mitigate the harmful effects of globalization. Such new doctrines as the concept of “human rights and humanitarian intervention” must not be used as pretexts to subvert weak states. Moreover, liberalization and deregulation should not lead to the collapse of infant industries in Africa. Globalization should also not result in the dumping of goods in Africa or burying of hazardous chemicals and waste in African countries, as some media reports have recently suggested.**

**The need to assist fragile countries to develop national capacities, through human training, investment in research and development, together with pragmatic actions towards attaining global competitiveness, cannot be overemphasized. This calls for fruitful partnerships, including, effective Regional Integration programmes and South-South Cooperation. Developing countries have no choice than to apply the rules of liberalization, to enhance the capabilities and capacities of their economies, which have to compete on the global market. Globalization, just like colonialism, imperialism and slavery , share one thing in common: they exploit the weak and vulnerable states and / or disadvantaged segments of populations.**

**It is against this background that the Government of Ghana has made conscious effort to make the promotion of good democratic governance, political stability, human resource development for capacity building in all sectors of the economy, and private sector-led growth, the cornerstone of**

**its development**

**strategy.**

### **Conclusion**

**I have been sharing with you, some perspectives on democracy and development, with some few examples drawn from Ghana and the rest of the world. I have also established the link between good governance and development and shown their impact on the transformation of the political economies of most African countries. Together, we have also examined some interventions of the international community and the deliberate and laudable efforts of African leaders in the pursuit of reforms.**

**My tentative conclusion is that three possible trajectories could be the way forward for African countries. Firstly, for countries in which economic and political reforms prove compatible, there could be consolidation of democratic values and**

**freedoms, resulting in economic progress and increased welfare. The second possibility is the development of populism in which the political costs of economic reform lead governments to retreat from adjustment and rather resort to an increase in state interventions as was the case with the centralized governments of the past. The third alternative is to exploit new windows of opportunities offered by globalization in order to meet the challenges of economic restructuring and accelerated development.**

**I welcome your honest and frank thoughts on the way forward because there is too much poverty and too much suffering which we must all urgently address. Our people cannot wait to be lifted out of poverty. Moreover, we cannot have a globalised world, in which one part develops at the expense of another. That is a veritable recipe for chaos, conflict and threats to global peace.**

**I thank you for your attention.**