

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA,
NANA ADDO DANKWA AKUFO-ADDU,
AT THE 76TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS' GENERAL
ASSEMBLY, ON WEDNESDAY, 22ND SEPTEMBER 2021, IN NEW
YORK, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, ON THE THEME
"BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH HOPE TO RECOVER FROM
COVID-19, REBUILD SUSTAINABLY, RESPOND TO THE NEEDS
OF THE PLANET, RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE, AND
REVITALISE THE UNITED NATIONS."**

Mr President, I congratulate you warmly on your assumption of office as President of the General Assembly, the Assembly of humanity, and wish you well in the management of our affairs. I congratulate also the Secretary-General on his unanimous re-election for a second term. The Common Agenda that he has outlined provides us with a powerful framework within which to tackle effectively global issues in these first decades of the 21st century.

The presence here, in New York, of one hundred and two (102) leaders of nations, in this 76th Session, tells us of our resolve to return the world to normalcy. We are not there yet, but we are making considerable progress.

Back in 2017, when I made my first appearance at the General Assembly as a newly elected President of Ghana, I said neither Ghana nor Africa wanted to be scars on anybody's conscience. I said we want to build economies that are not dependent on charity and handouts, because long and bitter experiences have taught us that, no matter how generous the charity, we would remain poor.

Between 2017 to 2020, Ghana recorded an average growth rate of 7%, amongst the highest in the world. In 2020, when the global economy and sub-Saharan Africa's contracted by 3.5% and 2.1%, respectively, Ghana was one of the few countries that produced a positive growth rate. This is a testament to our determination to build a Ghana Beyond Aid.

One year on, although infection rates and deaths are relatively lower in the Region, the virus's impact on economies and livelihoods has been damaging. The latest numbers from the African Development Bank indicate that African economies, which contracted by 2.1% in 2020, are yet to return to pre-pandemic levels. More than thirty million Africans fell

into extreme poverty in 2020, and nearly forty million could do so in 2021. The social impact has been devastating; over one hundred and three million African jobs have been lost. Women, who account for forty percent (40%) of total employment, have been most hard hit.

Mr. President, we are listening to the scientists: it is evident that vaccination is the way to protect populations, and revitalise societies. To vaccinate seventy percent (70%) in the shortest possible time, as is being done elsewhere in the world, means some nine hundred million Africans have to be vaccinated. The Afreximbank's structuring of the Africa Vaccine Acquisition Taskforce's two-billion-dollar acquisition of four hundred million Johnson & Johnson vaccines is part of the historic African Union's COVID-19 Vaccine Development and Access Strategy. It is a critical milestone in our collective fight against the pandemic, in a continent suffering the worst brunt of vaccine nationalism. The Africa Vaccine Acquisition Taskforce vaccine programme, partly manufactured in South Africa, is the single largest and most far-reaching trade transaction since the entry into force of the African Continental Free Trade Area in January this year. It is eloquent testimony to the benefits of domestic production and pooled procurement in Africa, as envisioned by the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement.

Ghana agrees with the call of the Rome Declaration of Global Health for voluntary licensing and technology transfers to boost vaccine production. The Africa Union is working with WHO, WTO and other global partners to expand its vaccine manufacturing and deployment.

We, in Ghana, have, so far, received five million doses, which have been administered to frontline health workers and those classified as being most at risk. Five million is not a figure to be sneered at, particularly when we consider the situation in many other African countries. We are grateful that our efforts at the management of the pandemic and vaccine distribution have been recognised, and we have received these amounts so far. We are still hoping to vaccinate twenty million of our people by the end of the year.

One unfortunate development appears to be the recent measures on entry into some countries in Europe, which suggest that Covishield, the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine manufactured in India, is not recognised by these countries. What is intriguing is the fact that this vaccine was donated to

African countries through the COVAX facility. The use of vaccines as a tool for immigration control will be a truly regressive step.

Mr President, the last time there was such an upheaval in the world was during the Second World War, which led to the establishment of a new world order. This organisation, the United Nations, and the other Bretton Woods institutions were created to maintain international peace and security, help rebuild the shattered post-war economy, and promote global economic cooperation.

Even before the pandemic outbreak, many had concluded that the current structure of global economic co-operation, designed some seventy-seven (77) years ago, has proven inadequate to finance infrastructure and economic transformation in developing countries. Given the incapacity of the global financial system to produce the necessary outcomes to finance sustainable development, we need a constructive review. COVID-19 provides a great chance to rethink global economic co-operation, based on the principles of mutuality, equity, sustainability, and collective prosperity envisaged by the SDGs.

There is no question but that, if the famous gathering in San Francisco was to take place today, it would be a significantly different United Nations Charter that would be written. In much the same way, a World Bank or IMF or WHO, that is born today, would be radically different institutions from those that were set up after the World War, as many of the countries in today's world, especially in Africa and the Caribbean, were not present in San Francisco.

The pandemic has also shown us that, the great advances in science and technology notwithstanding, we still have a lot to learn and discover about the human body and about life. Thus far, in spite of the grisly predictions of dead bodies littering the streets of Africa, and in spite of not having had as much access to vaccines as the developed world, Africa seems, mercifully, to have escaped the worst of the COVID death rates. And, for that, we thank God.

Ghana wants to share a few thoughts, which, we believe, should form the basis for the new global co-operation.

Firstly, we need to strengthen the funding of the existing global health organisations. This must include a greater, more predictable base of

multilateral funding for WHO and Regional Centres of Disease Controls, which play the central roles in global health security. It will require dedicating an additional one percent (1%) of GDP to funding global health. This is an investment in a global public good, not aid.

Secondly, we must develop more resilient finances to build back better, and for future preparedness. Across the African continent, revenues have decreased by as much as one hundred and fifty billion dollars (\$150 billion), as economies are still reeling from the economic impact of the pandemic. African governments have already spent scarce reserves fighting the pandemic, and providing social protection to millions of affected households. Ghana has been advocating that innovative financing must also address structural challenges beyond responding to immediate fiscal needs, by providing mechanisms to facilitate investments in health infrastructure, technology, the environment, and people that would bolster resilience and equitable recovery.

The IMF's unprecedented six hundred-and-fifty-billion-dollar (\$650 billion) SDR allocation offers a unique opportunity to provide additional financial resources to address the vast and surging inequities the pandemic has revealed, and a crisis to come. Africa's allocation is some thirty-three billion dollars (\$33 billion). If there was ever a time for an African Marshall Plan, it is now! The SDR infusion should be seized upon as a catalytic effort to leapfrog Africa to the next level of human development, and ensure sustained global prosperity. African leaders have advocated for a prudent and transparent channelling of twenty-five to thirty-five percent (25%-35%) of SDRs, that is one hundred and sixty to two hundred and thirty billion dollars, from wealthier to vulnerable countries, one hundred billion dollars (\$100 billion) of which should be dedicated to Africa. We welcome the support of the European countries represented at the Africa Summit in France, the IMF, the G7 and G20, to some SDR redistribution.

Mr President, proceeds of channelled SDRs should fund vaccine acquisition and manufacturing, climate and green investments, and a pan-African Stability Mechanism, like the European Stability Mechanism, that would safeguard financial stability on the continent. A part of the redistribution should also help fund the recapitalisation of the African Development Bank and Afreximbank to support industrialisation, private-sector job creation and the African Continental Free Trade initiative.

Thirdly, we must re-position key multilateral organisations and international financial institutions such as the United Nations, the other Bretton Woods Institutions, and the G20 to reflect inclusiveness, support country investments in global public goods, and ensure fast-tracked financial support to build back better, and prepare for future pandemics. For instance, the key to the G20's effectiveness is that it achieves representative coverage of the global population and economy with a diversified enough number of leaders at the table, to enable speed and flexibility in deliberation and decision-making.

Admitting the African Union to an expanded G21 would have the same galvanising effect within Africa that the EU's participation in the G20 has within Europe, strengthening policy co-ordination and coherence across the fifty-four (54) African economies. With the African Union at the table, the group suddenly would have representation for fifty-four (54) more countries, 1.3 billion more people, and \$2.3 trillion more output. This extraordinary increase in representation will add just one seat to the table, and about ten minutes to the discussion. However, it will redefine global policy co-ordination to enable a more prosperous, inclusive and sustainable world to emerge.

Fourthly, we, in Africa, are as committed as any to the fight against Climate Change. We believe, however, that the fight is better-advanced if we are able to maintain the crucial balance between economic, political and environmental imperatives – positions that we will be articulating in Glasgow, at the COP 26 Conference, which should form part of the new Global Compact.

Lastly, now more than ever, we must defend democracy, constitutional rule and human rights in the world. In the last twenty-four (24) months, we have witnessed assaults on democracy around the world, sometimes even in developed countries where we had assumed that a consensus on the democratic form of governance had been established.

Mr. President, in West Africa, recent events in Mali and Guinea have undermined democratic governance in our Region. ECOWAS, the regional body whose Authority I have the honour to be the current Chair, is unreservedly committed to maintaining democratic governance in the ECOWAS Community. That is why both Guinea and Mali, foundation members of the Community, have been suspended from its organisation,

pending the restoration of democratic governance. We welcome the support of the United Nations for the measures taken.

ECOWAS has given Guinea six (6) months to do so, and requested the immediate release of President Alpha Conde. On my visit to Conakry last Friday, the military leaders indicated their willingness to see to his imminent release, and it is our hope that they will keep to their word. The Authority has also made it clear to the military government in Mali, that it is not prepared to negotiate an extension to the February deadline for the holding of democratic elections, as the essential steps to be taken can, with political will, be effected within the ECOWAS-sanctioned timetable. It is better that a government, with a democratic mandate, be in place as soon as possible, to implement the necessary reforms for the future stability and growth of Mali, thereby enhancing capacity for the all-important fight against terrorism in Mali and in the wider Sahel.

We, in Ghana, highly resolve that we will continue to defend democracy and constitutional rule, and uphold human rights. We shall work to strengthen the institutions that support democracy in our country and in our Region.

We shall continue to support the United Nations and other international organisations to help remind us that, indeed, no man is an island, entire of itself.

I thank you for your attention.