

**INAUGURAL SPEECH BY HE JOHN DRAMANI MAHAMA,**  
**PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA**

*Our Father who art in heaven, thank you for giving me this day – a day that offers me, your humble servant, a unique opportunity to reset Ghana.*

Thirty-two years ago, on January 7<sup>th</sup>, Ghana made its first and most successful democratic transition- a reset.

With the swearing-in of the newly democratically elected president, Jerry John Rawlings (of blessed memory), our nation was returned to a multiparty democracy; a new Constitution went into effect, and the Fourth Republic of Ghana was officially established.

I refer to it as a reset because, on that day in 1993, we made our fourth attempt at establishing a democratic system of governance with term limits based on free, fair and transparent elections.

The handover of power on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2001, between former President Jerry John Rawlings and the newly elected President John Agyekum Kufuor tested that reset. Our nation passed with flying colours.

So, today, with my induction as the new President of the Republic of Ghana, history is being made again. It is history worth repeating every four years with each newly elected government.

Today, we are also making a different kind of history, one that speaks to our maturity as a democracy, a nation of citizens enfranchised with the authority to determine their political future at the polls.

Today's exercise between the outgoing President, His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, and I feels a bit like déjà vu. Eight years ago, on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017, we shared this space and performed this transitional exercise. I was the outgoing President, having served only one term, and he was the incoming President, having been given the mandate by the people to lead this great nation. He and I both understood on that day, as I am sure we do today, that it is the people of Ghana we serve.

It seems fitting that I share this stage and this unique, historical distinction with Nana Akufo-Addo twice. Nana and I began our national political careers in Parliament in the same year, 1996. He has always greeted me with warmth, a firm handshake, and a smile. He is, perhaps, the only person in my life who has persistently chosen to call me Johnny. While we belonged to opposing political parties, we shared a sense of mutual respect.

In those early days, we probably could not have imagined that destiny would bring us to the leadership of our respective parties and that we would have to face off three separate times as we each vied for the highest office in the land.

Nana, as this will be our final meeting under such circumstances, and as I look back on the journey we have travelled—two much younger men who entered Parliament together—I with a full head of black hair and you with the same bald head and round eye-glasses—I have to say that you have, without exception, been a worthy opponent.

I extend my warmest wishes to His Excellency, the former Vice President, Dr. Alhaji Mahamudu Bawumia. It was a gruelling campaign, and we each gave it our all. Your sportsmanship in making an early concession eased tensions and contributed to the early conclusion of the electoral contest. I wish you all the best in your endeavours.

My Brothers and Sisters, the world in which Ghana exists today, as I begin this presidency, is not the same world in which we have lived under any other Ghana presidency.

Tensions and conflicts between nations that did not previously exist place pressure on alliances to decide where to support each other.

There is a seismic shift within the system of global economic dominance. Whereas the G7 nations—the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, and Japan—once provided the highest percentage of the world's GDP, over the last decade, that number has been steadily dropping. However, the combined total of the GDPs of the BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the UAE—has been consistently increasing.

2023 for instance, the G7's combined total world GDP was 30%; by 2029, that number is predicted to drop to 27%. In 2023, the BRICS' percentage of world GDP was 37.3%. What does this mean to us in Ghana? What could it mean to our economy? Where do we fit in this geopolitical maelstrom?

Technology, such as Artificial Intelligence, has taken us to new heights, opening up the potential for national, financial, and personal security issues that we cannot yet imagine. One example is the use of misinformation and algorithm manipulation on social media platforms to sway a particular group's sentiments toward or away from something.

Now, more than ever, we must strengthen our ties with our neighbours to ensure we work together to keep our subregion safe. We stand in solidarity and work in alliance with our neighbours in the subregion. Recognising the history of our borders, we also acknowledge that our family members are on the other side of those borders.

They may be Ivorians, Togolese, Burkinabe, Nigeriens, Malians, Akan, Kassem, Guan, Ewe, Nzema, Hausa, and Gurma. We are all part of one another. One big family!

With the increase of the climate crisis, and as the waters grow warmer, melting icebergs and permafrost, there is a greater likelihood for viruses that have been frozen and thought to be extinct for decades, perhaps even centuries, to spread and create a global pandemic.

Changes in climate conditions, increased population density in urban areas, and mass international travel are enabling existing viruses to spread and mutate at unprecedented rates.

This is a serious issue. Let us not forget the toll that past epidemics of viruses like Ebola and Mpox have taken on the families, communities, and medical infrastructure in several of our neighbouring countries in the sub-region. Let us also not forget how swiftly and completely the Covid pandemic brought the entire world to a screeching halt.

My government will be working diligently to strengthen our public health systems while monitoring the global health situations so that when—not if, but when—the next epidemic or pandemic occurs, the loss of lives in Ghana will be kept to a minimum.

The larger world exists around us and, to some extent, within us. While we cannot and should never use it as an excuse to stray from Ghana's direct and immediate needs for the well-being of our citizens, we must also consider the affairs of the world if we care to shape, lessen, avoid, or even, at the other end of the spectrum, maximize their effect on us.

My Brothers and Sisters, barely a month ago, we held historic elections that have dramatically shifted our political landscape.

I feel greatly honoured that you, my compatriots, considered me worthy of receiving such an unprecedented and overwhelming mandate to steer the affairs of our beloved nation at this critical time in our history.

The magnitude of my victory in the Presidential elections and the gains made by my party, the National Democratic Congress, in the Parliamentary elections naturally and justifiably resulted in great joy and celebration across our country, Ghana.

But celebrations, no matter how justified and well-earned, must be supplanted by discernment, sobriety, and deeper insights into why we received this kind of mandate in the first place.

By voting as you did on December 7<sup>th</sup>, the Ghanaian people conveyed a powerful message that is often overlooked by politicians. A giant of American political history, President Ronald Reagan, powerfully emphasized this message when he declared at his inauguration some 40 years ago that “Governments have no power except that granted by the people.”

While Ghanaians take great pride in our thriving democracy, they are deeply dissatisfied with the quality of governance over the years. They have openly voiced their dissatisfaction through the decisive action they undertook at the recent polls.

Our people also understand that democracy is not just a token adorned with periodic elections followed by pomp and pageantry when a new government is established. They expect that if democracy is celebrated as a superior means of governance, its outcomes must be more tangible and benefit their individual lives.

Any honest introspection and reflection on the pulse of our nation would reveal that many within our population do not feel they have benefitted from or partaken in the democratic dividend.

We are a people buffeted by severe economic suffering and hardships. In the last few years, we have lurched from crisis to crisis. But there is hope. Today marks the beginning of a new opportunity. An opportunity to make a difference in our governance and economic management. We shall reset Ghana!

To the millions of my fellow countrymen and women who joined long queues and waited their turn to vote for me, thank you for honouring me. My firm, immutable assurance is that your vote will matter in the work I will do to change the destiny of this dear nation of ours.

Your courage to bring change will not go in vain. Our nation was born with much promise. That promise would seem hazy and in doubt now because of all that has happened in the recent past, but I urge you, my fellow countrymen, not to be sucked into a state of perpetual pessimism.

Our country urgently needs a leader with an unwavering desire to get things done for some time. With all humility, I assert that I intend to be that leader with your cooperation and help.

As your next leader, I shall strive to exercise sound judgment and be able to make the right calls at the right time. I will have the humility and presence of mind to take responsibility for what has gone wrong and be willing to act timeously to resolve our challenges.

Since the elections, I have read and heard the word “hope” used numerous times in relation to my presidency and what it should offer the citizens of Ghana. I intend to speak plainly and clearly to you today and every time I address you. I intend to tell you the truth.

The circumstances we find ourselves in are indeed dire. Even so, I will be decisive and swift in my actions. We will focus our initial efforts on four critical areas: economic restoration and stabilisation of the macroeconomic environment; improvement of the business/investment environment to ensure Ghana's reopening for business; governance and constitutional reforms; and, last but not least, accountability and the fight against corruption.

Actions have always spoken louder than words. With that in mind, I have entered into a covenant with you, the good people of Ghana, in which I have enumerated twenty-six actions that I will take within my first 120 days.

Is there reason to hope? Yes, there is every reason to hope. You must also have faith because faith empowers us to trust that things will happen. With faith, you believe; you know. That is why we need a reset.

We need a reset with the faith we have in our leaders.

We need a reset with the faith we have in our institutions.

We need to reset our faith in Ghana—and by that, I mean in all of us because we are Ghana. You are Ghana.

You, seated in the stands, to my left and right, to you seated within the perimeter here, are Ghana.

The people who are with you or near you as you watch this on television or, listen on the radio, or follow on social media are Ghana.

I ask that you enter into a covenant with me, Ghana, and the good people who make up our nation. I ask that you envision the Ghana you want to live in and the Ghana you want to leave behind to your children and grandchildren.

What can you do to help build that better Ghana? What behaviours, attitudes, and mindsets can you reset? We need a reset, and we have faith in Ghana's ability to overcome, excel, and be so successful with this reset that it would be difficult to imagine a time when that was not the norm.

As we stand at this momentous crossroads in our nation's history, I am honoured and humbled to accept the mantle of President of the Republic of Ghana.

Today, we celebrate a new administration and herald an unprecedented era of opportunity and transformation.

With Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang by my side, we are poised to embark on a journey of progress and inclusivity, united in our vision for a more prosperous Ghana. This day is particularly special for us and every Ghanaian who dreams of a society where barriers are shattered and ambitions are realised.

With the inauguration of Ghana's first female Vice President, we have turned a significant page in our history. Naana Jane's ascension to this high office is not merely a personal triumph; it symbolises our collective commitment to fostering a nation where gender equality and female representation are cherished and amplified.

This is a powerful testament to the power of diverse voices to shape the future—voices that have the courage to soar beyond traditional confines. Together, as we look to the horizon, we reaffirm our dedication to breaking the glass ceiling that has long hindered many from reaching their full potential—Governance that reflects all segments of our population strengthens our democracy and enriches our conversations.

We stand committed to enacting policies that empower women and ensure that the doors of opportunity swing wide open for our youth, regardless of their background. Together, we will galvanise our efforts to create a society where every Ghanaian can dream, believe, and achieve without restraint.

Remember that great leadership is not defined merely by the offices we occupy but by the legacy we leave for future generations.

My administration, along with Vice President Opoku-Agyemang, will prioritise inclusivity, accountability, and innovation, forging pathways that uplift every citizen. I am profoundly grateful for this moment—a cornerstone in our journey toward a brighter future for Ghana.

In this resounding victory, I see a clarion call, particularly for the youth of Ghana—a generation brimming with potential and dreams waiting to be realised.

This moment is a powerful affirmation that your voices matter, that your aspirations are valid and that your future is a priority. We are committed to translating your hopes into action and creating opportunities for education, entrepreneurship, employment and empowerment.

Our policies will be tailored to sustain innovation and foster industries that engage today's young minds and equip them with the skills needed for tomorrow's challenges. Together with the private sector, we will create decent, well-paying jobs.

As we embark on this new chapter, I assure you that our decisions will champion diversity in all facets of governance, ensuring that every Ghanaian, regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, or background, has the opportunity to contribute to our nation's story.

Ghana's youth represent the heartbeat of our democracy. Their ambition will drive our policies as we strive to create an inclusive, equitable society where everyone has a seat at the table.

Our vision hinges on introducing and implementing a 24-hour economy. We envisage an innovative and vibrant 24-hour Ghanaian economy anchored in agriculture and agribusiness. This innovative approach will unlock dormant potential, enabling us to harness our people's energy and creativity.

Imagine a Ghana where our markets are alive and bustling at all hours, with responsive public services accessible at all times so that businesses can operate flexibly to meet diverse demands. Young people, including entrepreneurs, can find opportunities regardless of traditional limitations.

The 24-hour economy model will also bolster job creation for the youth, stimulate local industries, attract foreign investments and allow us to build resilient communities and a sustainable future.

This vision extends beyond mere economic transactions. It symbolises empowerment—the empowerment of every Ghanaian to contribute to our national progress.

My fellow citizens, this will allow us to embrace diversity, cater to varied lifestyles and preferences, foster a culture of inclusion, and ensure that every citizen can enjoy the fruits of our hard work.

To business leaders and entrepreneurs, I invite you to support this new model and join me in shaping an environment where creativity thrives and where the fruits of your labour contribute to the collective welfare of our nation. Your role in driving our economy forward cannot be overstated. Your innovation and dedication will be the backbone of our success story.

Thank you, your excellences, for your presence at this inaugural ceremony. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to the distinguished heads of state from our sister countries who have travelled from near and far to be with us today.

Your presence is a testament to the strong bonds of friendship and cooperation between our nations. I will foster partnerships that transcend borders, working collectively towards regional stability, economic growth, and mutual respect.

To my friends from across Africa and the world, I thank you and welcome you to Ghana. To my family and fellow citizens, thank you for your unwavering support and commitment to our shared vision. This journey is not mine alone; it belongs to each of you.

Let today be the dawn of a new era of hope, job creation, accountability, institutional strengthening and resilience, and unparalleled potential for all Ghanaians. We will write the next chapter in Ghana's story—one of promise, transparency, and transformative progress.

This is a patriotic call to action for all of us to participate in building a nation that lives up to its promise—a place where hope thrives, and dreams become a reality.

Together, let us cultivate a brighter future for our beloved Ghana, where unity, progress, and equality are not just ideals we aspire to but the very fabric of our nation.

In closing, I invite you to partner with us on this journey. Together, we can co-create a brighter future for our beloved Ghana, where unity, progress, and equality are not simply goals we aim for but the cornerstone of our society.

Let's work hand in hand to foster these values and strengthen our nation for everyone.

God bless our homeland, Ghana.

