

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA,
NANA ADDO DANKWA AKUFO-ADDU,
AT THE 78TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL
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***"Leaving no one behind: Acting together for the advancement of
peace, sustainable development, and human dignity for present
and future generations"***

President of the General Assembly,
Secretary-General,
Excellencies, Heads of State and Government
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I cannot help but reflect on the significance of this moment, as this will be my final opportunity to address the United Nations General Assembly, as I enter the closing months of my presidency. Over the past eight years, I have had the privilege of speaking on several variations of the essential themes that, quite properly, dominate the deliberations of this global assembly – the condition of humanity and the state of the planet. Serving the people of Ghana, and by extension, those of West Africa, Africa, and the world, has truly been the greatest blessing of my life. Mr. President, Ghana congratulates you on your election to preside over the affairs of the 78th Session of the General Assembly. You can count on Ghana's support.

Indeed, being here this morning fills me with both pride and humility—pride in the limited progress we have made together as nations, and humility in recognising the challenges that still remain. My time as President has been deeply fulfilling, and I am profoundly grateful for the trust placed in me by my fellow Ghanaians. It has been an honour to serve them and to contribute to advancing peace, security, and development on the global stage.

Mr President, I am here with a heart full of hope, yet mindful of the great challenges that still confront us. As President of the Republic of Ghana, and as a citizen of the world, I am acutely aware of the shared responsibility we

carry. Our work here is nothing less than shaping the future of humanity – a future that will affect generations long after we are gone.

"Leaving no one behind: Acting together for the advancement of peace, sustainable development, and human dignity for present and future generations" reminds us that the decisions we take here will define whether we rise to meet the hopes of billions or continue to let inequalities and injustices persist. We owe it to those who look to this body for leadership to act, and not just to talk.

The world we live in today is a stark, unfortunate contrast of privilege and hardship. For too long, the voices of those marginalised—those left behind—have been drowned out. They constitute the bulk of humanity. These are the voices of the poor, the displaced, the vulnerable. We cannot, in good conscience, leave them behind. They should be at the centre of our discussions and our decisions.

Africa, in particular, knows the cost of being left out. Yes, we are a continent rich in potential and resilient in the face of adversity, but we have also been disadvantaged by a global system that has generally treated us as an afterthought. We have been viewed merely as passive recipients of aid, rather than as equal partners in global progress. The well-meaning promises of assistance have failed to materialise to bring about the long-term change we so passionately need. Such aid, as is offered, often comes with strings attached, limiting our ability to shape our own futures.

Africa is not a continent of despair, she is full of great possibilities. She is required, however, to chart a new course of development. Our young population is filled with energy, creativity and ambition. The people of Africa are not asking for handouts—they are demanding opportunities in a new global architecture so they can have access to education, healthcare and jobs, to be able to build better lives for themselves, their families and their descendants.

In Ghana, we have taken bold and decisive steps to ensure that no one is left behind in our national development. We have shown that it is possible!

Our flagship Free Senior High School policy has benefitted five-point-seven-million (5.7 million) young people, many of whom would have been denied the opportunity to learn, to dream and to succeed. This initiative has transformed the lives of millions, positioning the next generation of Ghanaians to take their place as leaders in the global economy. But this is just the beginning. We need a global commitment to ensure that every child, no matter where they are born, has access to quality education. A world where children are left unprepared for the challenges ahead is not a just world.

Beyond education, we have also prioritised healthcare for our people. Through Agenda 111, my government has embarked on the largest-ever healthcare infrastructure project in Ghana's history. This initiative is constructing one hundred and eleven (111) hospitals across the country, ensuring that even the most remote regions have access to modern healthcare facilities. This is part of our broader goal of ensuring that no one in Ghana is left without the basic right to health.

We have also taken significant steps to boost food security and economic growth through the Programme for Planting for Food and Jobs. This initiative has improved food production, created jobs and enhanced incomes for millions of Ghanaians. It is a clear demonstration that, with the right policies and investments, we can transform our agricultural sector and ensure that no one goes hungry. In the same vein, our 1-District-1-Factory policy is transforming the industrial landscape of the nation, generating the structural transformation of our economy, which is our major strategic objective.

In addition, Ghana has embraced, in full, the teachings of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and is actively pursuing an agenda of digitalisation. Under my administration, we have revolutionised public service delivery by integrating technology into governance. From the introduction of the Ghana Card, which has streamlined identification and access to services, to the digitisation of the country's land registry, these reforms have enhanced transparency, efficiency, and accountability. Digitalisation has improved the lives of ordinary Ghanaians, and has also laid the groundwork for sustainable economic growth in the digital age.

And let us not forget the strides we have made in enhancing the rule of law and governance. Through reforms in the judicial system, strengthening our democratic institutions, and promoting transparency, Ghana continues to be a beacon of good governance in Africa. We have enacted laws and implemented policies that uphold the principles of accountability and ensure that every Ghanaian, regardless of their background, is protected by the rule of law.

Mr President, it is impossible to address the challenges of today without speaking of the contradictions that exist within this global institution. We gather here to discuss peace, but wars continue to ravage nations. We speak of justice, yet injustice endures.

Take the Russian invasion of Ukraine, for instance. Millions of lives have been uprooted, thousands have lost their lives, and, yet, the Security Council has struggled to respond decisively, just as it is struggling to make a decisive intervention in the tragic, ongoing war in Gaza. The structure of the Council reflects a world that no longer exists, and its failure to act in times of crisis raises a difficult question: what is the purpose of the Security Council if it cannot intervene when the world needs it most?

Reforming the UN Security Council is a matter of fairness and necessity. The current structure, created in 1945, no longer reflects the realities of today's geopolitical and economic landscape. Africa, Latin America, and South Asia remain underrepresented, despite their significant influence on global affairs. This lack of representation undermines the legitimacy of the Council's decisions, and the use of veto power by a few permanent members often paralyzes its ability to act effectively during crises. Reform is essential to ensure that the Council is more inclusive, democratic, and responsive to the complex challenges we face today. The world has changed, and the Security Council must change with it to maintain its relevance in promoting global peace and security.

For years, I have championed the need to reform the Security Council as per the Ezulwini Consensus, the Common African Position on UN Reform, which calls for Africa to have a permanent seat on the Council. It is incomprehensible that a continent of 1.4 billion people has no permanent voice in shaping decisions that affect global peace and security. The time for

half measures is over. We need a Security Council that is fit for purpose in today's world. It is heartening, however, that, finally, the demand for Reform has found acceptance by leaders of two (2) of the Five (5) Permanent Members – President Joe Biden of the United States of America, and President Emmanuel Macron of France. Hopefully, the others will soon follow suit.

We must also recognise that the fight for peace goes beyond government actions. It is a fight for humanity itself. In Africa, we have often borne the brunt of conflicts, sending our troops to peacekeeping missions with limited support from the global community. While I am pleased to see the UN taking steps to finance peacekeeping in Africa, an outcome of Ghana's presidency of the UN Security Council, we must go further. Peacekeeping alone is not enough. We must address the potential causes of conflict—poverty, inequality and lack of opportunity. True peace comes from investing in education, healthcare and economic development.

However, peace cannot be imposed from the outside. It must be built from within. African nations must take ownership of their security, and the African Union needs to strengthen itself to be able to respond swiftly to threats.

Mr President, as I speak today, ongoing developments in West Africa are deeply troubling. Military coups in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso and Niger threaten the democratic progress we have worked so hard to achieve within the ECOWAS Community. These coups are stark reminders that democracy is, indeed, fragile and must be continually nurtured.

In Ghana, however, we remain resolute in our commitment to democracy. As my presidency draws to a close, I want to assure this Assembly that the upcoming 2024 elections in Ghana will be free, fair and transparent. Ghanaians have demonstrated time and time again, in the last three (3) decades, their strong attachment to democracy, which they will not permit to be undermined. The Electoral Commission, supported by Ghana's security services, is well-equipped to ensure that the will of the Ghanaian people is respected. Ghana has long been a beacon of democracy in Africa, and we intend to keep it that way.

The people of Ghana, from every corner of the country, have made their voices clear: they will not tolerate any attempts to disrupt the democratic process. Ghanaians are deeply proud of their democratic heritage, and they will protect it at all costs. The 2024 elections will be proof of our enduring adherence to the rule of law, transparency and the principles of democratic accountability that have guided our nation in recent decades.

Mr President, we find ourselves at a pivotal moment in history. The decisions we make today will shape the future of our world. We can choose to act with courage, compassion and a commitment to leave no one behind – or we can choose inaction, and allow the suffering of millions and the degradation of the planet to continue.

Let me end by reminding us all that the future is not something that simply happens—it is something we create. We have the power in this room to change the course of history. Let us not shy away from that responsibility. Let us act now, and let us act together.

I wish you God's blessings in all your current and future deliberations.

I thank you for your attention.