

## POST PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

By HE John Dramani Mahama

Auditorium of the University for Development Studies (UDS),  
Tamale, Northern Region  
Monday, May 15, 2023.

I want to start by acknowledging the Chairman and members of the Council of Elders of our great party, – National Chairman Johnson Asiedu Nketiah and the entire National Executive Committee – Regional and Constituency Executive Members, my kingmakers the Branch Executives, supporters, and sympathisers of the NDC.

To our revered traditional leaders, opinion leaders, senior members of our party, Members of Parliament and the general viewing and listening public, I say thank you.

I must add, very quickly, how happy I am to be speaking here at the University for Development Studies (UDS) in Tamale, having earlier launched my campaign at the University for Health and Allied Sciences in the Volta region – two universities established by our great political tradition, the NDC.

### **Appreciation**

Yesterday Sunday 14th May was Mother's Day. Let me use this opportunity to extend my Mother's Day appreciation to Lordina and all Ghanaian women.

With profound gratitude, I humbly accept to be the Presidential Candidate of the National Democratic Congress. Thank you for your vote of confidence and for your unshaken conviction that I am the most suitable person with the experience and the vision to lead our party, the NDC, to victory in 2024.

We must win the elections to enable us build the Ghana we want together. I pledge to lead you to a resounding victory in December 2024.

Let me, on your behalf and on my own behalf, acknowledge the contribution of Dr. Kwabena Duffuor, Former Mayor Kojo Bonsu and Mr. Ernest Koba towards enhancing the internal democratic systems of our party.

I also wish to thank the staff of the Electoral Commission for their support in making our Parliamentary and Presidential Primaries a resounding success. My special thanks go to Mr. Serebour Quaicoo and his District Election Directors for working over and above the call of duty to ensure a successful election.

To you the kingmakers of the NDC, I say thank you for electing me with an overwhelming and unequivocal 297,603 votes, which is 98.9% of the of the total valid votes cast.

This margin of victory is deafening, emphatic and resounding. It is indicative of the unwavering singular intent of the NDC to win election 2024. I accept this onerous responsibility placed on my shoulders with absolute humility and a deep sense of respect for the tough tasks that lie ahead in Resetting our beloved nation Ghana to one that allows us to regain our lost glory.

Ours is a nation that led the decolonization process in Africa; a nation held up as the model of democracy and governance in Africa; a nation of prudence in the management of its economy and national resources.

This victory is not about me, John Dramani Mahama. It is about our people and the creation of a society that allows our citizens to live a decent and dignified life. It is about expanding access to health care so that our mothers and sisters would not lose their lives carrying out their biological duty of procreation; it is about the little children whose promising future is cut short because of a dangerous boat crossing in search of education. It is also about managing our economy and finances in a manner that does not require the appropriation of the life-time investments of our retired senior citizens and the middle class.

This victory is about raising securities, investments, and funds for future generations and not just for spending in a day; it is about restoring trust, once again in our institutions, and engendering love and pride in the name, Ghana.

But first, we must win the elections in 2024, and that will require from all of us, hard work and winning the trust of the people of Ghana. The NDC and Ghana's interest must therefore continue to guide and bind us all together as one people from one great family.

From today, right here, in this hall of the University for Development Studies, I declare that the internal competition for the Flagbearer position is over. You have chosen experience with vision, over experiments, and I am confident that in December 2024, Ghanaians will make that choice that puts us back on the path of building the Ghana we want together.

We must flip the coin from competition to cooperation. We need cooperation to build a better Ghana and a better NDC. I am, therefore, calling for cooperation among all elected parliamentary candidates and your aspirants and supporters.

Incumbent Members of Parliament who lost their primaries must also keep your heads up. You remain a hero for the good job you have done, and continue to do, for our party and country. We need your experience and talents for the onerous job that faces us when the good people of Ghana give us a mandate to steer the affairs of this country once more.

Above all, we need you in the remaining one and half years of your Parliamentary mandate to carry out your duties with dedication and commitment to safeguard the interest of the Ghanaian people. I intend to meet with you as early as possible.

The party needs you, and we will continue to rely on you as we seek to win election 2024 and change the destiny of the suffering people of Ghana. We must remain one family. Let me emphasize and urge all of us, as members of the NDC, to re-dedicate ourselves, commit our energies and resources to work hard to win the 2024 elections.

I assure you of my open-mindedness, my open-door policy, and my commitment to run a government based on merit and competence. Let me reaffirm my unshaken commitment to offer the needed support to our Parliamentary Candidates and all Constituencies to make certain that we secure a healthy majority in the next parliament.

This means, we must conclude the outstanding parliamentary elections in earnest so that we can focus our resources on the campaign for the upcoming national elections.

I assure you that, together with the National Chairman, General Secretary, and the other Executives, we will plan and campaign, very vigorously, with clear objectives and strategic outcomes. We owe it as a duty to our country to do so, and we shall.

On this note, as I dissolve my innovative, hardworking, and successful campaign coordinating team – led by Professor Joshua Alabi – I wish to thank the team, my staff, security, media, the NDC Regional Chairmen, regional and constituency campaign teams, my wife, Lordina, and children, my siblings, and all others who were on this journey with me. I can never repay you for your generosity, dedication, and love for me and for our country, Ghana.

### **Let's hold on to hope.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, we must urgently commence building the Ghana we want together because our dear nation Ghana is sailing through perilous seas. Our socioeconomic foundation as a nation has, in the last few years, not only been threatened, but fractured and dislocated.

Corruption and the raid on the public purse have come to a crescendo. The rights of citizens including journalists no longer matter to government. In the last two years, Ghana has dropped on the Press Freedom index.

Our National Health Insurance Scheme is comatose. The scheme is starved of funds by the Government's capping policy and refusal to release proceeds of the National Health Insurance Levy to the National Health Insurance Authority. Patients are faced with an empty scheme that only ensures retrieval of their medical folders and consultation. Even basic drugs such as analgesics, cough mixtures and antibiotics, must be purchased by patients themselves.

For the first time in our history, retirees and the middle class are facing existential threats to their survival and financial stability due to gross mismanagement of our economy by a grossly inept Finance Minister and Economic Management Team.

For the first time in known memory, new-born babies are unable to access the full complement of their childhood vaccines.

Yet these newborns and the younger generation also face the heavy burden of inheriting a suffocating national debt, which stands at almost GH¢600 billion, the equivalent of over 100% of GDP. Only a fortnight ago, the government recalled Members of Parliament, and the main purpose was to approve a further \$710 million more debt to compound the already choking national debt.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the lack of vision and prospects by government is patently discomfoting. That is why we have no option but to win elections 2024 to reset our country on a path of transformation for progress and prosperity.

I come to you, the good people of Ghana, and I say, there is hope for our country! That hope will emanate from our very self as a resilient nation; a people with a passionate appetite for progress and prosperity; a people capable of rising from the ashes of catastrophe like a phoenix to build a stronger and smarter nation to serve our needs and wants.

The hope also springs from a leadership willing to accept responsibility and fix problems, rather than pass the buck. A leadership that is honest and does not lie to its people. A leadership that is consultative and willing to build a consensus in solving the challenges that confront Ghanaians in their daily lives.

I have an unshakeable conviction, I believe, and I know Ghana shall rise again. My vision for our beloved Ghana aligns with your expectations for a better Ghana, one that we will build together.

Beyond my vision, ladies and gentlemen, our constitution also gives us hope. It creates the foundation for our 4th Republican democracy. A democratic dispensation that is still the best form of government and which we must guard and protect, because however abysmal and appalling the performance of a government is, the people have an opportunity to make a change at the next election.

Clearly the Akufo-Addo and Bawumia NPP administration has failed to meet the expectation of the Ghanaian people and they must prepare to bow out at the next election. They must start preparing their handing-over notes and account to the people of Ghana for their stewardship.

### **Economy and Jobs**

Yes, there is hope for our country. I firmly believe in our collective ability as a party to lead a transformation agenda that restores decent values, revives youthful aspirations and ambitions.

Ours will be a progressive government that provides equal opportunities for sustainable and decent livelihoods. I am convinced that by working together with Ghanaians, we shall turn Ghana's hopelessness and gloom today into a better and brighter tomorrow.

Ladies and gentlemen let us talk about the 'destructive' elephant in the room – the economy.

Literally and figuratively, the government's Economic Management Team has displayed grave incompetence, mismanaged Ghana's economy, and inflicted severe hardship on Ghanaians, including the elderly and the young.

Ghanaians now know the address of the so-called "solid economic management team." The Chairman and members of the EMT have become the butt of jokes in people's homes, in the markets, in restaurants, on social media, and on the airwaves because of their misguided commentaries both in opposition and government.

As a leader your word should always be truthful, it should be sincere and honest. If you are not truthful, you lose the trust of the people.

Prices of goods and services continue to see extreme increases with devastating effects on the livelihood of Ghanaians. The price trends reflect the inflationary increase from 15.4% in December 2016 to over 40% presently.

Unfortunately, as inflation rises, unemployment has not improved but worsened. The growth rate of the agriculture sector, which was 2.7% in 2016, despite all the slogans, was a paltry 0.7% in 2022. The manufacturing sector, which stood at 7.9% in 2016 dipped to 4.5% in 2022; and the construction sector has gone down from 8.4% in 2016 to 4.2% in 2022.

Sometimes when I read about these terrible economic trends coupled with credit rating agencies downgrading Ghana, I ask, what has happened to the unprecedented resources that have accrued to the Akufo-Addo government since 2017?

No government, in our 4th Republic has had the sheer amount of resources that have been available to this one. Yet, they have been unrelenting in hiding the truth. The fact however remains that by March 2020 – a pre COVID era in Ghana – the national debt had already increased by GH¢100 billion within three short years. This shows a steep rise from GH¢120 billion in 2016 to GH¢225 billion in 2019.

Indeed, the budget deficit of 7.5% recorded in 2018 had at the time exceeded the legally acceptable threshold of 5%.

### **Fixing the Economic Mess for More Jobs**

Ladies and Gentlemen, the combined effect of the critical economic indices before COVID-19 and after COVID -19 points to one truth. That immutable truth is that the NPP has blatantly mismanaged the economy and the country.

We cannot allow them to continue holding Ghana's progress in reverse gear. Ghana is not for a few people alone. Ghana is for us all and the unborn generations.

We must rise like the phoenix rising from ashes; renew, reform, and liberate ourselves from their misrule on December 07, 2024. This is why I am running for president in 2024. And this is why you voted massively for me on Saturday, May 13, 2023.

I have proposed a raft of measures and referred the government to the NDC 2020 manifesto for policy alternatives. These measures still apply today because we are neck deep into an economic crisis.

First, government must take responsibility for the messy economy, arising from its reckless borrowing and mismanagement of the country. This is going to be one of the immediate actions of my government, God willing, when voted into office. I will lead a process to set a standardized limit for borrowing.

Government has refused to cut expenditure by reducing the size of government, adjusting the compensation and allowances of appointees and profligate expenditure. The president is rather appointing more people and continuing to recklessly overspend.

A John Mahama and NDC government will respond to the concerns of the Ghanaian people, proactively and drastically cut down on the number of ministers and other government appointees. There will be no room for wasting the taxpayer's money on the comforts of government officials.

The NDC will reconsider the tax exemption regime, ensuring that any exemptions are beneficial to the Ghanaian people. We will further ensure that the extractive sector operates within a mutually beneficial tax environment for the stability of the exchange rate. We will seek to make Ghana benefit more from its finite natural resources and encourage indigenously owned Ghanaian businesses that have the technology and capacity to operate their own productive mining concessions by themselves or in partnership.

We have done it before, and we will do it again, together with my team, we will enhance investor confidence in our country to attract credible domestic and foreign investors especially in the manufacturing and light industries sector. This we will do by being transparent and not concealing economic indices such as the budget deficit, public debt, and Net International Reserves.

As we await the board of the International Monetary Fund's approval for Ghana's requested bail-out by end May or June this year, we expect that the finance minister will urgently present a mid-year review budget to Parliament, which will include any agreements they might have reached with the Fund and one that critically cuts government expenditure.

The 2023 budget and financial statement presented to Parliament last November is riding on stilts with no stability. This is why I insist Government must immediately upon approval of Ghana's programme by the Fund, review the 2023 budget to reflect the realities of the economic situation today.

Ladies and Gentlemen, unemployment is a national security crisis. What must be done to help in ameliorating the challenge has not been done. From January 2025, the next NDC administration will transform the economy, diversify our exports, and ensure value addition to create more jobs.

Agriculture and agribusiness shall be one of the key anchors of our economic transformation plan. We will launch a programme akin to the “Operation Feed Yourself and Industries” of the early 70’s to make Ghana self-sufficient in basic staples and curb unnecessary imports. We will seek to make indigenous entrepreneurs capture the “commanding heights of the Ghanaian economy.”

In our previous stint in Government, we sought to achieve this by strategically prioritizing the Tamne Irrigation project in the Upper East Region; we supported the Avnash rice processing factory here in the northern region; provided fish storage facilities along the Coast and prepared the Komenda Sugar Factory for take-off in the Central region among others.

In the non-agriculture sector, Wankang ceramics factory, which came alive in the Western region and the Savanna Cement Factory are but a few of the examples. We also injected GH¢51 million into the pharmaceutical sector for expansion and job creation – our foresight became a windfall when COVID-19 struck our shores.

Let me restate what I said in Ho during the launch of my campaign for Flagbearer— we shall promote robust local participation in our banking, financial, telecommunications, tourism, mining, agriculture, agribusiness, and manufacturing sectors to grow the economy and create sustainable employment for the youth. We will restore indigenous Ghanaian investment in the finance and banking sector and create a tiered banking system that will serve various segments of the market.

We will give the opportunity for experienced banking hands who were laid off, to secure their careers once more and move from the menial jobs they were forced into. As far as practicable, banking licenses that were unjustly cancelled by this Government would be restored.

### **Governance**

Ladies and Gentlemen, our nation is still at the crossroads with crippling debt, and an inefficient and wasteful government. We cannot continue this pathway. It is a betrayal of the people, as a leader, to keep doing things the same way when the results leave them the poorer.

I am committed to operating an effective government with not more than sixty (60) ministers. These Ministers together with other appointees of the government will not be entitled to ex-gratia payments after their tenure, as they will commit to that undertaking even before the necessary constitutional amendments, including a review of the controversial Article 71.

I share the view that Ghanaians in the diaspora must no longer have to renounce their foreign citizenship before they can stand for elections or hold public offices in Ghana.

I personally believe most of them make up for their absence with their remittances, and, if conditions improve, a lot of them will return to work home, in Ghana. In fact, some Ghanaians in the diaspora have proven to be extremely beneficial to our country. Professor Frimpong Boateng of the Cardiothoracic Centre fame returned from Germany to establish the National Cardiothoracic Centre that has saved many Ghanaian lives.

Since the Professor's return he has contributed his significant bit in medicine and in politics. Only recently amid an Aljazeera documentary accusing President Akufo-Addo and his government of organized crimes in collusion with a foreigner, it emerged that the heart surgeon had two years ago boldly exposed the duplicity of the NPP government in the fight against Galamsey.

He opened a can of worms, which I know this president, in his usual manner, will sweep under the carpet just as many corruption scandals have been cleared by the Clearing Agent. We shall investigate further and pursue justice on this matter.

The truth is, this government cannot just wish away the reality that Ghana is not looking good on the Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International. The President no longer makes corruption a pet topic in his speeches because corruption has defeated him hands down.

In the government's bid to obscure corruption, they have resorted to suppressing press freedom and inordinate clampdown of Civil Society activists including even members of parliament who dare to expose corruption.

Let me assure you, as I stated in Garu in the Upper East during my campaign tours, that I will adopt a robust root and branch approach to fight corruption because corruption is a major source through which state resources are wasted. It will not matter whether the people involved are our own or from some other party.

We will continue the constitution review process commenced by President John Evans Atta Mills of blessed memory and take it to a logical conclusion. This will plug the loopholes and clarify some clauses in our constitution and make it more responsive to our current reality.

### **NDC Party Matters**

Fellow Akatamansonians,

Ey3 zu!

Ey3 za!

I began by thanking you, my party delegates, for voting massively for me on Saturday. I promise that I will fulfil every promise I made to you during my visits to your constituencies, in the sixteen regions of Ghana between March and Friday 12th May 2023.



I will be working with the National Chairman and the leadership of the party to build a formidable National Democratic Congress – one that every Ghanaian will be proud to associate with.

Ghanaians should keep in mind that the NDC has provided the most impactful socio-economic and development projects across the country.

I make a firm promise to ensure that our 2024 campaign is fully decentralized, empowering the branches to lead the voter mobilization and voting day canvassing, supported by the constituency and regional executives and teams.

Empowering the branches, motivating them, and ensuring that we deploy the needed campaign materials and logistics, I remain convinced, will help our campaigning and canvassing in 2024. We must all embrace and support an equitable distribution of party logistics to the branches. This will strengthen the branches and encourage competition even as we plan to reward each branch adequately for meeting set targets.

In the next few months, we will begin redeeming our promise to help constituencies acquire their own offices and commence the organization of periodic orientation and training programmes at the Party School, for our executives.

## **Conclusion**

Ladies and Gentlemen and the millions following us from Ghana and across the world, before I take my seat, I wish to reiterate some of my commitments to the people of Ghana. I want you to remember them so you can hold me accountable. I will keep each of the promises when I assume office on January 07, 2025, God willing.

1. Restore stability and inclusive growth to the economy and rejuvenate the almost collapsed banking and financial sector. This will involve sweeping reforms at the Bank of Ghana because the Central Bank itself has been part of the problem.
2. I will ensure that Ghana never suffers such a deadly debt management programme that threatens to send elderly people holding government bonds to their early graves and wipe out the investments of the Ghanaian middle class.
3. Prioritize local participation in the banking, financial, telecommunications, mining, oil and gas, agriculture, manufacturing, and construction sectors to generate more jobs for the youth. The Ghanaian young women and men we interact with on daily basis and their colleagues in other African countries are simply tired of jobless GDP figures.
4. Actively attract viable and serious private sector investors to partner government to invest in the productive sectors of the economy for more jobs to be created. This will involve an emphasis on agriculture and agribusiness and will have a strong focus on making Ghanaians own their own micro enterprises.

5. Complete abandoned and ongoing projects instead of rushing to start new ones. We will carry out an inventory of all hospitals, schools, electrification, water, and road projects which have stalled or been abandoned and make annual budgetary allocation for completing them.
6. Beyond the economic front, we will also be very thick on governance because transparent and accountable governance at all levels remains an assured fuel that fires the socio-economic transformation of successful nations.
7. We will establish a Governance Advisory Council to help improve political governance, curb corruption, and ensure the respect for human rights is upheld. The Council will include representatives of civil society organizations, religious leaders, traditional leaders, and ordinary Ghanaians, and among others, they will be empowered to release a State of Governance in Ghana report every year.
8. I will run the leanest but most efficient government under the fourth republic by appointing not more than 60 ministers and deputy ministers.
9. I will work to abolish the payment of Ex-gratia and cut out waste and ostentation in Government.
10. We shall work with Parliament and all stakeholders to complete the constitution review process and strengthen separation of powers.
11. Government procurement is recognized as a major source of corruption and misappropriation of public funds. We will among other measures, set up an Independent Value for Money office to scrutinize all government procurements above a \$5 million threshold or as shall be recommended by Parliament.
12. I will give anti-corruption state institutions unfettered space to operate – The days of the Clearing agent must come to an end on January 07, 2025.
13. I will also set up a Commission of Enquiry to investigate the matter of looted State Lands and make recommendations for resolving the vexed issue of expropriated Ga-Dangbe lands.
14. And to deepen our democracy, the Fourth Estate of the realm – the media – must also be given the conducive and collaborative atmosphere to operate as the fourth power that they ought to be without threats, harassments, and assassinations.

We are starting off in earnest, and I will be outlining other policies and strategies in the course of the campaign and in our 2024 manifesto conversations.

Let me emphasize that Ghana is in this severe and acute financial distress with suffocating levels of unemployment due to the reckless mismanagement of the economy by this Government.

But there is hope! That hope can be fast-tracked if we choose vision with experience over experiment — especially at this critical time in our nation's life.

The NDC delegates have shown the way by electing me with a definite 98.9%, or in mathematical terms, 99% of the valid votes cast — which is indicative of their elevated faith and conviction in my ability to provide honest, visionary, and responsible leadership.

They did so not only based on our solid record of achievements but also the concrete, sincere assurances I have given to transform our cherished country, Ghana, by building the Ghana we want together. That transformation will demand your cooperation, and that cooperation begins from today.

In building the Ghana we want together, we will need you — every Ghanaian (including disappointed NPP people) who are appalled by the arrogance, untruthfulness, mismanagement, corruption, and nepotism of this government. Join us in this rebuilding mission.

We will also need you — every Ghanaian who wants to have a project or programme in the agriculture including horticulture and aquaculture, manufacturing, building and construction, services and extractive industry sectors but has been impeded by the illicit demands of officials of this governments.

We will need you — every Ghanaian — who believes merit must be recognized and compensated and not favoritism taking the centre stage.

And we will need you if you genuinely believe we have had enough of the incompetence and mismanagement of this government.

**ENOUGH IS INDEED ENOUGH!**

Ghanaians have suffered enough hardships and misrule from this bungling and rapacious Akuffo-Addo and Bawumia NPP government. Let us complete the task we have started by campaigning day and night for your humble servant, John Mahama, and our Parliamentary candidates.

My brothers and sisters, I urge you to campaign vigorously in every corner of the country, on radio, television, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Tik Tok, Instagram.

We shall protect your votes.

Your votes will be counted.

Your votes will count. And your votes will propel the NDC into office, with a team led by me, John Dramani Mahama, ready and willing with vision and experience to build the Ghana we want together with you.

Ladies and Gentlemen, victory will be ours in December 2024. And there shall be work and happiness for all.

Thank you.

God bless us all, and God bless our homeland Ghana.