

# **KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**BY**

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# **KAA FOR PRESIDENT 2024**

**CAMPAIGN LAUNCH**

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People of Ghana, faithful of our great tradition, New Patriotic Party, ladies, and gentlemen.

### **Right from the beginning**

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of March 1957, exactly five years before I was born, Ghana became an independent country. At the Old Polo Grounds, Ghana's first national leader, grabbed the attention of the world with a riveting speech. He declared in an oratorical flourish, that it was Ghana's duty to show that the Black man could manage his own affairs.

As Ghanaians, have we done so? Have we lived the dream of showcasing that we are capable of managing our own affairs? When we look back, are we glad to be where we are today?

From 1957 to 2023, Ghana has come a long way. But the fact remains that in sixty-six years, we have never crossed a GDP per capita of more than US\$3000 per annum. According to the World Population Review, these are the current GDP figures for Singapore: \$103,717; South Korea: \$34,998; and Malaysia: \$12,523, which were our peers at independence.

Beginning from the 1<sup>st</sup> Republic to the 4<sup>th</sup>, through the wildernesses of multiple military interventions, what have we, as a country not done right? Where did we lose our way? These questions, people of Ghana, were on our minds and informed our hopes when we entered the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic.

### **Into the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic.**

Thirty-three years into the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic, we must of course reflect on how much we have fulfilled what we set out to achieve with it. The 4<sup>th</sup> Republic, it is important to remind ourselves, was born out of adversity with the sweat, tears, and blood of many Ghanaians. I ought to know, for my dear father and some of his colleagues were victims of this brutal process that eventually led to the return of constitutional democracy.

People were locked up in prison without trial. Some were exiled and made jobless. Others lost their businesses and possessions. Yet some paid the ultimate price, they were callously murdered. Has it therefore been worth it?

Our current situation has led to a demoralised, despondent, and disillusioned population. A growing sense of apathy has gripped the youth and twisted their mindset on what it means to serve the country. According to the recent Housing Census, 25% of households live in ramshackle structures, 60% of us live in poverty and misery, and sadder still 50% of the National Security Budget is expended on managing Land and Chieftaincy disputes and conflicts. A country that can no longer deliver services competently is a source of worry and strain among decent people.

Poor Sanitation, *Galamsey*, high Unemployment, deficient city planning resulting in a chaotic explosion of slum settlements, falling standards of education, perilous health care, undernutrition, land conflicts and more, are unwanted features of our current existence. For some time now my heart has been troubled over the direction of our country. I recite these facts not for the purposes of casting innuendos or aspersions. I recite them to admit our sad reality and we must first acknowledge that where we find ourselves now is not where our forebearers envisioned us to be.

The time has come for us to change this definitively. This is where I come in.

### **A time for a NEW DAWN**

It is pretty obvious that our country stands in need of regeneration and renewal. And so does our party NPP. We need to usher in a NEW DAWN of astute political leadership with a Clear Vision and Plan that inspires Hope in the youth and rekindles the faith of all Ghanaians in our Constitutional Democracy.

The country must heal from the chronic polarisation that has become an ugly feature of our politics. Even within political parties, polarisation is now at an all-time high, stridently divisive.

The task ahead of Ghana in trying to reach sustained development is massive. We must all gird our loins and prepare to join me on this inspired journey.

We, the citizens of Ghana, in a true democracy, are the royals of our beloved country. We must rise and save this country from further decline. Ghana must rise to the heights it should easily be capable of.

Our forebears, steeped in historical struggles for freedom, were right when they said in striking construction that: *odehyee anko a, akoo dwane!* We must put the nation on a 'War Footing' rolling our sleeves, restoring the culture of hard work, meritocracy, and professionalism back to the workplace. We must unite as a party, and more generally as Ghanaians, to lift our country up and achieve our dreams by instilling a renewed sense of Urgency, Vitality, Passion, and Patriotism back into our body politic. This NEW DAWN must necessarily include a Social Charter that emphasises the civic responsibilities of we the citizens too.

In this NEW DAWN, I envision a Ghana that is economically robust and resilient, fiscally responsible, socially cohesive, and fully accountable to the good people. The NEW DAWN is hinged on the following;

1. **A lean wholly downsized government**, one that works efficiently and effectively to deliver to the aspirations and expectations of the Ghanaian people. The Ministries will be reconfigured to align with the constitutional Cap of 19 Cabinet to be assisted by an equal number of deputies in addition to the 16 in the regions making up a team of 54. Stakeholder consultations will be undertaken to introduce an upper limit of 9 Judges on the Supreme Court and possibly remove the retirement age of 70 and allow Supreme Court judges to serve until they are unable to perform their functions.
2. **Enforcing Law and Order, imposing Discipline and ensuring Compliance** of Rules and Regulations. A Zero Tolerance policy anchored on a drastic penalty regime coupled with a strong political will to punish those who tinker with the public treasury. The Law should work to uproot corruption, protect individual and property rights.
3. **Cutting waste in the public sector** by ensuring that there is Value for Money in public procurement and here I will draw heavily on my engineering background to facilitate the freeing up of vital resources to support the empowerment of the youth through technical education, entrepreneurship, and small business start-ups.
4. **Restore Meritocracy and Professionalism** to the Civil and Public Services by significantly reducing unbridled politicization and interference. It is time to end the

wasteful seminars, workshops, fora, and expensive retreats and rather move into implementation mode, utilising the recommendations of the huge volumes of reports gathering dust.

5. **Urban Regeneration and Renewal.** The current Urban Ecosystem is dysfunctional. A structured, coordinated, and integrated approach must be adopted and implemented to create more liveable cities and human settlements where basic needs do not become a permanent dream. A Technical Advocacy Committee TAC of the Professional bodies within the Built Environment (Surveyors, Planners, Architects and Engineers) will be set up to help resolve the challenges thereof.
6. **Entertainment and Sports.** In the Creative Arts, the issue of protection of intellectual property and copyright is dear to me. Creatives need to be empowered to own their work and earn a decent living from their talent. It is a sector that has the potential to absorb our teeming youth and it is my dream to see creatives thrive in Ghana. My passion for sports is public knowledge, nevertheless, Ghana cannot be the jack of all sports and master of none. Soccer, Boxing and Athletics will obviously be priority with a focus on school sports and Colts soccer. We have got to revive interest in our Premier League and restore the organic link between communities and traditional football teams and of course the all-important role of Government in football administration in Ghana.

I can see a bright future, we can create a competent state, one that works at pace, one that ensures compliance with rules and enforces its own regulations.

This is a collective task that will need people of every gender, all faiths, people from all parties, every single ethnic group in the country, peasants, workers, bosses; everyone. We are the royal people of Ghana. Our country needs us. We must step up to the challenge.

### **Why KAA is the one?**

We cannot change things by simply doing the same things that got us into this spot of bother. Leadership is of critical importance in social relations everywhere in the world. Ghana is no exception and needs leadership regeneration.

To take Ghana to the promised land we all desire, we need a lease of new life, new energy, systems thinking and structural approaches that cause us to change course. We must agree on this NEW DAWN, NEW DIRECTION, NEW DIMENSION.

At the level of our party primaries, five of my co-contestants are still members or former members of the Economic Management Team. Another has been part of the system in parliament and is a Board Chairman of a vital public utility.

While we are all brothers, and hopefully, when we soon talk about presidential primaries in our party, we should be saying “brothers and sisters,” we must be honest enough to admit that the Akufo-Addo government despite chalking successes in Road and Health Infrastructure, Tourism and of course Education, it has struggled to deliver on a number of fronts

We started out saying we were breaking dependency on Western donor agencies. The slogan *Ghana Beyond Aid* rang from the Jubilee House with intensity and vigour. Today, we lie on a stretcher before the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Ghana has become in the eyes of many, a case study of how not to do it.

It is true that the international climate has been hostile. But how many other countries had inflation skyrocket to 54%, food inflation hitting the roof and our cedi only just slightly recovering after a wild tailspin last year? These are stark signals of economic distress, and we cannot hide that fact. We have had to endure a painful debt exchange program with pensioners laying siege at the finance ministry.

Our party therefore cannot afford to put forward those who led us to this state and expect Ghanaians to embrace them during the 2024 election. We need a new face, a pair of clean hands, and a leader to reconnect with our base and earn the trust of Ghanaians. I humbly submit that I, Kwabena Agyei Agyepong offer the hope of a fresh start.

It is a matter of public record that I have always availed myself of this tradition. More importantly for example, in the run-up to the 1992 election, under the Rawlings dictatorship, when it was life-risking to be associated with the New Patriotic Party. I am not a newcomer. I

did not join our great tradition midstream after the danger abated. I have served this party right from the get-go in many capacities. I was there when it mattered most and also when the party was at the peak of its glory.

I gathered valuable experience doing so. Sitting at the feet of some of the revered leaders of our tradition. The likes of the venerable B.J. da Rocha, Steven Krakue, Peter Ala Adjetey, Albert Kwadwo Adu Boahen, T D Brodie-Mends, R R Amponsah, Kwame Donkor Fordjour, Alhaji Bin Salih, Roland Alhassan, Dzane-Selby, JH Mensah, Veep Aliu Mahama and of course President John Agyekum Kufour, who I dutifully served for over 5years. I have served this party selflessly and sacrificed for this country. I learned, I grew, and I patiently climbed the ladder.

I, Ing. Kwabena Agyei Agyepong, in all humility, come to you to ask for your support. I wish to serve you as Flagbearer and eventually President. To lead this country with your collective energies and hopes. Mine is a burning desire to serve the party and country with a clear conscience, pure motives, and a solid character.

I offer hope for a new beginning. A clean break from the status quo that has become associated with our tradition in recent times. A leadership that UNDERSTANDS PEOPLE, LOVES PEOPLE and HELPS PEOPLE.

I promise inclusive leadership. One that unites this country from Hamile, to Pusiga, through Kintampo to Elubo and Aflao. One that restores the dignity of our people and gives every citizen a reasonable opportunity to live out their full potential so we can secure our common future. I am equipped to provide that sort of leadership that will restore the party as a genuinely united force to enhance our capacity to deliver that elusive third consecutive victory in 2024.

### **My final charge**

Today, I ask for God's support. To guide me to serve you well. I ask for your commitment to Ghana. That commitment should lead you to make the right choice for leadership. No one thinks more highly than I do of the dedication and valour of our gallant foot soldiers through whose sweat and toil we have come this far.

I urge party delegates to consider this. You retain the power of choice. The future of our party and our country rests in your hands. You have a sacred responsibility to choose the next leader of our party NPP with WISDOM and FORETHOUGHT.

We should not allow materialism to rule our political space. The fight for the soul of this country is in its crucial stages. Whatever decision you make in the upcoming election, the effect may be felt several years down the line in the remotest Hamlet. It is time to vote VALUES, vote PRINCIPLES, vote CHARACTER.

Let us restore AUTHENTICITY, INTEGRITY, and SUBSTANCE back into our political landscape and not allow ourselves to be bamboozled with excitable slogans on a bandwagon that leads us nowhere. We must dispel the fog of uncertainty.

We are the tradition that believes in creating a world of plenty. We must all be redetermined to make this country that shining example all Africans were proud to say is on our continent.

That, people of Ghana, is my plea. God help us all and God bless our homeland Ghana.