

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY H.E. J.A. KUFUOR, PRESIDENT OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF GHANA AT THE GOLDEN JUBILEE ANNIVERSARY PARADE  
ON MARCH 6<sup>TH</sup> 2007.**

Your Excellency, President Olussegun Obasanjo, the Special Guest of Honour, Your Excellencies, Colleague Presidents from Africa, Leaders of Delegations present here, Speakers and Leaders from Sister Parliaments, Friends of Ghana, My Compatriots, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

Today is the high point of the year-long celebration of Ghana's fiftieth independence and I ask you to join us to thank the Almighty for having brought us this far.

On behalf of Ghana and on my own behalf, I also wish to thank all of you, colleague Presidents, from around the continent of Africa and the other foreign dignitaries and all your delegations for coming to join us to celebrate our big day. Ghana appreciates it that so many of you have been able to make the time to accept our invitation.

I am sure you will agree with me that this is a celebration not only for Ghana but also for the whole of Africa. For, March 6, 1957 changed the outlook of our continent and its status and the role in the world forever. The African on the continent who for centuries had been violated and subjugated through the slave Trade and colonialism, on that fateful day succeeded in breaking asunder, the chains of bondage. Today therefore is as much Ghana's celebration as it is for the rest of Africa.

Today I must pay homage to the first President of Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and his colleagues of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) who in the 1947 launched the last phase of the process towards independence. These colleagues were: J.B. Danquah, (who gave us the name GHANA), Paa Grant the financier of the group, Obestebi-Lamptey, Edward Akufo-Addo, William Ofori-Atta and Ako Adjei.

Let me also pay homage to the first government of our nationals under Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, I must mention some of its stalwarts: K.A. Gbedemah, Kojo Botsio, Kofi Baako, Krobo Edusei, Imoro Egala and others of blessed memory. Of that pioneering group I acknowledge two men who are still alive and are here with us, K.S.P. Jantuah and Amuawuah.

I also must pay homage to the members of the then Opposition; to Prof. K.A. Busia, S.D Dombo, S.G Antor Victor Owusu, Joe Appiah, and others of blessed memory, and R.R. Amponsah and C.K. Tedam, who are alive and with us here. They struggled to establish the culture of multi-party democracy in our country.

But above all, let us give thanks and praise for the many Ghanaians throughout the years who have worked anonymously and often without reward to make our nation what it is today. For as our former Prime minister, Dr. K.A. Busia, put it, and I quote him "it is by

the devoted day-to-day service of many ordinary and unnoticed citizens that a nation achieves greatness”

Today is also a fitting occasion to pay a special tribute to our public servants down the years. They partner the politicians and form the other essential half in running government. For the most part, anonymously and quietly, they have seen Ghana through good times and bad times in these past fifty years. In the early years, they quickly rose to meet the challenge and filled the vacuum left by the departing European administrators, with admirable competence.

We must also show appreciation to our development partners who have stood by us, cheered us on and given us a helping hand these fifty years. They have given us the technical assistance, we have benefited from their debt forgiveness and they have often extended to us, concessionary lines of credit. They have proved to be true friends indeed.

Fifty years ago, this nation was born to a very different world. The Cold War was raging and everything appeared to be measured in terms of where one’s sympathies lay. In many ways the nation itself was quite different from what it is today. There were less than five million Ghanaians at Independence, today there are about 22 million of us. The land area had eight and a half million hectares of pristine, tropical forest, today only about a million hectares of forest cover is left.

Fifty years ago, as the first African nation south of the Sahara to gain independence, Ghana under Kwame Nkrumah made the fight for independence of other African countries, its prime occupation. Nkrumah articulated this passion in these immortal words which I quote “the independence of Ghana is meaningless, unless it is linked with the total liberation of Africa”.

6<sup>th</sup> March indeed proved to be the critical turning point in the struggle for independence in Africa that had been ongoing for decades earlier. In the memorable words of the then British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, a wind of change started blowing across Africa. The event opened the floodgates of liberation against colonialism and apartheid and within the next ten years most African countries had achieved independence. But the struggle was not to end until the collapse of apartheid in the early 1990s.

Ghana thus became the Mecca for many freedom fighters and potential leaders who came here for inspiration and material support. Today, all of Africa has political independence.

That period of the birth of nations on our continent was exhilarating and a time of great hope. But there was no blueprint for the more difficult business of governance, economic management and the building of a nation out of the diverse peoples that had been forced within artificial boundaries imposed by the colonialists for their own convenience. The new, enthusiastic but mostly inexperienced leaders had barely any guide in the art of government. And for a long time, among both the political leaders and the people, it seemed that getting independence was the end in itself.

This naivety resonated around the African continent. If the 1960s were the time for political independence on the African continent, the 1970s and 80s were years in which much of Africa was thrown into the wilderness of political instability, tribal conflict and economic mismanagement. The continent seemed to relapse into exploitative grips of neocolonialism and the early hopes sparked by independence seemed to fade. It was not until the 1990s, with the end of the Cold war that another gust of wind of change blew across the continent. That brought in its wake a new breed of political leaders and a fresh commitment to constitutionality and African Renaissance. The continent was energized anew and eventually a new continental organization the African Union was formed as the successor to the OAU. The Africa Union is anchored on good governance, respect for human rights, sound economic management as a way forward for development of the continent. It also shares the vision of an eventual union government for the whole continent.

Ghana subscribes to these tenets and mechanisms setup by the African Union. In particular Ghana renews its pledge to work with the rest of the continent in pursuit of the New Economic Partnership for African Development and accepts the responsibility that this places on member states. That is she has submitted to the Peer Review Mechanism.

Fifty years after our independence, fate has conspired to bring the chairmanship of the African Union to Ghana and conferred a happy coincidence when she is celebrating this jubilee, Ghana renews her pledge to work with the rest of the continent to develop Africa and its people to gain a respectable and dignified place in the mainstream of the emerging global village.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, at this stage. I make a plea to the youth of Ghana and Africa. Your continent and its nations need your energy, your dynamism, your creativity and above all, your dreams for the development of its component states.

We have no illusions about the size of the problems that we face. How can we, when there are daily stories of young Africans undertaking perilous journeys across the Sahara desert and in flimsy boats on raging oceans in a bid to get to Europe and elsewhere? How can we when old and new diseases like Malaria and HIV/AIDS still plague Africa and reap a grim Harvest on the youths?

But there is no doubt that Africa and many of its nations are making progress. So, I urge you our young people to resolve to stay at home using your energies and your enthusiasm to server Africa. You will find that what we achieve together here will be far more fulfilling and satisfying than anything you can do elsewhere in the world. Indeed, this continent now provides a quicker avenue to success financially and emotionally than anywhere else. The future of this continent is yours, it is your heritage and you must be part of building the well-governed, economically vibrant nations we all aspire to.

I pay homage to the many of our young people who bring honour and joy to Africa's image in their daily endeavours; there are many of them who are excelling in the fields of information technology, finance, sports, fashion, music and dance, and we celebrate their successes.

Your excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, as we celebrate fifty years of independence and sovereignty, it is worthwhile to remind ourselves that freedom is a living flame to be constantly fuelled and not a monument to be saluted and revered occasionally. Ghana's freedom, indeed, Africa's freedom must be an eternal flame to be continually fuelled by all our governments and peoples, because it defines our humanity.

Ghana's historic date 6<sup>th</sup> March 1957 will remain integral with the destiny of our peoples for as long as the story of liberation is told and it must therefore always be celebrated.

But even as we celebrate, we must not become complacent but keep on striving towards achieving excellence.

Thus as we reach one milestone, we must aim higher. As we achieve one goal- political independence, economic prosperity, a literate population, a longer and healthier lifespan, peace and self respect on our continent- we must raise our sight even higher.

Our destiny is with the most advanced in the human community and we must pursue it.

Let us therefore approach the next fifty years with clarity of vision and sustained rational steps and never forgetting our difficult past.

I wish you all a happy anniversary.

Long live Ghana

Long live Africa.