

**STATEMENT BY HON.PATRICK YAW BOAMAH, MP FOR OKAIKWEI CENTRAL  
CONSTITUENCY ON THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 80<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY  
CELEBRATION OF FORMER PRESIDENT KUFUOR.**

I am grateful Rt. Hon Speaker for the opportunity to make a statement to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration of our Former President. (H.E JOHN AGYEKUM KUFUOR).

Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor was born on December 8, 1938 in Kumasi. He was the seventh of ten children to Nana Kwadwo Agyekum, head of the Oyoko royal family, and Nana Ama Dapaah, a Queen mother.

**EDUCATION**

Mr. Speaker, at school Mr. Agyekum Kufuor was good at both academics and sports. He liked schooling and so after graduation went on to attend and graduated from Prempeh College in Kumasi in 1959. At his graduation he was awarded five of the six awards given to the best students. He went on to study law at Lincoln's Inn in London, England. He passed his bar exam in 1961 and went on to Exeter College at Oxford University to pursue legal studies. After only one year of studying law, however, Kufuor realized that his passion lay not in the law but in politics. He switched degrees and started studying philosophy, politics, and economics. He graduated two years later.

**BIOGRAPHY**

Hon. Speaker While he was studying at Oxford, Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor met and fell in love with a woman named Theresa Mensah, who was also from Ghana and had gone to England to study nursing. The two married in 1962, and had five children together. At the time his wife and two young children back to Ghana, He agreed and took up law until 1969 as a way to make a living. He became the chief legal officer and the city manager of Kumasi in 1967, posts he held until 1969. Both of these posts allowed Kufuor a view of politics from the inside that he had never had before, and they inspired him on his future path.

## POLITICS

Mr. Speaker, Earlier in his career, he was twice elected Member of Parliament for Atwima Nwabiagya (1969–72) and (1979–81). He served as a Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs under Victor Owusu one of the men who used to visit his home when he was a boy in (1969-72) and represented Ghana's delegation to the United Nations (UN) in 1971; He was also Secretary for Local Government in (1982).

In 1972 the government was overthrown by the military, and many officials were thrown into jail, including President Kufuor. After his release he took up a career in business. He became chairman of the board of the Ashanti Brick and Construction Company.

Kufuor spent a long time in business before he returned into politics. It was not until 1996 that he ran for the office of the President on the ticket of the New Patriotic Party. He was not elected to the post, but was then re-elected in 1998 as the Flagbearer of the NPP to contest the Office of the President again.

Mr. Speaker Kufuor was elected president in 2000, defeating the late Professor John Evans Atta Mills. After such an extended period of rule by one person, many were nervous about how the turnover of power would go, but the change went smoothly. Kufuor managed to win the election with the platform of "**zero tolerance for corruption.**" The country had been rife with it before, and so the idea was appealing to many.

The country was also doing poorly economically, mostly because of such corruption, and people were ready for a change. Kufuor was nicknamed the "**gentle giant**" because he was tall at six feet, three inches and yet he seemed to instill confidence in those he was to lead.

## GOVERNANCE

Mr. Speaker, Under his presidency, Ghana witnessed the fastest growth in its history; attaining a Lower Middle-Income status by 2006 much earlier than the projected year of 2015 as envisaged under her own development agenda, and GDP growth reached a record 8.4% between 2007 and 2008, even during the international financial and economic crises.

He introduced a health insurance scheme, with free maternal care for pregnant women, under which about 56% of the population was registered in its early years and he also instituted the Free School Feeding programme to provide one nutritious meal a day for school children from kindergarten, (age four) to Primary School, (age 16). He also introduce LEAP as a tool to alleviating poverty.

Under President Kufuor, the Ghana's Agricultural Extension Service programme was reactivated and special attention paid to educating cocoa farmers on best practices, and also, government's take-over of free spraying of cocoa farms with pesticides. As a result, between 2002 and 2005, cocoa production in Ghana, the world's second largest producer, doubled from 350,000 tons to 734,000 tons a year, a record then in more than a century of cocoa production in the country. His government was able to predict in 2007 that Ghana's cocoa production would top one million tons by 2011, which truly came to pass.

Using similar measures, production of food crops, livestock and fish increased tremendously and poverty levels in Ghana were cut in half early in his administration.

Under his watch, Ghana experienced a very robust infrastructural development in the areas of roads, schools and hospitals, among others. Some of the road infrastructures are Tetteh Quarshie Interchange, Asafo Interchange, Sofo line Interchange, Pantang- Manfe Road, N1 Road and Achimota-Ofanko Road just to Mention a few.

President Kufuor's singular focus on finding hydrocarbons for Ghana yielded results when, in 2007, Ghana struck oil in commercial quantities. Due to his prudent measures, within three years, Ghana had become an oil-producing country. Today, Ghana produces more than 200, 000 barrels of oil a day, and a sizeable quantity of gas to feed energy production.

## **RETIREMENT.**

In retirement, President Kufuor has set up the John A. Kufuor Foundation for Leadership, Governance and Development that seeks to mentor the next generation of African leaders to equip them with the enlightened leadership qualities in all spheres of life that he thinks are necessary to govern Africa well for the assurance of peace and sustainable development on the continent.

Hon. Speaker, In 2011 he was named joint-winner, with former Brazilian President Ignacio Lula da Silva, of the World Food Prize for Food and Agriculture.

## **POSITION HELD AFTER RETIREMENT**

Mr. Speaker, From 2009 to 2015, he was the Global Ambassador against Hunger for the UN World Food Programme; Chairman of the UN Interpeace Program; Chairman of the Sanitation and Water for All Partnership; Global Envoy for the Neglected Tropical Diseases Alliance; and Lead Advocate for the Partnership for Child Development. He currently co-chairs the Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition since 2013.

President John Kufuor was in December 2013 appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki Moon, as one of three UN Special Envoys on Climate Change, which ended when the Paris Climate Accords were signed by the global community in December 2015.

Other positions President Kufuor has held include: President of the Italian development organization, Alliance for Africa; member of Club de Madrid; Director of Brenthurst Foundation of South Africa; Director of the Leon Sullivan Foundation, Director of the Netherlands Development Corporation. In 2014 he was made a member of the Global Citizenship Commission that was tasked with updating the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.

Mr. Speaker, Former President Kufuor, upon his retirement, was chosen as one of 10 distinguished global leaders tasked to work on the reform of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

He has served as leader of several election monitoring delegations to several African countries under the auspices of the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Kufuor has received numerous awards including; the Chatham House prize for good leadership by Queen Elizabeth II of Britain, Germany's highest national award - the Bundesversskreuz by former President Horst Kohler; Liberia's highest award of the Grand Cordon in the Most Venerable Order of the Knighthood of the Pioneers for helping to return peace to that country.

### **CONCLUSION**

Mr. Speaker, He is a living legend that need to be celebrated and I take this opportunity to wish Former President JOHN KOFI AGYEKUM KUFUOR HAPPY HAPPY BIRTHDAY.