

REMARKS BY GHANA'S AMBASSADOR TO NORWAY, H.E. MRS.
JENNIFER LARTEY ON THE OCCASION OF GHANA'S
64TH INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION

Fellow Ghanaians,

Today, the 6th of March, marks yet another remarkable milestone in the history of our Nation; as we celebrates 64 years of Independence. For us Ghanaians, living whether at home or abroad, the day fills us with pride and joy. The freedom of Ghana which was won on March 6, 1957 served as a symbol of hope and trail blazer for the independence movement throughout Africa. The commemoration of our independence is therefore always a reminder of the strength and resilience of the country's founders and ordinary Ghanaians who fought for our Nation's freedom.

As a people, the celebration of an important occasion such as today, is usually marked by ostentatious display of ceremonial grandeur featuring our culture, food and music while we showcase our Ghanaian hospitality with our guests.

Unfortunately, the Coronavirus pandemic has made it impossible to meet to mark this occasion as intended. The COVID-19 pandemic remains a challenge to all nations and has contributed to the restricted way we are observing the Day this year. The pandemic has not only affected the way we meet but our health and in some cases the loss of lives of dear ones. In this regard, I wish to, convey my deepest sympathies to all bereaved families who have unfortunately lost their loved ones through this pandemic. Please join me as we observe a minute silence in honour of the departed souls.

May their gentle souls rest in the bosom of the Almighty. Our thoughts and prayers are also with those who may be battling the virus and wish them speedy recovery. The current situation underscores the importance of us all continuing to strictly adhere to the laid-down Covid-19 protocols, rules and regulations by our respective countries. Our collective efforts will pay off and this shall pass.

My dear Compatriots,

Let us be encouraged by the journey of our nation thus far. Ghana is globally acclaimed a beacon of democracy. Our democratic norms are entrenched, the rule of law is respected, and there is an active civil society. We have a Government which is in pursuit of a development agenda based on transparent and accountable governance, a strong economy geared towards the creation of real jobs, the rapid expansion of infrastructure for accelerated growth, and the investment in the people of Ghana for the creation of a productive human resource base.

As you may recall during the historic visit of President Akufo-Addo to Norway last year, he informed us of some developmental strides achieved under his administration. Some of these included the implementation of the free SHS programme, the reduction in inflation rate to about 7.6% and the establishment of 58 Factories so far under the One-District-One-Factory Initiative resulting in 10,983 direct jobs and 43,900 indirect jobs just to name a few.

Many nations have also made their unique contributions to the success of our nation. The Kingdom of Norway, being one, shares a common relationship with Ghana. The leaders of both countries serve as co-Chairs of the Eminent Group of Advocates of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Their role is to help promote the universal sustainable development agenda, raise awareness of the integrated nature of the SDGs, and to foster the engagement of new stakeholders in the implementation of these Goals.

Additionally, Norway in its support of the COVAX Scheme which has an aim to ensure the equitable distribution of Covid-19 vaccines, pledged some 164million kroner towards supporting the Scheme. It is under this Scheme that Ghana, on 24th February, 2021, became the first African country to receive 600,000 doses of the AstraZeneca and Oxford University vaccines. The vaccination exercise began on Monday, 1st March, 2021, and the President, First Lady, Vice President and Second Lady as well as some other high-profile citizens took their first jab during a live broadcast.

Norway remains an important partner of Ghana, and as an Embassy, we will continue to work to deepen the strong relations between the two countries.

Fellow Ghanaians,

As most of you may know by now, Ghana proudly serves as the headquarters of the Secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), a flagship project of the African Union's Agenda 2063. The AfCFTA has the aim of establishing a single market for goods and services thus allowing for the free movement of business, travelers and investments and also creating a unified customs union to streamline trade on the Continent. With the Agreement being fully implemented since 1st January, 2021, regional income stands to be boosted by about \$450billion, 30million people could be brought out of poverty while the income of over 68million Africans could also be raised above average.

Fellow Ghanaians,

In my concluding remarks, I am hopeful that we will come out of these difficult times victorious because we are a resilient and strong people. I wish to encourage us all to look to the future with optimism and let today serve as a reminder of what can be achieved when we remain strong and united.

Long live Ghana! Long live Ghana-Norway relations.

And may God bless our homeland Ghana and make our nation great and strong!

I thank you for your attention.