



56TH INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION
ADDRESS BY H. E. JOHN DRAMANI MAHAMA
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA

[WEDNESDAY, MARCH 06, 2013]

Vice-President Kwesi Bekoe Amissah Arthur,

Right Honourable Speaker of Parliament,

Her Ladyship the Chief Justice,

Members of the Council of State,

Ministers of State,

Honourable Members of Parliament,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Religious and Traditional Leaders,

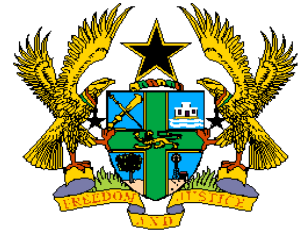
Members of the Security Services,

Contingent of school children on parade,

Fellow Citizens:

Today, we celebrate the vision, perseverance, and legacy of a generation of heroic Ghanaians.

Today we honour the leadership of Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah.



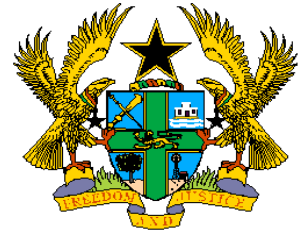
A leadership that was both committed and compassionate, one that extended beyond words and into action. And even today, significant parts of the national infrastructure we still enjoy are as a result of the vision of Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah.

Yet the liberation of an entire nation cannot rest solely on the shoulders of a single individual. Even after a goal has been established by a designated leader, it takes the dedication, focus and work of millions before movement and progress can take place.

Today, we remember those millions, all of the founding fathers and mothers who organised and sacrificed; the millions of brave men and women who fought and died to give this country, and indeed all of Africa, freedom from colonial domination and repression. Some of them have been recognized; their names and faces are on our monuments and on our money. A greater number will most likely remain nameless and faceless.

But the people that made up those millions, those men and women were our grandfathers and grandmothers, our uncles and aunts, our mothers and fathers, our sisters and brothers. It is because of the courage, self-determination and dignity they displayed that we stand here today, on this occasion, the celebration of Ghana's 56th year as an independent nation.

In order to make this country free, it took not only the desire for freedom; it also took the willingness, from each and every citizen, to play a part. And we thank God for the lives of each and every individual who took a stand and made a difference in this country.



We praise the ex-servicemen, the miners, the factory workers, the civil servants, the artisans, the market women, the farmers and the students who dared to believe that a better world was not only possible but that it was within reach and worth fighting for.

Our forefathers and foremothers fought to build one united nation of Ghanaians out of our various ethnic cleavages, clans, religions and professions. They did so based on the understanding that with equality comes ever-expanding opportunity to create access for all to the various avenues of well-being and prosperity; with equality comes appropriate social protections for the vulnerable as well as for the downtrodden.

Our forefathers and mothers fought for our independence in order to use the wealth of our nation—its impressive store of human resources, its abundant natural resources, its royal cultural history; not for the benefit of any one person or group of people representing just the few, but for the betterment of the many, of our entire nation, especially our children and grandchildren and those yet unborn.

It would be simple enough to acknowledge on this day of celebration that they bequeathed to us this lovely country and in so doing, also offered us an important place in world history. But the legacy is more sacred than that. We are, each and every one of us, the answer to the hopes and prayers of our forefathers and mothers. They wanted Ghana to succeed, and I am all but certain, they prayed that we would make it a nation whose place of greatness in the world would be timeless and meaningful, not temporary and mediocre.

Independence brought with it many prospects and opportunities. But it also brought with it many responsibilities.



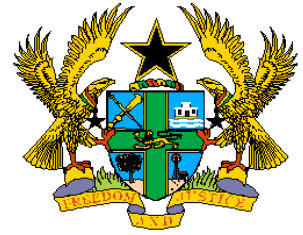
Our first President, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, was well aware of this. In the address he gave on that fateful day, 56 years ago, he fully acknowledged both the prospects and the responsibilities involved in the achievement of independence. He admonished us, each and every one of us, to strive at all times to use whatever abilities and advantages were at our disposal to increase the prosperity of the country.

Today, 56 years have passed since Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah delivered that address, but I wish to echo the same sentiment.

I wish to pledge, once more, that in my first term as president of this Republic, I will make full use of the advantages our country has, to increase our prosperity; It is still true today, as it was during our independence years, that the vision could be an individual's, but it will take the millions acting in concert to bring it to reality. I wish to invite you once more to join me in this venture of nation building by also pledging to believe, to sacrifice and to work for the betterment of this nation—our nation.

Our independence was achieved through high levels of discipline, sacrifice, and selfless dedication. Our forefathers and mothers felt that political independence held the key to unlocking the challenges that were being imposed by ignorance, disease, illiteracy and poverty. They held firmly the belief that these challenges were affecting the productive capacity of the citizenry, and the socio-economic transformation of the society. They were right.

Currently in Ghana we are confronted with many similar challenges. The war against poverty still rages on.



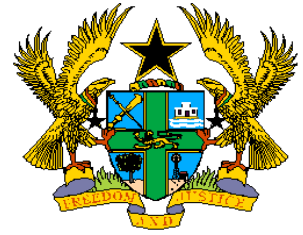
This generation's wars against ignorance, disease, and illiteracy are far from over. Though we won the battle for political emancipation, we are still waging the battle for economic freedom.

Our economy is burdened with a major energy and water crisis. I have already visited Aboadze, Bui, Daboase, Kpong, and Weija to inspect and ascertain the progress of ongoing projects aimed at increasing our electricity and water supplies. I will work with the utility companies to ensure that these challenges are over in the shortest possible time.

Fellow Ghanaians, while we await the complete resolution of the utility problems, I wish to make a personal and passionate appeal to you my countrymen and women to demonstrate a high sense of individual responsibility by taking a stand against the abuse and misuse of water, electricity, and other public services.

All those who abuse our utility supplies, either through unauthorized connection or through other misuse, create problems for everyone else. We appeal to your patriotism and we urge everyone to demonstrate a commitment to collective responsibility. We are working hard to bring this crisis to an end, and every bit of assistance will take us one step closer to that goal.

All across Africa, and indeed the world, Ghana occupies a high place of respect and admiration among the comity of nations for its role in the liberation of the continent from colonial rule, as well as for its continuing influence in shaping the processes of world peace.



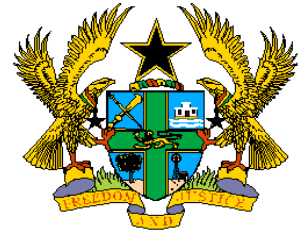
For nearly six decades, regardless of the difficulties we were having within our own borders, Ghana remained an example of peace and progress. This is because Ghanaians have always wanted the best for Ghana. We realize that putting Ghana first, wanting the best for Ghana, will ultimately mean having the best for ourselves and for our families.

The reason Ghana is seen the world over as Africa's shining star is because while other nations have been engaged in ethnic warfare and endless battles for power between opposing political parties, tearing away at their people's morale and crumbling what little security was left in their societies; while those nations were investing themselves in the causes and concerns of individuals, groups, and factions, Ghana was busy building institutions to reinforce our democracy and help further the application of the rule of law.

Ghana has never cut off its own nose to spite its face; Ghanaians have always been able to see that tomorrow is not the only day the future holds for us.

This is why we cannot go back to yesterday and tread ground that has already been covered. We cannot go back and fight battles that have already been won. We cannot waste away anymore time and energy in petty political squabbles and insults and expect that our country will still somehow magically prosper.

What we are doing when we devote our time, attention and media to these distractions, is that we undermine the progress of our own nation, a nation that was built with the blood, tears, and sweat of our forefathers and mothers.



Each and every one of us has a responsibility to make meaningful and constructive contributions towards the growth and betterment of this nation. We owe that much to ourselves and to our children who will inherit this land, and we owe that much to all those who fought for us to have a place to claim as ours and to call Ghana.

Governance is a shared responsibility. Government can, and will provide the necessary social infrastructure and incentives, but unless we take collective ownership of challenges that face us; unless we demonstrate a strong desire and an unflinching commitment to be part of the solution, most of our efforts will come to nothing.

We must work together as a team. We must remember that the words we speak matter. If we speak of success, we envision success, and we work toward realizing that vision, we will achieve it. If we speak and focus on failure, any inspiration to believe, to see, and to create has already been killed. We also must remember that our actions do matter. They matter in the short-term and they matter in the long-term. With our actions come repercussions.

We cannot throw plastic waste into our drainage systems and expect not to be confronted with floods when it rains; we cannot continue to drive recklessly on our roads, and hope that ours will be a society free of vehicular accidents; people cannot pay and collect bribes, and hope that somehow public services will automatically improve; we cannot create markets for the purchase of stolen items and expect that crime in our society will cease by itself.

I want to use this occasion to appeal to all Ghanaians to embrace the wind of change. Change does not come easily.



There will always be those who want to maintain the status quo; even if they do not like the world they live in, it is easier for them to complain than to make the effort to change it. And then, there will always be those who want miraculous change; they want everything to be perfect by tomorrow and when it is not, they decide they are already bored with the whole process and want no part of it.

But the change we seek is one that is intended to make our nation a better place for all.

Today is a day to celebrate Ghana, and to celebrate ourselves as Ghanaians. Today is a time to feel proud of and express love for everyone and everything that has brought us this far. Today is also a time to ask ourselves, “Where do we want to go from here? And how do we get there?”

I urge you all to reflect on how you will want to be remembered by the next generation. It does not matter who you are, where you come from, who your parents were, what you do right now, what your position in society is. You have something to offer that will help move this country forward to its next anniversary. It might just be a little change in your attitude to work; it might be an offer of help, however small, to others who need it. It might be the act of mobilizing for community action or volunteering at a hospital or clinic.

Any and every contribution toward positive change is welcome. No offer of service is too small or too big to make the necessary impact. No single individual is too big or too small to be part of this process.



This is who we are and what we do as Ghanaians. It's nothing new; this is who we've always been and what we've always done as Ghanaians; which is why we celebrate today and give praise and gratitude to those who came before us. This call to national duty is appropriately captured in the second stanza of our National Anthem:

Hail to thy name, O Ghana,
To thee we make our solemn vow:
Steadfast to build together
A nation strong in Unity;
With our gifts of mind and strength of arm,
Whether night or day, in the midst of storm,
In every need, whate'er the call may be,
To serve thee, Ghana, now and evermore...

To our service men, school children, students and youth who took part in this parade, I extend to you the appreciation of a grateful nation. Indeed your turn out was impressive and you have made us proud to be Ghanaian.

Thank you all. I wish you the best of the Almighty God's blessings on this special occasion, and ask for His guidance through the future that is now here. His favour is upon us and he will surely lead us to the land he has promised.

I wish you all happy Independence Day Celebrations.

God Bless Ghana.