

## ADDRESS TO THE PARLIAMENT OF GHANA

ACCRA 06 OCTOBER 2000

Speaker of Parliament  
President Jerry Rawlings  
Members of the Executive  
Honourable members of Parliamentarians  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps  
Ladies and Gentlemen;

I am deeply honoured that you afforded me the privilege to join you today, if only to convey to you the heartfelt greetings and best wishes of the government and people of South Africa, those of the veterans of our struggle, such as Nelson Mandela, as well as my own.

My wife, Zanele Mbeki, and the rest of our delegation join me in the discharge of this pleasant and unique task.

None among us is not deeply moved by the fact that this morning we are among the elected representatives of the people of a great sister country that is very close to our hearts, Ghana, a pioneer and a pathfinder in Africa's quest for the realisation of the hopes and dreams of the children of Africa.

None among us is not deeply moved by the knowledge that in Ghana we are in a country which, to us, is a home away from home.

We also feel strong today because of the knowledge that, as we stand here, we are among fellow combatants for the accomplishment of the realisable goal of the all-round and total emancipation of Africa, of the rebirth of our Continent.

I say this because the people of Ghana, a forward echelon in that continuing struggle, elected you as their leaders and representatives because they knew that you would work to advance their cause and the cause of the peoples of Africa.

This, after all, is the charge that that great gift of Ghana to our Continent, the late Kwame Nkrumah, bestowed on you and us and all successor generations.

You will remember that as he looked back on that glorious day on which Ghana attained her independence, Kwame Nkrumah wrote the following inspiring lines:

"The independence of Ghana, achieved on March 6, 1957, ushered in the decisive struggle for freedom and independence throughout Africa -freedom from colonial rule and settler domination. On that day I proclaimed to the world "the independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked with the total liberation of the African continent." Immediately, the beating drums sent this message across rivers, mountains, forests and plains. The people heard and acted. Liberation movements gained strength, and freedom fighters began to train. One after another, new African states came into being, and above the world's horizon loomed the African Personality. African statesmen went to the United Nations; Africans proudly wore the ancient regalia of their ancestral land; Africans stood up and spoke for Africans and the people of African descent wherever they might be."

The decisive struggle of which Kwame Nkrumah spoke led to our own liberation nearly four decades after you achieved your own emancipation.

When we in 1994, and in the presence of the leaders of the people of Ghana, hoisted the flag of freedom over the city of Pretoria, for too long a symbol of the apartheid crime against humanity, we signalled the completion of the continental process of the liquidation of the colonialism and racism in Africa.

At last, Africa was free, in spite of the resistance of those opposed everything represented by the emancipation of Ghana. As Kwame Nkrumah had said, Ghana's liberation was meaningless unless it was linked with the total liberation of the rest of the continent. Ghana's liberation was our liberation. Our liberation is your liberation. It is the liberation of Africa.

I am honoured to have this opportunity to convey to you and through you to the people of Ghana the sincere thanks of the millions of your brothers and sisters in South Africa for the unstinting and selfless support you have us to ensure that we too destroyed the yoke of white minority domination.

This constituted an act of solidarity and an assertion of a shared destiny that our people will always treasure and never forget.

Since independence, the politicians and intellectuals of Africa have been searching for effective ways to achieve good governance and stability, to create conditions that would lead to sustainable socio-economic development.

In the last decade, we have seen much progress in the deepening of democracy with multi-party democratic elections being held in many of our countries.

I believe that in the greater part of Africa, we have made great strides towards the creation of conditions for sustained democracy. Now more than ever before, we are in a position to consolidate our democracies through regular elections, through constantly improving our systems of governance, through ongoing voter education and other campaigns among our peoples, through involving these masses in the process of governing themselves.

However, events in your neighbouring country, the Cote d'Ivoire, emphasise the point that we should constantly maintain our vigilance because there are some in all our countries who are not democrats.

These are people and forces that continue to believe that power does not derive from the people but from the use of force against the people.

I say all this being aware of the fact that some in Abidjan may denounce what I have just said as unacceptable interference in the affairs of the Cote d'Ivoire.

Africa shares a common destiny. We are to one another brother and sister, whatever the nationality of the passports we carry. What Kwame Nkrumah said about the liberty of the peoples of Africa being indivisible remains true to this day.

It therefore cannot and will not be that, when armed soldiers rob the people of their freedom, the rest of us maintain a treacherous silence. As the OAU has said, this would constitute an endorsement of the fruits of tyranny. This we will not do.

We continue to be faced with the collective task of the attainment of peace and stability throughout the continent. We must meet the continuing challenge of the inculcation in the consciousness of all our people, of a culture of peace and the solution of all problems by peaceful means.

For if we are to succeed in our efforts for the social and economic progress of the African people, then we must act with the greatest vigour in defence of peace and the safety and security of all our people.

All of us are also aware of the fact that we pursue the twin goals of democracy and peace, we do so within a socio-economic context bequeathed to our continent by colonialism and neo-colonialism, a context characterised by underdevelopment.

For the fact remains that most countries on our continent are underdeveloped, have large sectors of the population that are poor, with little or no access to educational facilities and health care. In most cases these people live under squalid conditions in both rural and peri-urban areas.

Millions of our people are unemployed, unskilled or semi-skilled and have little hope for jobs both within and outside their countries.

New and supreme efforts are still required to generate the resources; to elaborate and implement the plans; to inject among ourselves the sense of urgency; that will make it possible for us to achieve the rates of economic growth and development that will enable us to end poverty and underdevelopment on our Continent. In this context I would like to believe that we are of one mind that we need to take all measures to fight against corruption in our societies. Surrounded as we are by immense poverty and disease, we cannot allow that a few steal the wealth of the people for their own self-enrichment.

The governments of Africa are also determined to engage our partners, the countries of the North, to end the export of capital by the poor to the rich as a result of the heavy debt burden many of our countries carry.

Our elected legislatures, such as the Parliament of Ghana, an independent judiciary and a free press are important parts of the new Africa we are working to create. So also are the strong, democratic state systems we must also work to build. We are firm in our conviction that we need to ensure that we build developmental states that have the capacity to intervene both in defence of democracy and human rights and in ensuring that we achieve the goal of a better life for all.

Among other things, the pursuit of this goal requires that we build partnerships between government and the state with business, labour and civil society so that our societies move as one to end the intolerable suffering that is daily visited on the masses of our people.

Clearly an important part of the struggle to end poverty and underdevelopment on our Continent is the formation of other partnerships, those between countries, on a bilateral basis, and those among countries both regionally and continentally.

In this regard, I must underscore our happiness at the way the relations between our two countries are developing. I am certain that our visit will also further strengthen these bonds which can only bring mutual benefit to both our peoples.

I would also hope that this parliament will also develop strong relations with our own so that, together, as elected representatives, we reinforce one another as we strive to serve our respective peoples.

I am also certain that our interaction will help to strengthen the ties between the two important regional organisations to which we belong, namely ECOWAS and SADC.

I am convinced that a generation of a progressive leadership on our continent has re-emerged, including you who sit in this august house - a generation that is moved by this plight of the people, and seeks to advance their interests.

Bessie Head, the South African writer who spent a great deal of her life in Botswana, tells the following story: -

"Long ago, when the land was only cattle tracks and footpaths, the people lived together like a deep river. In this deep river which was unruffled by conflict or a movement forward, the people lived without faces, except for their chief, whose face was the face of all the people; that is, if their chief's name was Monemapee, then they were all the people of Monemapee.... Before a conflict ruffled their deep river, they were all the people of Monemapee, whose driven by the knowledge that we are one to the other, brother and sister.

The new leadership that has emerged on our Continent gives hope to the millions of our people that our combined actions will free all of Africa's children from tyranny, war and poverty. We dare not and must not disappoint those hopes.

I wish you success as work among the people of Ghana to participate in the important task of freely choosing their representatives later this year. This democratic act will further entrench democracy and stability throughout Africa.

I thank you for your attention