

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY PROF. NAANA JANE OPOKU-AGYEMANG, VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE TO H.E. JOHN DRAMANI MAHAMA FOR THE 2024 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.

Our respected party leader and flagbearer, HE John Dramani Mahama, the next President of our beloved Republic, HE Lordina Mahama, Niimeɪ, Naameɪ, Nananom. Togbey ooo Mama ooo, Council of Elders, Members of Parliament, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, the National Chairman, the General Secretary, the entire leadership of the National Democratic Congress, from the national through the regional, constituency to the wards and branches, to our devoted, hardworking and teeming supporters and sympathisers, many who have travelled from across the country, to you all I extend my deep appreciation for endorsing my nomination and for accepting me, again.

To my family, colleagues, and friends, all those who have sent me volumes of moving letters and voice and written notes and songs and prayers of support since my nomination, accept my undying gratitude.

My plea is for all of us, bound by a shared vision to see our country take a turn for the better, to work towards realizing that vision.

HE Ayebida President Mahama, please allow me to address you directly:

As I stated in my brief acceptance note on March 7, 2024, by renominating me you have demonstrated your remarkable consistency and unwavering commitment to inclusivity and innovation. I have heard you share with the public your rationale

for choosing me, again. I have found that very touching. Thank you very much; as the Gonjas express it with meaning: ansan kushun.

I see your choice as an affirmation of your belief in the capabilities of the Ghanaian woman.

I will repay your abiding confidence with loyalty, understanding and a devotion to duty.

My output, going forward, by the Grace of God, will continue to demonstrate what the world knows already, that women are also capable of high achievements; that we do so with that reservoir of strength, determination, and mental acuity that only those who are noble and far-sighted can comprehend and contend with.

I will share in our collective successes and, share responsibility for our setbacks if any.

And, at the time of reckoning, HE John Dramani Mahama, I will not, in the advancement of self-serving ambition, declare to the world that I was only the driver's mate.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, before I go on to other important matters, please let me state my understanding of where we are as a country and the implications of what lays ahead, as clearly as I can manage it: the election ahead of us is not about making history, although that is important. It is not about returning a former president back to power, or about producing the first woman vice president, historical and exciting though they are. It is not only about bringing the National Democratic Congress to power although that is indispensable in our current circumstances.

It is about winning the elections for a purpose that goes beyond those enumerated above. The purpose is the opportunity to hold our country together, again; to heal Ghana; it is about the chance to pull Ghana from the precipice of destruction, of normalizing corruption, of incomprehensible greed, from deep despair. The election ahead is about hard work and abiding sacrifice. It is to embrace everyone in building a Ghana that functions, again.

It is to work towards a Ghana where citizens have confidence and hope and are determined to regain their independence of thought and of agenda. We must work towards a Ghana that at the very least, can feed itself; where the law truly works; where there is shared prosperity; where democracy has not become a fluke; where people are not abused and where the basic necessities of life are not denied the majority or eventually, anyone. It is a chance to work hard towards a country where

citizens do not feel disrespected, are not intimidated, ignored because of the way they vote or the language they speak. The victory we seek as a party is to invite everyone to the onerous task of rebuilding a broken Ghana, of restoring hope, in a manner that the NDC is capable of doing by their history and achievements.

My brothers and sisters, we are not in ordinary times. This is not news.

Some of us have been around for a while and have experienced the to-and-fro of politics in Ghana.

But never have we experienced the levels of greed, unbridled arrogance, unrestrained impunity, sheer dishonesty, barefaced hypocrisy and incompassion displayed by this incumbent government over the past seven years and more.

The task ahead is formidable, much more than it was four years ago.

I remain inspired by the fact that, as a people, we have faced terrible situations before. Check our history. Please don't begin with the Fourth Republic or the struggle for independence, important though they are. Go hundreds of years back. In those hard times, our forefathers and foremothers, did not throw up their arms in despair. They fought back; they resisted, they sacrificed, they persevered; they brought back hope where there was none; they picked up the broken pieces and carefully, strategically, sewed them back, and they left for us a legacy of selflessness, patriotism, and pride. It's our turn to leave the same and even better to our future generations. Giving up is not an option.

Across the political divide, across social and professional groupings, among the youth, you hear of complaints and stories concerning state capture, where this government has chosen to use its power not in the broader interest of all Ghanaians but to favor a small clique. What is that?

John and I have agreed, that whoever has participated in the plunder of the state must be held accountable. This is not a threat; it is a promise, premised on the wishes of our citizens across the various political and social divides, and hinged on the principle of accountability.

Let us face the facts: The promotion of ethnocentric elitism masquerading as intellectualism; nepotism cloaked as know-

how; weakness strutting as courage; and crony capitalism masked as development in freedom; shameless hypocrisy acting as objectivity... these never served a country determined to make progress at any level.

Rather, the most significant achievement of these things has been a country in near insolvency, its natural resources such as water and land and environment in rebellion, a people harassed and intimidated into numbness and as some say cynically, bribed into silence.

I envisage a report of the administration of HE John Dramani Mahama on the ticket of the National Democratic Congress which justifies his return. The report would have no reference to the following:

1. A multi-million-dollar dugout; I don't know about you but the image I get looking at the trench is that of a hole in utter shock that anyone could believe it was intended as a thanksgiving gift to the Almighty, Invisible, God Only Wise
2. A free SHS at war, with the battle fought on the grounds of food, shelter, space, calendar, teaching and learning materials, or those who spend a couple of weeks at school and several months idling at home; past questions instead of textbooks and science equipment, or an atmosphere that suppresses learning.
3. Free water and electricity to a few that turns out to be most expensive for all.

Such a report would not find:

4. Covid money shared for partisan political campaign purposes, while people die from a lack of support at our health facilities

5. An Agyapa-like manifesto under the NDC led by JDM

It would not include:

6. A president clearing malfeasance and writing love letters to prejudice a bad situation

It would not find:

7. Unemployment that has jumped from 8 to 14% (check out the actual numbers), a GDP that has gone AWOL or a cedi that refuses to be tamed. Or,

8. Weak efforts to hide the truth of dumsor.

The report would not include:

9. Scandals surrounding the PDS; Australian Visas; Kelni GVG; Bost Contaminated Fuel; excavators and aboboyaa

tricycles that can fly swifter than nkonfem; or the loss of some GHS 60.8 at a central bank, or

10. Unfulfilled promises of one village one dam; one million dollars per constituency per year; 350 secondary schools from scratch and too, too many betrayals

It would not see:

11. A tracker in hiding, too embarrassed to expose its plagiarized content
12. In truth, such an investigation would not reveal over 100 scandals, and counting, during the tenure of the NDC under JDM

What would the report say about the NDC under JDM?

After exhausting the list of clinics, hospitals, medical centres, expansion of existing universities, polytechnics turned technical

universities, brand new universities focused on current and projected national needs; Mahama Schools, popularly called E-Blocks constructed from scratch; a debilitating shift system in education painstakingly and effectively abolished; tens of education expansion projects at all levels; textbook ratio at the primary level from one book to three children to four books per child, and yes, even the over-supply of chalk...

It would highlight new roads, the harbours, railway lines, the ayalolo buses, the lack of intimidation of opposing voices, serious investment and practice to enable a digitized economy and society, the report would go on to point at housing projects including the famous Saglemi complex and those happily razed to make room for a presumed cathedral, journalists not hounded into exile...need I add more?

The report would find that once upon some years ago, the blame for power outages was placed at the doorsteps of the president and the minister for energy. The report would find a president who solved the energy crisis he inherited, and a minister who did resign on principle. The report would tell of a timetable for load shedding, provided to respect the dignity of citizens and acknowledge their right to plan and also to learn the truth of our situation with energy.

The report would contrast the existing arrogance in leadership with that of the respectful JDM, who builds the children and youth by offering quality education, serious, adaptable training, lasting skills, who opens up the economy to create more space for jobs and for self-actualization. It would highlight a JDM who does not line up desperate, young people in the heat of the tropical sun,

to march and salute him as head of state, for jobs that have no head, tail, or future.

The report would explain the foundations of the policies of the NDC that thrive on consensus building- from observation, study, analysis through vigorous debates that tolerate all views, to an agreement on the options at hand and end with well-thought-through implementation plans. The benefits of such an approach inure to all—nation, community, and individual, necessarily in that order.

The report would highlight, going forward, the critical processes that would lead to innovations and flexibilities of the brave, timely and intentional intervention of a 24-hour economy as proposed by HE Mahama after consulting widely with stakeholders and

citizens across the country. I am not surprised at all that many significant labour groups, businesses and individuals have embraced the concept.

It is a vision anchored on the firm belief that with the right policies and incentives in place, we can inspire a new generation of enterprises to adopt a multi-shift work system and wider participation in the economy, thereby ushering us into a new golden era of Ghanaian industry. Obiara beye bi. By the time the policy is in full flight, we will see how from the vegetable seller to the miner; from the smallest hamlet to the crowded cities; from the farmer to the fisherfolk; from the young couple to the single parent; everyone will come to see and apply the benefits of a 24-hour economy for national, group and individual advancement. Please come join us in our town hall meetings and other

programs to learn more about this incredibly effective strategy.

Do not fall victim to those who have realized that having failed in sloganeering and packaging, they have exhausted their strategies and therefore resort to deception and destruction. We are particularly pleased to see, as evidenced in credible polls, that this visionary policy has caught on and resonated with the public, especially our young people.

I know for a fact that the nation builder, John Mahama, who is not an economist, will deliver this economic model. He thinks through what he says and considers advice; he is confident enough to amend his views when confronted by working alternatives. He does not rush with decisions that have serious effects on the lives of others. John Mahama does not shoot from the hip.

A 24-hour economy will demand that we pay special attention to skills training – "Nsaano edwuma."

That is why we are serious about continuing with the critical reforms and the improvements we made in our technical and vocational training institutions, to ensure that we equip our young people with the technical skills necessary for a thriving economy.

"Nsaano edwuma" also means equipping our youth with TECH skills so that they are ready to participate in our economy and in the global remote economy.

So, as we mentioned several times during the 2020 campaign, we intend to implement the ONE MILLION CODERS PROGRAM, which sets an ambitious and attainable goal to train

over a million of our youth in coding, data science, and other tech fields. The potential for this pool of young people to contribute to Ghana's GDP is enormous, and Insha Allah, it shall happen—live.

Definitely, we will pay special attention to issues and challenges faced by women in all walks of life.

That is part of the reason we proposed extended maternity leave, in line with one of H.E President Mahama's 2020 election promises. And in the 2024 manifesto, the flexibility offered within the context of a 24-hour economy must hold special attraction for women, for obvious reasons.

Women entrepreneurs must have access to capital for the entire sector to boost their businesses. That is why we will actively

pursue the establishment of a Women Development Bank to nurture and grow women-owned, women-led businesses.

Women must become millionaires too, through hard work, as the men do. Women do not need hands outs. We need a hand up.

Women of Ghana are capable to managing the bank 100%. The bank will take care of the small-scale businesswomen—such as those hawking or anyone who does not depend on huge capital to run her business.

I envisage its board, including trading associations and cooperatives, fully represented and making decisions and being accountable to its members. Anaa? Aloo wonyee??

And the world knows what we do with our resources when women prosper. We do not leave our children and the wider families behind. There is better stability and peace at home; most

will demand less “chop money.” All these add up to make a nation, a party, groups and individuals at peace. Surely, this is what Kwegyir Aggrey must have observed when he made his famous statement about the far-reaching effects of the education of women.

And, if you have any doubts about this, remember Esther Ocloo. What brilliance, what innovation, what a display of entrepreneurship! She showed the way; let’s revive the dream and hope and actions of our hero and heroine entrepreneurs as models. Let’s stop killing their dreams because some of us are too lazy, too envious, too lacking in original ideas or have capacities that are also too low to match their results. How do we preach entrepreneurship, encourage its study and propose its practice, and then turn round to make waste of the efforts of

successful entrepreneurs? If you decide you don't like the owner, think of their worker who may be a member of your community, political party, or church. We must move to the level of encouragement, appreciation and support of those who participate in the private sector, regardless. Their efforts at nation building trickle down to all groups.

We will also undertake the modernization of our markets, which remain special and dominant places for many women in the economy. Market women deserve the benefits of a clean, modernized marketplace. It must not end with the beautiful Kejetia or attractive Kotokoraba and allied markets.

My fellow Ghanaians across the political divide, please, please, please, I am not about to burst into a James Brown song! Let's show some respect to our citizens.

So, the lights are not stable and because someone has not told us there is dumsor it means there's none. So, the Electoral Commission is struggling to defend its credibility and until the commission tells us that the missing equipment means nothing, everyone should believe that there are not issues to worry about.

Hey! What is that? How did disrespect grow such wings?

Actions that impoverish and disenfranchise do not necessarily translate into feeble-mindedness in the angry, the hungry and the oppressed. On the contrary... again, check out the details in history.

EC, I address you directly: it is in the national interest, and in your own, that you make transparent what has been and is going on at your establishment. The truth will not be suppressed. You cannot be so independent as to disregard the people who validate your existence. That does not exist anywhere.

A word to the wise is in Assin North.

This administration has all but given up. Worse, they will not consult; they will not engage; they will not review.

Womo ntie obiaa.

Womo beko no saa

Amanfo nso ne womo be pem so saa

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, my brothers and sisters, fellow Ghanaians, Ghana requires a different environment, and

urgently so. Therefore, the Ghanaian voter is presented, again, with the experienced, humble, focused, and truthful John Mahama, who has always consulted, out of respect and out of the conviction that knowledge does not reside in the head of any one person. The condescending sees this as a sign of not having original ideas. The unpretentious see it as a sign of understanding the foundations of democracy, which is consensus building, the clearest signpost to sustainable peace. I see it as a sign of strength, and I feel privileged to work with him.

Consensus building should be the fulcrum of any progressive, positive project. It has already been demonstrated to us how, without such a foundation, the Ghana Without Aid has turned to Ghana Without Compass.

The choice is clear; let's make it on December 7 this year.

Corruption is rampant in too many government and non government institutions; sadly, those institutions meant to check on corruption have been significantly weakened. We must strengthen the institutions and we will do just that when the NDC comes to power from January 2025, God willing.

It is our duty to ensure that our sources of wealth are not given away to obscure entities shrouded in opaque deals. We must not arrive at a destination where our national assets and natural resources are treated by some as if they were assets of their own creation, to be willed forever to relatives and friends.

We must be passionate about justice, about the protection of our environment, about protecting our differently abled citizens. We

must be passionate about institutions that are responsive to our collective needs. We must be passionate about stamping out corruption.

Let no one tell us otherwise, not even those who have so alienated themselves from reality as to be impervious to the truth—the truth of women delivering on the floor, of children waiting for a benevolent person to advance much-needed vaccines, of young children learning in dangerous circumstances; of teachers threatened and parents intimidated from their core functions of caring for their own children; of those who can no longer afford healthy and once generally affordable meals euphemistically called “face the wall” and “kofi broke man”, or of elderly citizens who must picket for their own money.

What is that?

Let no one tell us that the culture of silence has become the norm, let no one tell us that eight persons were shot in cold blood because they had gone to exercise their civic responsibility of voting, and that it was all right for a member of parliament to call them criminals; or that it is okay for SALL to have no representative in parliament for four years under a democracy because someone whimsically decided hours to the elections that they could not vote for a parliamentary candidate. And please don't tell us that the Bank of Ghana, rather than defending itself from accusations of breach of procedure, can choose to label those who raised the matter publicly as hooligans who should have followed procedure.

And at the time of accounting to the people, let no one pretend that they have more human rights than those they have consciously disenfranchised and those to whom justice has been shamefully denied.

When those otherwise loud voices we assumed spoke for the voiceless have gone into self-imposed silence, and deafness and blindness, should we honestly be surprised at the high levels of cynicism if not downright mistrust of leaders? Of our youth in despair?

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, our country is not sitting pretty. Things have gravely deteriorated. We all agree to that. It is high time we came together to do the hard work, to build, again, regardless how daunting. All is not lost.

Our beloved country can rise again; Ghana will rise again and this time, not to slack.

That is politics; not insults or filthy language, not disrespect or fear, not violence or greed; not abuse of power or hypocrisy.

Politics is about fighting injustice, hunger, hopelessness, arrogance, selfishness, unbridled greed, corruption, state capture, disrespect of fellow human beings.

In this fight, we don't need private armies, mercenaries, destructive ammunition, or, in Ghanaian parlance, "by heart talk" or wanton ruining of hard-earned reputations. That is not politics; it is jealousy hoisted on cowardice.

We need the armour of principles, selflessness, of compassion, of truth, of sacrifice, all these rooted firmly in using power in the service of those who give it to us

Politics is to imagine a better community, a better constituency, a better region, a better Ghana; all of us building the Ghana we want, together.

The time for us to rise as a nation is now.

Let us walk and work towards a victorious election that goes beyond political triumph, towards a transformed Ghana, where equality thrives; where equity is paramount; where merit counts; where opportunity is not a privilege, where justice is just; and where our sons and daughters can aspire to any height without the fetters of bias or limitation.

To every person who has lost or is losing hope, our youth as a collective and specifically, indispensable constituencies made up of young women and girls—the professionals and those who remain unemployed, our friends in the media, wherever you are and whatever you do, drivers, food processors, chop bar operators; factory workers, market women, hawkers and spare part dealers; kayayee, artisans, gardeners and galamsyers or coconut sellers and cleaners and apprentices and babysitters, and many, many more—I address you last because you are very special to me: come, I open my arms to welcome each one of you to partner with the NDC to envision and craft and roll out a future of limitless prospects; a future where your dreams and those of your children are attainable, your voices are constructive, where your lives matter.

This moment is for you.

No shaking

I thank you for your kind attention.

May God bless you

May God bless our Homeland, Ghana