

BUILDING THE GHANA WE WANT TOGETHER

A CAMPAIGN LAUNCH

BY

HE JOHN DRAMANI MAHAMA

Our hardworking Branch and constituency executives,

Party Members and supporters

Regional Executives

Members of the Council of Elders

National Executives present here

Invited Guests

Our media friends

My wife, Lordina

My brothers and sisters,

I thank you, sincerely, for answering my invitation to attend this campaign launch. I am delighted by this opportunity to engage with you, the good people of Ghana, once again.

I am greatly humbled to be addressing all of you present here, the millions glued to your television and radio sets, and those tuning in via the internet in Ghana and across the world.

Thank you for sharing your morning with me. I do not take this for granted. Thank you.

As I drove onto the campus of the University of Health and Allied Sciences, built during the tenure of our Great Party, I could not help but feel a sense of fulfilment that the dream and vision of our late President, Professor John Evans Atta Mills, has been actualized in a most beautiful way.

The Volta Region retains a towering significance in the history of our great party the NDC.

Our founder and former President Flt Lt Jerry John Rawlings of blessed memory, whose courage and vision inspired the formation of the NDC, hailed from this region.

Other stalwarts, dead and living, like Security Chief, Captain Kojo Tsikata, Literature Icon and former Chairman of the Council of State Professor Kofi Nyidevu Awoonor, Former Speaker Edward Doe Adjaho, Ambassador Dan Abodakpi, former Transport Minister, the late Dzifa Aku Attivor, and many others too numerous to mention, are all natives of this region, and have toiled tirelessly to build our great party the NDC and our beloved nation, Ghana.

It is no coincidence that we are holding this launch here as a tribute to the many illustrious sons and daughters of the Volta Region who have toiled and continue to work tirelessly for our great party.

[Moment of Silence for the departed]

The English Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley in 1817 wrote a famous poem titled “Ozymandias”. This was a cautionary tale about a ruler who was so full of pomp, arrogance, and a deluded sense of self-importance.

One is struck by the poet’s description of the clueless ruler as he goes on to boast: “My name is Ozymandias; King of Kings; Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!”

Tragically, according to the poem, when one looked around for these so-called works, one saw nothing except the decay. This poem mirrors our present national circumstance in a most uncanny way.

Fellow country men and women; my brothers and sisters, I thank Professor Joshua Alabi, the Convenor of my Campaign Committee, a former Vice Chancellor of the University of Professional Studies, Accra, and an aspirant in the 2019 Presidential primaries for picking my nomination forms last week.

I also wish to thank the hundreds of party supporters who accompanied Professor Alabi to perform that task on my behalf.

By that action, I have officially joined the race to contest for the flagbearer slot of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) for the 2024 elections, which I consider to be the most important and defining poll of our time.

I have not taken this step lightly. It has been the product of months of prayer, broad consultations, and sober reflection.

I have searched my soul and paid close attention to your voices, to your daily struggles, to our present predicament.

At this stage, Ghana demands experience, not experiments!

Ghana demands togetherness, not divisiveness!

Now is the time for bravery of heart and clarity of purpose.

Six years ago, despite our best efforts, the people of Ghana entrusted the management and administration of this country into the hands of the NPP.

They did so in the hope that the many mouth-watering promises made to them would translate into meaningful action that would mark an improvement in their living conditions and the general wellbeing of our country.

Six years on, those hopes have been dashed. Instead of the prosperity and progress that was promised, the last six years have been, perhaps, the most difficult and challenging period in our history.

This government has been clueless and, in many cases, callous.

The unthinkable has happened and our country is broken on all fronts. Ghana is bankrupt. We are saddled with debt we simply cannot pay, and we have suffered the global humiliation of defaulting on our debts and being downgraded by credit rating agencies to the lowest levels in our history.

Our economy is in its worst ever shape, with suffering and pain on an unprecedented scale. Hyperinflation and an ever-increasing price of basic items including food have all combined to inflict unbearable pain on millions of Ghanaian households.

Parents are being forced to make hard choices between seeking prompt health care for their sick children and providing meals with their meagre resources for families.

Our middle class stands the real risk of being wiped out on the back of an obnoxious debt restructuring programme. The poor who depend on the middle class for employment and sustenance are on their own and uncertain of their fate.

Our aged pensioners have not been spared either. In the past few weeks they have been compelled to stage public manifestations in defense of their livelihoods even in their elderly state.

Who would have thought that Ghana would come to a juncture where a government would mete out such shabby treatment to our senior citizens whose only crime is that they put their life savings in what is considered the safest financial instruments in the world - Government Bonds.

We are at this most depressing phase in our history where our economy has been destroyed because of the systematic mismanagement, misguided and clueless policy choices, and incompetence of President Akufo-Addo and Vice President Bawumia.

While our people struggle to keep their heads above water, government officials continue to exhibit high levels of greed, corruption, arrogance of power, dishonesty, blatant state capture and conflict of interest.

Unsurprisingly, no one in this NPP government wants to take responsibility for anything, including their flagbearer hopefuls, most of whom were part of their Economic Management Team.

They continue to lay blame for their economic disaster on external factors whose relationship with our present sorry circumstances are at most tenuous.

We all know that this economic collapse has been years in the making just as we know it was entirely avoidable.

Amid all the suffering, the government remains obstinate and refuses to back down from the costly missteps that led us here in the first place.

They continue to waste the precious little we have on dodgy and misguided projects, programmes and on a bloated government.

As they tighten the noose on the helpless citizenry by piling on more taxes and expropriating our money through measures like the domestic debt exchange, government offers no semblance of genuine sacrifice on its part.

The national decay of the last six years has not been limited to the economy. It extends to all aspects of our lives.

Our hitherto trusted state institutions today stand as pale shadows of themselves, undermined, and politicized to the point that they consider themselves an extension of the governing New Patriotic Party.

The youth see no future in their country of birth.

They see no silver lining at the edge of the clouds, which often appears dark and gloomy, with no ray of sunshine seeping through.

Who is to blame them when after years of struggling to earn an education, they are condemned to unemployment and acute lack of opportunities?

If not remedied, through my agenda to Build The Ghana We Want Together from 2025, some graduates and post-graduate degree holders may hit the pension age and never employed in their entire lives, save for national service.

It should worry us deeply that the average young Ghanaian would grasp any opportunity to flee the despondent climate under which they live in favour of even the most menial jobs in other countries.

We have always had our people going in search of greener pastures abroad, but the current mass exodus of active workers and professionals is profoundly worrying.

The loss of all hope that anything good can come out of this country or that any available opportunities will be equitably shared among our people has accounted for this.

For some sections of our population, the unravelling of our national fabric and the collapse of our economy under this government forms sufficient basis to dismiss all public office holders and politicians, both in government and out of government, as the same.

Some have lost all hope in the democratic experiment and believe it is no better than other forms of governance.

These are the predictable effects of the betrayal of the people's trust by the President, his Vice and crop of officials.

I wish I could say this in a more pleasant way, but you are the better judges.

Our present state and its effects on our people trouble me a lot.

This is why, as you have observed, at every significant wrong turn taken by government, I have, with the benefit of experience, provided alternative solutions and even offered the expertise and knowledge of some of my party's members to help get us out of the challenges.

This is because there is an increasing gap right now between the Ghanaian society and Ghana's political system. And it is one of the reasons why a change has become absolutely necessary.

Off course, I know how to deliver that badly needed change because, during the last three to four years, I have studied our problems, I have continued to listen to each and every one of you, and to a variety of scholars and experts – I can say with full confidence that I learned a lot during the period and I am ready to be the President Ghanaians are looking for.

In our present state, it is no longer sufficient to sit on the sidelines and offer suggestions, which are most likely to be ignored.

I am therefore coming before you, in all humility, and in response to calls from my party and the generality of the people of Ghana, to offer myself, to serve this country and its people that I love so dearly, by first putting myself up for election in the NDC Presidential Primaries.

There are many who say that my words, just before leaving office in 2016, that posterity will be my judge, have proven prophetic in the face of the disastrous performance of the NPP government and their harrowing dismantling of our country's prospects.

I am not the kind of leader who derives pleasure from or who can smile at our failings — even the failings of my political opponents.

As noted by Otto Von Bismarck, a wise man learns from the mistakes of others. As far as I am concerned, there is no vindication to be derived from the sufferings of the Ghanaian people.

I am offering myself for public office at this time because I appreciate the enormity of the task ahead owing to the level of damage done to our country by this government.

And I also know that such a mountainous task requires a steady, unifying, and experienced hand to build the Ghana we want together. This is no time for experimentation. Ghana at this time does not need a “try me too” leader.

Our country urgently needs a leader with an unwavering desire to get things done in a no-frills, no thrills, business-like manner.

Not one enamored with sloganeering, excessive partisanship, personal comfort, and shallow populism.

Ghana’s next leader should exercise sound judgement and be able to make the right calls and at the right time. A leader who accepts responsibility and works to fix the problem and not shift blame onto others.

The leader should be one whose heart is filled with compassion for the people and who has the humility to connect with and understand the needs of the people he serves.

Our country requires a visionary leader who would build a prosperous and progressive Ghana for all Ghanaians and not a few.

We, in the NDC, will not run a government of slogans; instead, we will run a government of action.

A leader should be held accountable for his promises to the people. Your word should always be your bond. Ghana's next leader should exercise sound judgement and be able to make the right calls and at the right time.

Such a leader must have the humility and presence of mind to take responsibility for what has gone wrong and be willing to act timeously to get the numerous problems resolved.

He should be a leader whose heart is filled with compassion for the people and who has the humility to connect with and understand the needs of the people he serves.

He should not be a leader who views the public purse as a family heirloom or even the mandate given him to govern as the manifestation of a birthright. A leader who has his sights on leaving a legacy for posterity.

With all the humility I can muster, I believe I possess these qualities and that I am uniquely placed, having sat back the past few years to take stock of our country's path.

I am aware of the extent of work that awaits the next government. There is so much to fix; there is so much to repair; and there is so much to heal.

But I am set and ready! Very ready, to Build The Ghana We Want Together with you.

Our mission is to get out of the current nightmare. And to get out of it together, reaching to one another, listening to one another, providing hope for all.

Working with a pool of experienced, talented, and passionate men and women, and with many others from non-political backgrounds including the private sector and

civil society who simply want the best for Ghana and who desire to transform our country and its people, it can and will be done.

The first order of business will be to reset our country to its default settings as envisioned by the founders of the 4th Republic.

A nation of peace and prosperity, built on the principle of integrity, justice and equity, respect for human rights and personal freedoms, a leadership of modesty and humility that forges consensus and carries the people along in the implementation of its policies and programmes.

At the top of our priorities as the new government in 2025, God willing (Insha Allah), is to restore stability and inclusive growth to the economy.

This we will do by bringing the various indicators under control to relieve Ghanaians of their suffering.

We will strictly enforce prudence and responsibility in the management of public finances by cutting out waste and ostentation, which have become common place under this administration.

Together, we will build the Ghana we want.

We shall restore faith in our almost collapsed financial system and embark on sweeping reforms at the Bank of Ghana.

We shall actively pursue policies to ensure robust local participation in our banking, financial, telecommunications, mining, agriculture, agribusiness and manufacturing sectors.

This will be anchored on our plan to grow the economy and create sustainable employment for our youth.

We will make investments in productive sectors of the economy like agriculture, industry, technology, digitilisation and tourism to spur growth and generate jobs for the teeming youth who continue to lose hope by the day.

With the limited fiscal space, we are likely to inherit because of the mismanagement of the economy under NPP, a new NDC Government will give priority to continuing and completing abandoned and ongoing projects rather than rushing to commence new ones.

I shall assemble and operate the leanest but most efficient government under our fourth republic.

We will reduce, significantly, the size of government. As I announced in my Ghana We Want address at UPSA late last year, I will form a government of less than sixty (60) ministers and deputy ministers of state.

I will initiate and undertake the most far-reaching constitutional, political and governance reforms under the fourth republic aimed at restoring confidence in our democracy and governance systems while making life easier and better for our people.

In response to the concerns and calls from many of you, I will initiate and undertake the most far-reaching constitutional, political and governance reforms aimed at restoring confidence in our democracy.

We will continue and bring to conclusion the constitution review process began by President Atta Mills including a review of the controversial article 71 to reduce the number of office holders, and remove the disparities in privileges and emoluments vis a vis the public and civil service.

The payment of ex-gratia to members of the executive under Article 71 will be scrapped. The necessary constitutional steps to abolish that payment will start in earnest in 2025.

I will also begin the process to persuade other arms of government to accept same.

Issues pertaining to the excessive powers of the President, proper separation of powers, strengthening of parliament, restoring true independence to the judiciary, independent and quasi-independent state institutions and depoliticizing them will take centre stage.

With renewed vigor, we will work to restore confidence in all institutions of state, so that our people will see their institutions working for them as they should with utmost professionalism and non-interference from political actors.

We must, for instance, end the chaos that now characterizes the Computerized School Selection and Placement System for BECE graduates.

As a first step, we should allow students to only complete their applications for SHS after they receive their BECE results.

They will be in a better position to know their actual grades and match them with the cut-off grades and raw scores of the senior high schools they wish to be admitted to.

This will moderate expectation, ensure effective demand based on real results and address uninformed demand. It will also root out corruption and blatant discrimination from the process.

Fellow country men and women, the time has come for Ghanaians to receive proper accountability from those they elect to political office.

This accountability can only be achieved by a new party in government. I promise Ghanaians, that I shall investigate how public funds were expended and this includes the Covid-19 Audit and the findings from the Auditor-General's reports over years.

We must clean the Augean stables and rid them of the filth and corruption.

The anti-corruption will be given unfettered space to do their work. The days of the infamous 'clearing agent' will be well and truly over. But to ensure efficiency and professionalism at this endeavor, institutions of state would be empowered to be independent in their work.

State owned enterprises will not be a gravy train for political apparatchiki.

We shall re-introduce the hallmark of my previous administration - tolerance for criticism and the creation of a conducive atmosphere for the media to do its work without the fear of threats, harassment, and possible assassination.

I have heard many of my party supporters say that the next NDC government must also exact its pound of flesh.

My brothers and sisters, I daresay, there is no use fighting for political power, if it is only to come and repeat the same mistakes of the NPP administration that have brought our dear nation to this sorry state.

We must therefore engage our grassroots to work together with us to build the Ghana we want.

To be able to achieve all the above, we must see different personalities and backgrounds. We must not see NDC and NPP. We must not see Ga, or Ewe or Akan or Dagomba. We must not look to religious differences. We must look to ourselves. We must look to Ghana. One united people.

You and I, hand in hand and working together. In Building The Ghana We Want Together, it will take grit. It will take determination. But we have what we did not have before – the benefit of hindsight and reflection from afar, and the benefit of experience – to improve upon our successes and avoid our mistakes.

As I roll out my campaign for the flagbearer slot of the NDC and subsequently during the national elections, I will engage as many of you in the public as possible and interface with various interest groups to tap into your views on how to fashion the Ghana we want.

As observed by Aldous Huxley “experience is not what happens to you; it is what you do with what happens to you.”

In the coming days, we will be having conversations about our country. But more important, we must put into action the plans that we would conceive together. It will not be easy. It will take grit. It will take determination. It will take tears. It will take sacrifice. I promise you I will share that pain and sacrifice with you. And above all I promise you hard work.

I want to assure you, my fellow Akatamansonians that I have heard your concerns on how to further strengthen our party.

I will certainly make you proud by addressing your needs, as we work to position the party to be more responsive to your needs.

We shall build the most formidable political party that every Ghanaian will be happy and proud to associate with.

Remember it was the NDC that provided the most road and water projects, educational, health and telecommunications infrastructure for you, across the country.

Remember it was the NDC that considered it prudent to build an airport in the Volta Region when the naysayers opposed and ridiculed it.

Too much has happened to us as a people. But we have a duty to ourselves to learn from history and chart a path accordingly.

“The greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things. He is the one that gets the people to do the greatest things” are the wise words of Ronald Reagan that I subscribe to.

The next government would not be about me. It would not be about forming a cadre of family and friends to enrich themselves at the expense of our people. It would be about you.

In all humility, with a rekindled spirit, renewed energy, and sharpened vision to help save our dear country, Ghana, I formally announce my candidacy and launch my campaign.

I am proud and honoured that our NDC family, young and old, men and women, from all over the country is supporting me.

I am humbled by your love, and I hope you know I love you all!

I must also thank the diverse group of individuals who continue to voluntarily donate towards my campaign.

Some of you – students, professionals, traders, okada riders among others – voluntarily set up platforms to mobilise funds to support my campaign.

Thank you very much.

I am John Dramani Mahama, your proven servant leader.

I ask you to bless me massively with your trust, and your votes on May 13 and subsequently on 7th December 2024 and I will return your generosity with hard work.

Ghana needs experience, not experiments!

Ghana used to be the shining light on the continent. I am of the strongest conviction that we can attain those heights again. I believe it. We will lead by example.

As I conclude, I wish to thank my wife, Lordina, who has been my dependable partner on my political journey.

Thank you all.

Akpe ka ka ka!!

Let's win this together!!!