

MESSAGE ON THE STATE OF THE NATION
ON THE DISSOLUTION OF THE 8TH PARLIAMENT
BY
THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC,
NANA ADDO DANKWA AKUFO-ADDU,
ON FRIDAY, 3RD JANUARY 2020, AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE,
ACCRA.

Mr Speaker,

As my constitutionally mandated period as President of our country nears its very end, I come before the august House to perform my last official public duty. I am grateful for the opportunity to give an accounting of my time in office, spell out the highlights of the state of our nation, and place on record the Ghana I am handing over to my successor.

In accordance with protocol and convention, it is good to see that my wife, First Lady Rebecca Akufo-Addo, Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia, Second Lady Samira Bawumia, President-Elect John Dramani Mahama, incoming First Lady Lordina Mahama, Vice President-Elect Jane Naana Opoku Agyemang, Spouse of Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Alice Adjua Yornas Bagbin, Chief Justice Gertrude Torkornoo, and Justices of the Supreme Court, Chairperson Nana Otuo Siriboe II and Members of the Council of State, Chief of Staff at the Office of the President, Hon. Akosua Frema Osei Opare, and officials of the presidency, Secretary to the Cabinet, Ambassador Mercy Debrah-Karikari, Chief of Defence Staff of the Armed Forces, Lt. General Thomas Opong-Peprah, the Inspector General of Police, Dr. George Akuffo Dampare, and the various Service Chiefs, are all present. Mr. Speaker, the House is also duly honoured by the welcome attendance of the former President of the Republic John Agyekum Kufuor, former First Lady Nana Konadu Agyemang Rawlings, and the Dean and Members of the Diplomatic Corps.

Mr Speaker, before I commence my Message on the State of the Nation, I want to put on record that I am deeply saddened by the devastating fire at Kantamanto market, which took place yesterday, and has left many traders and their livelihoods in ruins. My thoughts and prayers are with those affected, and I extend heartfelt sympathies to the hardworking traders who have lost their goods and investments. Government stands with you, and will work with relevant agencies to ascertain the causes of the fire, and to provide the needed support. As a nation, let us unite in

compassion and solidarity to help those who have suffered losses. Together, we can extend a helping hand to our fellow Ghanaians in need during this challenging time.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to state, at the outset, that serving the Ghanaian people as President has been the greatest honour of my life. It has been one of great challenges and even greater triumphs, one that has demanded every ounce of my energy, commitment and love for our beloved country. My vision has always been to see a Ghana that is self-reliant, prosperous and united—a beacon of hope, democracy and opportunity in Africa and beyond. That vision remains undimmed, and I am confident that the strides we have made together will propel Ghana to even greater heights.

Mr Speaker, the first responsibility of a government is the safety and security of the state and its people. I am happy to report that our country's territorial integrity is intact and all our borders are secure.

In a neighbourhood of widespread instability, it is no longer an assumption we can make that our land would be safe and secure. Ghana, by the grace of God, remains the only country in the neighbourhood that has not fallen victim to terrorist violence.

It has taken a lot of concerted effort, and, dare I say, a lot of money to enable us protect our country from the ravages of the variety of terrorist groups operating and destabilising other countries in the neighbourhood. I wish to pay great homage to the security services and their ministerial leaders for the work they do every day to keep us safe.

Mr Speaker, it gives me no pleasure to state that an important and integral part of the fabric of our society and the hallmark of our traditions, chieftaincy, continues to be a source of insecurity and destabilisation.

Upon coming into office, we worked hard, with considerable assistance from the Committee of Eminent Chiefs – Otumfuo Asantene, the Nayiri and the Yagbonwura – to bring, finally, a resolution to the conflict which had blighted the ancient kingdom of Dagbon for many, many years. Bringing peace to Dagbon remains one of the highwater marks of my time in office, and I had been so looking forward to counting it with pride as the top of the list in resolving chieftaincy disputes and conflicts.

Unfortunately, the sad situation in Bawku must necessarily dampen any enthusiasm about the resolution of chieftaincy problems elsewhere. It is a matter of great regret and distress to me personally that, in spite of our best efforts, the Bawku conflict remains unresolved.

Bawku is, unhappily, not the only area of chieftaincy conflict, and, judging from the experience of other parts of the country, I will have to mark chieftaincy as a growing source of insecurity that would continue to require a lot of attention. It is clear that part of that process is the need to strengthen the capacities of the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs and the Peace Council, the two frontline institutions responsible for dealing with chieftaincy and other disputes.

Mr Speaker, in my inaugural speech at my swearing-in in my first term on 7th January 2017, and early on in that term, I made a public commitment to tackle galamsey, the phenomenon that had been ravaging our environment and destroying our lands and water bodies in the pursuit of mining for gold. I knew, and was very much aware, that fighting galamsey was not a universally popular position for a President to take, but I felt strongly enough about the need to protect our environment to say I was prepared to put my presidency on the line in the defence of our lands and water bodies.

And indeed, Mr Speaker, the fight against galamsey led directly to the loss by my Party of several parliamentary seats in the 2020 elections, and to the makeup of this 8th Parliament, which affected the implementation of my policy agenda, and impacted the second term of my presidency.

I welcome the many loud converts to the fight against galamsey that suddenly appeared in the run-up to the 2024 elections, and I pray that more and more of us get to embrace the need for the protection of our lands and water bodies.

As I have stated on numerous occasions, the fight against galamsey is not a fight against mining or the extraction of the gold the Almighty has so generously endowed us with. But we owe it to future generations of Ghanaians to extract our minerals in the manner that protects our lands and water bodies.

I am happy to be able to say that we have implemented some of the boldest and most progressive policies in the mining, forestry and land sectors.

As a result of these policies, we overtook South Africa as the leading producer of gold on the continent, and have consistently increased gold production to reach an unprecedented four million ounces (4 million oz), last year.

Not only have we revamped dormant mines, like the Obuasi and Bibiani Mines, we have, also, worked to deliver the Cardinal Namdi Mine, the first large scale mine in northern Ghana, and the first greenfield gold mines in our country in more than a decade, with the ongoing construction of new mines in Ahafo by Newmont and Upper West by Azumah Resources.

To add value to these volumes of minerals, we have constructed, through a Public Private Partnership, a four hundred kilogramme (400kg) capacity gold refinery, here in our country. We have, also, concluded discussions with the parent company of Ghana Manganese Company Limited, for the construction of a four hundred and fifty million United States dollars (US\$450 million) manganese refinery at Nsuta.

Moreover, the establishment of the Ghana Integrated Aluminum Development Corporation and the Ghana Integrated Iron and Steel Development Corporation has laid the groundwork for the industrialisation of many of our natural resources. These entities are expected to generate significant revenue, create jobs, and enhance the value addition of our natural wealth. Each of these initiatives was guided by the vision to harness Ghana's wealth for the benefit of her people, ensuring a legacy of sustainable development for future generations.

We continue to work to increase the forest estate of our country. Under the Ghana Forest Plantation Strategy, some one hundred and twenty-one thousand hectares (721,000 ha) of degraded forests were cultivated between 2017 and 2023. And under the Green Ghana Project, over fifty-two million trees have been planted in just four (4) years of its implementation.

In 2023, Ghana became the second country in Africa, and the third in the world, to receive results-based payments from the World Bank's Carbon Fund for reducing emissions, under the Ghana Cocoa REDD+ Programme.

We have, also, completed all the necessary steps under the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the European Union, and effective June this year, Ghana will become the first African country, and the second globally, to issue Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) licences.

Mr Speaker, if arguments still rage over what there is to show for the fight against galamsey and the effects of irresponsible mining, there can be no such arguments about the introduction of the Free SHS and Free TVET programmes, another policy that did not have universal approval when I sought to introduce it on coming into office.

However, I believe this is one of the rare occasions on which we can use the word transformational without any danger of abusing the word. We have transformed education, and there can never be a reversal of the fact that some five-point-seven million (5.7 million) young people have gained access to secondary education, who would otherwise not have had the opportunity, but for Free SHS and Free TVET. Indeed, my administration has also prioritised Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), establishing thirty-four (34) new TVET institutions and upgrading sixty-two (62) existing ones to equip our youth with 21st century skills.

Mr Speaker, I am proud that we were brave enough to have started the Free SHS policy at the beginning of my first term and resisted the calls for a gradual introduction. I am glad that we have removed from the Ghanaian mindset the belief that secondary school education is only for people from certain households and families.

From 2020, when the first cohort of Free Senior High School (FSHS) candidates sat for the WASSCE, Ghana has consistently recorded over fifty percent (50%) of candidates scoring A1 to C6 in all four (4) core subjects. This marks a stark improvement compared to the years prior, particularly the period when pass rates in core subjects were largely below fifty percent (50%). This year's results, the 2024 results, have maintained the laudable trend from 2020.

Indeed, only fifty-one-point six percent (51.6%) of candidates achieved A1-C6 in English in 2016, compared to a much higher sixty-nine point five-two percent (69.52%) in 2024. For Integrated Science, the pass rate improved from forty-eight point three-five percent (48.35%) in 2016 to fifty-eight point seven-seven percent (58.77%) in 2024. Mathematics

demonstrated the most dramatic progress, rising from a mere thirty-three-point one-two percent (33.12%) pass rate in 2016 to an impressive sixty-six point eight-six percent (66.86%) in 2024. Social Studies followed a similar trend, improving from fifty-four point five-five percent (54.55%) in 2016 to seventy-one point five-three percent (71.53%) in 2024.

Moreover, the 2023 WASSCE results stand out as the best in the history of the examination, with record-breaking performances across all core subjects. It is obvious, then, that our reforms have not only expanded access, but have also enhanced the quality of education.

I am glad that we have elevated TVET and STEM to where they properly belong, and they will no longer be seen as the option for those who cannot make the top grade. We have embarked on the development of twenty (20) STEM centres and ten (10) model STEM Senior High Schools across the nation, and also constructed one hundred and eighty-six (186) new science laboratories nationwide. The other day, I commissioned the Accra STEM Academy, which is destined to play a key role in the future of STEM education in our country. These institutions are designed to provide hands-on learning experiences with cutting-edge facilities. From coding to robotics, our students are being prepared for the demands of the 21st century. It has not been without challenges, but the results are evident.

I am delighted with the infrastructure transformation that has taken place on our school and university campuses. This was displayed in a dramatic fashion a few weeks ago when the Ministry of Education staged the simultaneous commissioning of eighty (80) new educational facilities.

I do not suggest that we have finished what we set out to do, but we have certainly established what a kindergarten is supposed to be like, we have established what a primary school should be like, we have set standards for what constitutes a JHS, science laboratories are now integral parts of Junior and Senior High Schools and computer tablets are available for all school children.

Mr Speaker, now we know and accept that a public-school building can be painted in beautiful and attractive colours. Mr Speaker, we have aimed to make the learning and teaching atmosphere a happy one for all school children and their teachers. We have spent a lot of resources on education in the past eight (8) years, and I am persuaded that it is money well spent

and the long-lasting benefits for our society will provide the justification for the expenditure.

Mr Speaker, it is impossible to make any meaningful accounting of my time in office without reference to the Covid pandemic. With the passage of time, it is easy to play down the extent of the catastrophe that brought our world to a thundering halt, and brought wild animals to lounge on highways. Do we remember that airports around the world were closed and some two years after the formal end of the pandemic, worldwide shipping and cargo freight have not returned to normal? Schools were closed around the world, and it took courage to reopen our schools, and there are parts of the world that have not yet made up for the closure of schools necessitated by the pandemic.

Probably, Mr Speaker, the most poignant aspect of those times was not the fear that gripped us all, but the fact that we were unable to shake hands or hug each other, and we could not have funerals for our dead. It is worth emphasizing the point that, with the help of the Ghanaian people and the guidance of the Almighty, we managed the pandemic in our country to the admiration of the whole world. Indeed, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Ghana emerged as a leader in Africa, managing the crisis with a balanced approach that prioritized lives and livelihoods. We were among the first countries on the continent to secure vaccines and roll out a comprehensive vaccination programme. The establishment of our own vaccine manufacturing facility, under the supervision of the National Vaccine Institute, a body created by Act of Parliament, in collaboration with international partners is a testament to our resolve to build resilience in our healthcare system. In the spirit of transparency and accountability, a parliamentary audit was conducted on the accounts relating to COVID-19 expenditures, reflecting my government's attachment to accountability and the effective stewardship of public resources during a time of crisis.

However, the consequences of the COVID-19 upheavals on all aspects of our lives have gone way beyond what anyone could have imagined. We are still dealing with the effects on the economy.

But let me first deal briefly with the effects on the health sector. The pandemic showed up some of the alarming shortcomings of our health delivery system, and we have tried to seek remedies to ensure that we are reasonably prepared to meet the next emergencies.

The most important intervention is the Agenda 111 project we have embarked upon that aims to place a hospital in every district. Out of the one hundred and one (101) district hospitals and two (2) Psychiatric hospitals on the project list, there are ninety-nine (99) district and two (2) psychiatric hospitals where contractors are deployed and work is in progress.

I had hoped that construction would be completed on all of them, but that was not to be. I am pleased to report that on December 5, I had the utmost pleasure to commission three (3) of the district hospitals. Progress of works on the other ninety-eight (98) active sites range from five percent (5%) for sites whose work commenced recently to ninety-five percent (95%) at other sites. I am hoping that the incoming Mahama administration would ensure that the project is completed to put our health infrastructure on a sound footing.

Furthermore, we launched the National Ambulance Service's revitalisation programme, increasing the number of ambulances from fifty-five (55) barely functioning ambulances to over three hundred (300), ensuring timely emergency response and saving countless lives. The strides in healthcare reflect our collective commitment to building a system that prioritizes the dignity, health and well-being of every Ghanaian. Furthermore, we have revived the National Health Insurance Scheme which, at one point before I came into office, appeared to be reverting to the days of "*cash and carry*". The number of subscribers has risen from ten-point-six-million (10.6 million) in 2016 to seventeen-point-nine million (17.9 million) at the end of 2023, with the renewal of subscriptions being facilitated by a tap on the mobile phone, and the scope of the Scheme being broadened to include treatment for sickle cell disease, kidney dialysis and childhood cancers.

Mr Speaker, our economy took a bigger hit from the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing consequences than had been anticipated, and in 2021 and 2022, we were in unaccustomed trouble. Our economy, which, in my first term, had been widely acknowledged to have performed creditably, marked by the longest period of single digit inflation, seven percent (7%) average GDP real growth rate, and strong external balances, was on its knees.

The government's difficulties in Parliament, with the slimmest of majorities, gave the impetus to the international rating agencies to trash

us on their assumption that we would struggle to get financial policy measures passed through the Legislature. We faced the problems we encountered with equanimity, took a deep breath and decided to apply for an IMF supported Programme, dubbed post-COVID-19 Programme for Economic Growth (PC-PEG) in the middle of 2023.

The Implementation of the Programme so far has gone well even as it has been challenging. We have passed successfully through three successive reviews of programme implementation by the IMF Board, with the most recent review approved on 2nd December, 2024 leading to the disbursement of \$360 million. The Fund has, therefore, disbursed a cumulative one-point-nine-two billion United States dollars (US\$1.92 billion) to date.

At the moment, I am able to say with confidence that the crisis is over, and that the economy has recovered strongly and faster than projected. In order for me to be able to make this assertion, I must make reference to the debt restructuring exercise. It affected many bondholders, and was one of the most challenging decisions our administration had to undertake. It was not a choice made lightly, as we were acutely aware of the personal and financial hardships it would impose on individuals, families and institutions across the country. Many citizens had invested their hard-earned savings, and we fully understood the pain and sacrifices this exercise demanded. However, it became evident that, without such bold and decisive action, our economy would have faced an even greater crisis, with far-reaching consequences for every Ghanaian.

This restructuring was essential to address unsustainable debt levels, and to create the fiscal space needed to stabilise the economy and lay the groundwork for future growth. It was critical in ensuring that Ghana could meet her financial obligations, regain the confidence of international and domestic investors, and restore our economic credibility. Through the resilience and understanding of the Ghanaian people, coupled with the strategic measures we implemented, we have been able to chart a path towards the recovery that is underway.

Today, we are witnessing the positive outcomes of this painful yet necessary exercise. The economy is rebounding strongly, our fiscal position is more stable, and our debt sustainability has significantly improved. These developments have provided a solid foundation for sustained growth and development, ensuring that the sacrifices made by

bondholders and other stakeholders will not be in vain, but rather the basis of Ghana's economic revival.

Mr Speaker, the country is not broke, as some propagandists want us to believe. We are handing over the country with Gross International reserves of almost eight billion United States dollars (\$8 billion. This is more than the six-point-two-billion United States dollars (\$6.2 billion) of Gross International Reserves my administration inherited in 2017.

Economic growth has also returned to the pre-COVID trajectory, with an impressive growth rate, rising from four-point-eight-percent (4.8%) in the first quarter of 2024; seven percent (7%) in the second quarter and seven-point-two percent (7.2%) in the third quarter. It is projected that this year's growth rate will be six-point-three-percent (6.3%), significantly higher than the three-point-four percent (3.4%) my administration inherited in 2017.

The growth of the economy is further reflected in the growth of private sector credit. Private sector credit in nominal terms grew by twenty-eight-point eight seven percent (28.87%) in October 2024, compared to the negative seven-point five percent (-7.5%) growth recorded in the same comparative period of 2023. In real terms, growth in credit to the private sector improved to five-point five percent (5.5%) compared to a contraction of thirty-one-point six percent (31.6%) recorded in October 2023.

It is further reinforced by improved external balances, with the current account balance improving significantly to a surplus of two-point six percent (2.6%) of GDP in the first nine months of the year, compared to a deficit of six-point six percent (6.6%) of GDP in 2016.

In much the same way, the trade balance has improved, and stands at a surplus of three point eight five billion US dollars (\$3.85 billion), compared with a deficit of one point eight billion US dollars (\$1.8 billion) in 2016.

Headline inflation, which stood at twenty-three percent (23%) in November, is still very high, but this is coming down from fifty-four percent (54%) recorded in December 2022 following the effects of COVID-19 and other global economic pressures. Encouragingly, food prices have also begun to decline, bringing some relief to households and contributing to a reduction in the overall cost of living. Government has

implemented significant measures to address the hardships that accompanied the economic difficulties. These include increased budgetary allocations towards the School Feeding Programme, Capitation Grant, National Health Insurance Scheme, and the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty programme.

The stock of public and publicly guaranteed debt increased during the economic difficulties. However, the government is servicing its debts, honouring coupon payments for both domestic bonds and Eurobonds. Moreover, the debt levels are reducing, recording a significant reduction in the debt stock by forty-six point eight billion Ghana cedis (GH¢46.8 billion) to seven hundred sixty-one point zero one billion Ghana cedis (GH¢761.01 billion) in October 2024 from eight hundred seven point seven nine billion Ghana cedis (GH¢807.79 billion) in September 2024. The public debt-to-GDP ratio, therefore, reduced from seventy-nine-point two percent (79.2%) in September 2024 to seventy-four-point six percent (74.6%) in October 2024. This is expected to reduce further to fifty-five percent (55%) of GDP in net present value terms, a level that restores Ghana's debt sustainability. It is hoped that the new government will continue with the policies being implemented to achieve this debt sustainability target.

I am happy to inform the House that today, 3rd January 2025, my government will honour coupon payments to our Eurobond holders amounting to three hundred forty-six million US dollars (\$346 million). We cannot afford to default on our debt repayments.

These achievements demonstrate our firm commitment to the policies, structural reforms, and programme objectives and targets under the Programme.

Let me at this juncture state unequivocally that the Banking Sector Clean-up undertaken by my administration was an act of necessity, not of vendetta. It was a bold and decisive intervention to safeguard the strength and integrity of Ghana's financial system. The illegalities and irregularities perpetuated by the affected banks and financial institutions are well-documented and indisputable. These practices threatened the very foundation of our banking sector and jeopardised the hard-earned savings of millions of Ghanaians. Our actions ensured that not a single depositor lost their money—an unprecedented achievement in financial crisis management. Today, the results are there for all to see: a more robust,

stable and resilient banking sector capable of driving economic growth and supporting the aspirations of our people. It was a necessary decision to restore public confidence and secure the future of Ghana's financial sector.

Mr Speaker, my government recognized, at the very outset, that the fight against corruption required more than rhetoric; it demanded systemic, sustained and strategic action. To this end, my government initiated a holistic programme of legislative, administrative, financial and technological reforms.

Indeed, one of my most satisfactory moments as President was when we established the Office of the Special Prosecutor. For me, this was not just another government office. It was—and still is—a symbol of our determination to tackle corruption head-on. I wanted Ghanaians to know that no one, no matter their rank or status, would be above the law. Its creation was, initially, met with considerable skepticism in some quarters, but I believe that, now, there is general consensus that it has been an important contributor to our anti-corruption efforts.

During my first term, we passed the Witness Protection Act in 2018, creating a framework to safeguard individuals who cooperate with law enforcement, especially in corruption cases. Furthermore, the Criminal Offences (Amendment) Act of 2020 elevated corruption from a misdemeanour to a felony, with harsher penalties of twelve (12) to twenty-five (25) years of imprisonment. We also enacted key laws such as the Fiscal Responsibility Act, the Revenue Administration (Amendment) Act, and the Anti-Money Laundering Act, all of which have strengthened our institutional framework to combat corruption and ensure accountability. We ensured that all allegations of corruption levelled against appointees were duly investigated by independent institutions of state, which generally dismissed them as unfounded.

Budgetary support for accountability institutions has also witnessed unprecedented increases. For instance, from 2017 to 2023, CHRAJ's budget increased by ninety-nine percent (99%), Parliament's by one hundred percent (100%), the Office of the Attorney General by one hundred and sixty-two percent (162%), the Audit Service by two hundred and fifty-eight percent (258%), and the Police by two hundred and seventy-four percent (274%). These investments reflect my administration's commitment to empowering these institutions to

discharge their mandates effectively, which means that the tools needed to exact accountability from all public office holders, including those of my own government, have been considerably sharpened. The application of these tools, whilst respecting, as it should, due process and the rule of law, should, however, pose no fears for any honest public office holder.

I remember the early days of these reforms when skepticism abounded. People asked, "Will this really make a difference?" Today, the numbers speak for themselves. The Auditor-General's report for 2023 showed a reduction of five-point-two-billion cedis (GH¢5.2 billion) in financial irregularities—a thirty-two percent (32%) drop from the previous year.

Mr. Speaker, my government has undertaken impressive reforms to strengthen Ghana's judiciary, enhancing both capacity and accessibility. Key achievements include addressing court infrastructure challenges, with the construction of one hundred (100) courthouses, ninety (90) of which have been completed and are operational, making it the biggest single infrastructural intervention for the Judiciary in our nation's history. The establishment of the Court of Appeal complex in Kumasi, along with twenty (20) townhouses and a guesthouse for justices in the northern sector, now enables appeals from eleven (11) regions to be handled locally, reducing delays in justice delivery. Additionally, the implementation of the e-justice system has digitised case management and streamlined processes, solidifying the judiciary's role as a bulwark of Ghana's democracy and development. Moreover, the Law House, a modern facility for the Office of the Attorney General, has been completed.

Mr. Speaker, infrastructure development has been a cornerstone of this administration. The construction and rehabilitation of over twelve thousand (12,000) kilometres of roads have improved connectivity and reduced travel times. These projects have not only facilitated trade, but also enhanced access to essential services.

It is fitting, therefore, to acknowledge that this administration has constructed more roads and interchanges than any other in our nation's history. In the Greater Accra Region alone, we have completed the Pokuase Interchange, Tema Motorway Interchange Phase I, Obetsebi Lamptey Interchange Phase I, the East Legon Underpass, and, recently, the Flowerpot Interchange. Beyond Accra, we have also delivered the first-ever interchanges in the Eastern Region, at Suhum, and in the

Northern Region, at Tamale. Each of these projects tells a story of commitment, foresight, and a Ghana that is continuously moving forward.

There are fourteen (14) additional interchanges currently underway across Ghana, each at different stages of completion. In Greater Accra, we are building interchanges at Obetsebi Lamptey Interchange Phase II, Nungua, Adjiringanor, Kpone Barrier, Prampram, Dawhenya, Savannah and Tema Motorway Phase II. In the Ashanti Region, ongoing projects include the Suame Interchange Phase I, Anomangye, Maakro/Magazine New Road, Abusuakuruwa and Abrepo, as well as the PTC Interchange in Takoradi in the Western Region. These projects represent the scale of our ambition—a commitment to excellence and growth that knows no limits.

Mr. Speaker, in aviation, we have expanded airports, including the construction of the Yakubu Tali International Airport in Tamale, the Prempeh I International Airport in Kumasi, the rehabilitation of the Sunyani Airport in Sunyani, and the completion of the Ho Airport, in Ho. These projects position Ghana as a hub for regional air travel.

Mr. Speaker, over the past seven years, we have revitalized Ghana's railway sector, undertaking key projects to modernize and expand the network. Notable achievements include the rehabilitation of the sixty-six-kilometre (66-kilometre) narrow-gauge Western Line from Kojokrom to Tarkwa, the construction of a twenty-two-kilometre (22-kilometre) standard gauge line between Kojokrom and Manso, and securing funding to extend the Western Line from Manso to Huni Valley, connecting to the Port of Takoradi. Additionally, a six-kilometre (6-kilometre) standard gauge line in Kumasi is underway, and the Tema-Mpakadan line has been completed. Progress on the Ghana-Burkina Faso railway project further underscores efforts to enhance regional trade and integration.

Mr. Speaker, we have made some good strides in improving the housing sector. Over the period, we have built one thousand and seventy-two (1,072) affordable homes, and broke ground for an additional eight hundred (800) in Kpone in the Greater Accra Region. We have also established the National Homeownership Fund, which is delivering five hundred and thirty-four (534) homes in Tema Community Twenty-Two. We delivered one thousand (1,000) homes to the security services, and are delivering six hundred (600) homes for public servants through the Bungalow Redevelopment Programme.

Mr. Speaker, the transport sector has also seen the deployment of electric buses in major cities, reducing carbon emissions and aligning with our climate change commitments. These advancements signal Ghana's commitment to building a sustainable transport infrastructure for the future. Behind every completed road and bridge is a story of lives transformed—farmers reaching markets, students accessing schools, and families connected.

Mr. Speaker, my government has prioritised the modernisation of Ghana's maritime infrastructure, with the Takoradi Harbour standing as a shining example of this commitment. The port has been transformed into a world-class facility, enhancing its capacity to meet the demands of modern trade and of the oil and gas industry. In November 2024, I commissioned a state-of-the-art Oil and Gas Services Terminal, a one hundred-million-dollar (\$100 million) investment, which serves as a hub for oilfield operators, logistics service providers, and other key players in the energy sector. Additionally, I launched a Dry Bulk Terminal and the Atlantic Services Container Terminal, diversifying the port's capabilities and solidifying its role as a critical player in regional and international commerce. We have also begun the processes for the construction of another modern port at Keta. These efforts are positioning Ghana as a leading logistics and shipping hub in Africa, creating jobs, boosting investor confidence, and ensuring sustainable economic growth for our nation.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture remains the backbone of our economy, and our investments in this sector have been transformative. Through the distribution of over 2.7 million bags of fertilizers and improved seedlings, we have increased crop yields and enhanced food security. For example, maize production increased by one hundred and ten percent (110%), rice by forty-eight percent (48%), and soybean by one hundred and fifty percent (150%) between 2017 and 2023. The establishment of one hundred and forty (140) agricultural mechanisation centres and the rehabilitation of irrigation schemes have modernized farming practices and reduced dependence on rain-fed agriculture.

The establishment of warehouse facilities under the One District, One Warehouse initiative has also helped reduce post-harvest losses by thirty percent (30%). The net effect of these policies is that our agricultural GDP growth rate rose significantly from two-point seven percent (2.7%) in 2016 to an average of five-point-seven percent (5.7%) in 2023.

Our cocoa sector has witnessed remarkable improvements, with productivity increasing from an average of four hundred and fifty kilogrammes (450kg) per hectare to eight hundred kilogrammes (800kg) per hectare, making Ghana a leader in sustainable cocoa production. The Living Income Differential policy, a policy agreed to by President Alassane Ouattara of Cote d'Ivoire and myself, under the aegis of the Strategic Partnership Agreement between our two countries, which is a fixed premium of four hundred US dollars (\$400) per tonne, added to the selling price of cocoa beans, irrespective of fluctuations in market prices, ensured that our hardworking cocoa farmers receive a fairer share of the global value chain, indeed receiving the highest prices in the history of the cocoa industry in Ghana. We were told by the Minority Leader on the campaign trail, and in the presence of the now President-Elect, that my successor will increase the price per bag of cocoa from the current three thousand, one hundred cedis (GH¢3,100) to six thousand cedis (GH¢6,000). Our farmers will be very happy when this pledge is realised.

In the fisheries sector, the construction of twelve (12) landing sites and cold storage facilities across the coastal regions, along with the commissioning of the Jamestown Fishing Harbour and the Elmina Fishing Harbour, has improved livelihoods and reduced post-harvest losses. These interventions have significantly boosted the incomes of our fisherfolk and contributed to the sustainability of our marine resources. We have also enforced measures to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, protecting our marine biodiversity for future generations, and proving the doubting Thomases wrong about our commitment to transforming the fisheries industry.

Mr. Speaker, Ghana has made significant progress in expanding electricity access, with electricity access rate increased to eighty-eight-point-eight-five percent (88.85%), up from the 79.3% I inherited. In renewable energy, completed projects such as a four-megawatt (4MW) floating solar PV at Bui and a fifteen megawatt (15MW) solar PV at Kaleo, together with a one hundred megawatt (100MW) solar PV under construction at Bui and a mini-grid Electrification Programme in Ada East have advanced efforts to reach the ten percent (10%) renewable energy target by 2030. Mr. Speaker, it is worth emphasizing that I inherited a nation plagued by dumsor, but I am very happy to say that I leave office in 2025 with the lights on.

This achievement did not come without its challenges. When my administration assumed office, we inherited an energy sector legacy debt of two-point-five billion dollars (\$2.5 billion). The Energy Sector Recovery Programme (ESRP), developed by Government and the World Bank, projected that this debt would balloon to a staggering twelve-point-five-billion (\$12.5 billion) within five (5) years, if no decisive actions were taken. We knew that such a scenario would cripple the sector, undermine investor confidence, and plunge the nation back into darkness.

Mr. Speaker, we got to work immediately. Through tough negotiations with Independent Power Producers (IPPs), prudent financial management, and targeted interventions, we have been able to stabilise the sector, while keeping the lights on. I am pleased to report that we have kept the energy sector legacy debt at two-point-five billion (\$2.5 billion), the same level we inherited, and have averted the twelve-point-five billion dollar (US\$12.5 billion) debt scenario, despite the rising cost of energy production, and the global economic challenges that have unfolded during my tenure.

The energy sector has truly been transformed, and I am leaving office confident that the foundations we have laid will serve this nation well for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most notable milestones of my administration has been the creation of six new regions—Western North, Ahafo, Bono East, Oti, North East, and Savannah. This historic achievement responded to decades of passionate advocacy by local communities for a governance structure that brings development closer to the people. Today, these regions stand as evidence of our commitment to equitable development, with enhanced access to public services, infrastructure, and economic opportunities for millions of Ghanaians. Additionally, my administration championed a bold vision for local governance by advocating for the election of Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs). Though the process was unfortunately aborted, I remain hopeful that, in the not-too-distant future, this vision will become a reality. Such a reform would deepen democratic accountability and empower citizens to shape their local governance directly, ensuring that Ghana's democracy continues to grow stronger and more inclusive.

Mr. Speaker, the youth are the heartbeat of our nation, and we have implemented programmes to empower them. From the National Youth

Authority reforms to sports infrastructure development, we have ensured that young Ghanaians have the tools and opportunities to thrive. The construction of some one hundred and fifty (150) astroturf pitches across the country, and the rehabilitation of existing stadia, have bolstered Ghana's standing as a hub for international sports, including hosting successfully, despite all odds, the 2023 All-Africa Games.

Creating an entrepreneurial climate has been a cornerstone of my administration's vision for empowering Ghana's youth. From the establishment of National Entrepreneurship and Innovations Programme (NEIP) in 2017 with a ten million United States dollar (\$10 million) seed fund to the transformative Greenhouse Estate Project and Entrepreneurship and Innovation Centre in 2020, we have supported fifteen thousand (15,000) startups, trained two hundred and fifty thousand (250,000) young entrepreneurs, and created over one hundred thousand (100,000) jobs. Initiatives being implemented by the Ghana Enterprises Agency (GEA), like the Ghana Economic Transformation Programme, Hubs Grant Acceleration Programme, CAPBuss, YouStart and the Ghana Cares Obaatanpa Programme, have further strengthened this vision, benefiting some one point six million (1.6 million) Ghanaians and disbursing over two billion cedis (GH¢2 billion) in loans and grants. These efforts have sparked innovation, created jobs, and laid the foundation for a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem, leaving a legacy of opportunity and growth.

Mr. Speaker, in tourism, the Year of Return in 2019 and Beyond the Return initiatives attracted over 1.5 million visitors. These campaigns not only boosted our economy, but also strengthened ties with the African diaspora, positioning Ghana as a premier destination for cultural heritage and investment. The establishment of eco-tourism sites and cultural heritage projects has further diversified our tourism offerings, attracting global attention.

One of the significant undertakings in this sector has been the renovation of the Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum. This celebrated site, dedicated to the memory of our first President, Kwame Nkrumah, has been transformed into a world-class facility that honours his legacy and attracts visitors from around the globe. The renovations include modernized exhibits, improved infrastructure, and enhanced visitor experiences, ensuring that the Mausoleum remains a symbol of Ghana's rich history and a source of inspiration for generations to come. As visitors walk through the

Mausoleum, they are reminded of the sacrifices and vision that built the foundation of our modern nation. The Nationalism Park, which I recently commissioned, and which commemorates other important personalities in our independence struggle, like Nii Kwabena Bonney, Osu Alata Mantse, and the legendary three ex-servicemen of the 1948 Christiansborg Crossroads Shooting fame – Sergeant Adjetey, Corporal Attipoe and Private Odartey Lamptey – has also been added to this development, as will be the proposed Heroes Park, whose sod I cut recently, and whose purpose will be to celebrate the legendary 'Big Six' of UGCC Fame and other great figures of our path to freedom.

Mr. Speaker, our security forces have been equipped with modern tools and training to safeguard the nation. The establishment of forward operating bases, such as the one I commissioned some two weeks ago in Ezinlibo in the Western Region, the Barracks Regeneration Project, the equipping of the military and police, with the Police receiving helicopters for the first time in our nation's history, the acquisition of advanced surveillance systems, and recruitment of over ten thousand (10,000) police officers have enhanced our capability to combat threats and maintain peace. The successes of our anti-terrorism programmes and cross-border security initiatives reflect our commitment to national and regional safety.

In line with our commitment to aligning with international military norms and enhancing the authority of our top military officials, I am pleased, as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, to announce the elevation of the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) to the rank of General, and the Chiefs of Army Staff, Navy Staff, Air Staff, and the Chief of Staff at the General Headquarters to the rank of Lieutenant General or its equivalent. These promotions, alongside our successes in anti-terrorism programmes and cross-border security initiatives, position Ghana as a serious player in defence, and bolster our international partnerships in peacekeeping and security.

In communications, the digitization of public services, including the Ghana Card, mobile money interoperability, and e-services, has transformed service delivery and improved transparency. These initiatives have positioned Ghana as a leader in digital transformation on the continent, with over eighteen million (18 million) Ghanaians enrolled in the National Identification System. The expansion of broadband connectivity to rural areas has bridged the digital divide, ensuring inclusive access to the

opportunities of the digital economy. Every citizen's ability to engage with technology is a testament to our shared belief in progress and innovation.

Mr Speaker, we have tried to make real many of the slogans that have dominated our public discourse since independence. I am proud to have approved visa-free travel to Ghana for all African passport holders, with effect from the beginning of this year. This is the logical next step to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the workings of the largest trading block in the world. All these are essential elements to the realisation of the AU's *Agenda 2063*, which envisages an integrated and connected Africa by 2063.

Mr Speaker, I am thrilled to state that under my leadership, Ghana has made significant strides in foreign policy, cementing our place as a respected voice on the African and global stages. It was during my tenure that Accra was unanimously chosen by the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the AU to host the Secretariat of the AfCFTA, a crucial phase in Africa's journey towards economic integration. We also secured Accra as host city of the Climate Vulnerable Forum Secretariat, a grouping of fifty-six (56) countries, reaffirming Ghana's commitment to leading the fight against climate change for vulnerable nations. As Chair of ECOWAS for two consecutive terms, I had the privilege of guiding our region through challenges of political instability and economic recovery. Furthermore, Ghana secured a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for two years, allowing us to contribute meaningfully to global peace and security at a time of unparalleled challenges. Indeed, it was Ghana that led the Security Council to adopt Security Council Resolution 2667, which provides for the UN to pay, from assessed contributions, seventy-five percent (75%) of expenses of UN peacekeeping operations in Africa, a matter that had been in controversy and unresolved for several years.

Additionally, Ghana witnessed a moment of immense pride when Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, a distinguished Ghanaian, was elected as Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, the first time a Ghanaian and an African woman has held this esteemed position. I hope the House will join me to extend hearty congratulations to our Foreign Minister, Honourable Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey. It is a prestigious position, and I am sure she will be a successful Secretary General and bring honour to Ghana. Another feather in the cap of Ghana's recent foreign policy has been the attainment, this year, of full membership of L'Organisation Internationale

de la Francophonie (OIF), of which we had been an Associate Member for some eighteen (18) years. Our country, one of the few to be full members of both the Commonwealth of Nations and La Francophonie, has the opportunity to play a constructive role as a bridge between the Anglophone and Francophone worlds, particularly in Africa, enhancing our influence.

These milestones reflect my administration's dedication to advancing Ghana's interests, and strengthening our standing in the international community.

Mr Speaker, there is a subject that continues to attract a lot of public discussion, and that is the call by some for a review of the 1992 Constitution under which we have operated in this Fourth Republic for the past thirty-two (32) years.

Mr Speaker, there is no perfect Constitution anywhere in the world and with all its shortcomings, I would say that this Constitution has served us well. It has provided the platform for the longest period of uninterrupted, stable, constitutional, democratic governance in our history. A constitution does not cure the irritations of the democratic process. There is no constitution that will satisfy the desires of those who do not believe in the democratic process. I would suggest that, in the approach to the calls for a constitutional review, we should be guided by the old saying, *festina lente*, the Latin adage for "*hasten slowly*". In this spirit, I will be forwarding the document prepared and submitted to me by the Constitution Review Consultative Committee on proposals for the review of the Constitution, along with the concerns and suggestions raised, to the President-elect for his consideration, as he prepares to assume the responsibilities of leadership.

Mr Speaker, elections are the main planks of a democratic structure. We have just had the ninth set of elections since 1992.

The losing presidential candidate called the winner to congratulate him and made a public concession fourteen (14) hours after the close of polls, which it is widely agreed, were conducted in a competent, free and fair manner. I doubt there are many such examples anywhere in the world. Yes, we should condemn the outbreaks of violence that followed and the assumption some had that because a presidential candidate had conceded defeat, the winning party should feel emboldened to cause mayhem. It

appeared, at one stage, that the outburst of violence would overwhelm the Police who, in my view, need to re-examine rapidly their methods for containing such incidents in the future. I say so without prejudice to the excellent job they did in supervising the electoral process itself.

I am hoping that we would soon reach the stage where the unnecessary tensions that are simulated to accompany our elections would disappear, and elections would become simply something that we do, and do without a fuss and with flair. The efficient, praiseworthy manner in which the Jean Mensah-led Electoral Commission has conducted the past two (2) elections of 2020 and 2024, despite their challenges, is a significant contribution to this end.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity of this august podium to congratulate again my friend, with whom I came into Parliament together for the first time in 1997, President-elect John Dramani Mahama, on his historic, comeback victory of 7th December 2024, assure him of my support, and that of all well-meaning Ghanaians, and wish him well in his second (2nd) term as President of the Republic.

Mr Speaker, you and I have made history of a kind these past four years and I must acknowledge the role you played in keeping steady, the ship of state and the governance structures of our country. This was the first time the Executive has to deal with, not just a Parliament with the slimmest of majorities, but with a Speaker from the opposition party. Mr Speaker, we found a way to accommodate each other and the government functioned successfully. I thank you.

Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to express also my gratitude to the Council of State, under the chairmanship of its highly-respected traditional ruler, Nana Otuo Sriboe II, Juabenhene, for the great help it has given me in helping to steer the ship of state to a successful end. Nana and the Members of the Council, I thank you very much for your invaluable counsel.

Mr. Speaker, as I prepare to leave office on 7th January 2025, I do so with immense gratitude for the trust and confidence the people of Ghana have placed in me over the last eight years. It has been the highest privilege of my life to serve as President of this great nation. I have done so with unwavering commitment, boundless energy, and a deep love for Ghana, always guided by the belief that our nation's best days lie ahead.

Together, we have weathered storms, celebrated victories and laid the foundation for a brighter, more prosperous future.

Reflecting on this journey, I am filled with pride for what we have accomplished. From the transformative policies in education and healthcare to the strides in agriculture, digitilisation, energy, governance, infrastructure, industry and trade, these achievements are not mine alone, they also belong to every Ghanaian who has contributed to the collective effort of nation-building. We have demonstrated that, through unity, resilience and determination, we can overcome even the greatest challenges. I am confident that the progress we have made will inspire future generations to dream bigger, aim higher, and achieve more for our beloved Ghana.

Mr Speaker, as I take my final bow, I do so in the certain knowledge that our nation will go from strength to strength, and that freedom and justice has taken hold forever in our body politic.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hand over a Ghana that is safe, secure, united and firmly rooted in her attachment to democratic principles and respect for the rule of law—a nation that continues to shine as a beacon of peace and stability in an often-troubled Africa and an uncertain world. I leave behind a Ghana that is thriving, one that has navigated significant global challenges with remarkable tenacity, whose economy is steadily rebounding, and whose institutions are operating effectively. It is a Ghana where the youth are being empowered with opportunities to channel their energies into meaningful and productive endeavours, where the arts are beginning to flourish, and where the elderly can grow old in safety and dignity, and continue to make meaningful contributions to society. I leave behind a Ghana that is working.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I thank you for your attention.