

INAUGURAL SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT
PROFESSOR JOHN EVANS ATTA MILLS
WEDNESDAY, 7TH JANUARY 2009

Madam Speaker,

Vice-President John Dramani Mahama,

Her Ladyship Chief Justice,

Hon. Members of Parliament,

Our Chiefs and Queen Mothers,

My fellow Ghanaians,

I wish to begin by acknowledging the presence of my two predecessors: former President Jerry John Rawlings and former President John Agyekum Kufuor.

On behalf of our nation I salute you, Your Excellencies.

I recognize your invaluable experience and deep insight into matters of state and you will be important reference points during my tenure of office as President.

I wish to extend a special welcome to our distinguished guests who have travelled from far and near to witness this momentous occasion.

Madam Speaker,

A short while ago I took the oath of office as the Third President of the Fourth Republic.

With a grateful heart, I want to thank all Ghanaians for giving me the mandate to serve as President. You have changed the face of the Presidency, Parliament and the political process itself. The least I can do is to work to your satisfaction and deliver on our promise for a better Ghana.

We have emerged from one of the most keenly-contested elections in the history of our country. Our democracy has been tested to the utmost limit. Thanks to the steadfastness of the good people of Ghana, sovereign will has prevailed. We give thanks and praise to the Almighty.

At this moment of joyful celebration, I hear a call to duty and I make a pledge to you, my brothers and sisters that I will strive to make a difference in the politics of our nation.

This is the dawn of a new era of change for the better Ghana. It is not change for change sake. It is a change in a new direction to enable us move forward with unity of purpose. Ours will be a consensus-driven agenda, and in building that consensus, we will recognize the contribution of our compatriots in other political parties.

I have always said that I will be President for all Ghanaians whether they voted for me or not, and without consideration for which part of the country they come from.

It will be my duty as President to heal wounds and unite our dear nation. I intend to pursue relentlessly all avenues for entrenching peace and unity in all parts of the country as I am enjoined by the Constitution to do.

We will not let the fear of crime rob law-abiding citizens of their freedom. Improving the internal security situation will, therefore, be a top priority of the new Government so that Ghanaians can begin to feel safer in their homes and communities.

Madam Speaker,

Our politics will not focus on power and privilege. On the contrary, we will not forget the concerns of the Ghanaian people who want to see an improvement in their living conditions. Willingness to put personal advantage aside will, therefore, be one of the key demands on those who will serve in the Atta Mills government.

Honesty, fairness, compassion and sincerity will be the hallmark of my administration. I have no wish to carry out political vendetta of any kind.

The principles of accountability will be upheld, and the law will be allowed to take its course. We have a duty to ensure that our laws are administered without fear or favour, and to this end we must avoid the syndrome of one set of laws for one group and another for the others.

We have a challenge to ensure that our laws work in a system that is blind to one's place in society or one's political persuasion. We will do all in our power to ensure social justice, equity and equality under the laws of Ghana.

There is only one Ghana, and that Ghana must work in the interest of every Ghanaian.

I extend a hand of cooperation to members of the Judiciary, security services and public service. I remind them of their obligations to the state and urge them to be loyal and committed to the larger interest of the Ghanaian people.

I also want to reassure the business community that the Government which I lead means well. Our goal is to facilitate creation of a business environment that balances the resuscitation and growth of local industries and enterprises with operations of foreign business considered essential to the creation of a robust national economy.

We will not pursue a policy that sees Ghanaian industries suffering from unfair competition. Our local businesses will be encouraged to create jobs and play their role in growing the Ghanaian economy. And we will strive to balance the efficiency of the market with the compassion of the state.

We made promises to Ghanaians on the strength of which they have reposed trust in me and elected me and the National Democratic Congress to lead our nation over the next four years and hopefully beyond.

The core of our campaign message and our agenda for change was:

- Investing in people
- Job creation
- Infrastructure development and expansion
- Open, transparent and accountable Government

Our success in accomplishing the agenda for change will be measured by the extent to which we realize the vision of a better Ghana where opportunities are available to all our people and where Ghana's prosperity will reach all, not just a few.

Madam Speaker,

We will strengthen our relations with our neighbours and help accelerate the processes toward economic integration in the sub-region. We will continue to be active in the African Union and in efforts to resolve conflicts on the continent. We will collaborate with the United Nations and other international and global institutions to make the world a better and safer place.

Madam Speaker,

When the political transition is completed, I will address the people of Ghana on the state of the economy which we have inherited, but I know we have to face hard truths and take bold, strong measures. I believe that as a nation, we will find the strength of character, love of country, and hope for our shared future as a nation, to accomplish even the most difficult of tasks.

Though our task ahead presents many challenges, I am confident that working together we will prevail, and Ghana will be the ultimate winner.

I want to tell you, my brothers and sisters across our nation, from Gambaga to Accra, from Wiawso to Keta, from every village, nook and cranny to every city centre and in-between; let us join in this great challenge that the Almighty has laid before us, to so transform our country in the years to come that we may be the ultimate beneficiaries of a prosperous nation under God.

I thank you.

God bless our homeland Ghana and make her great and strong.