

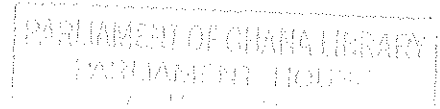
SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE RT. HON. JUSTICE D.F. ANNAN
O.S.G., SPEAKER OF THE PARLIAMENT OF GHANA TO THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA
ON THE OCCASION OF HIS OFFICIAL VISIT
IN SEPTEMBER, 1997

HONOURABLE MINISTERS

HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

EXCELLENCIES

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:



For the very warm welcome accorded me and my entourage by the Leadership of your Legislature a short while ago, I wish, on behalf of the two hundred elected Members of Ghana's Parliament and on my own behalf, to record our most sincere thanks and best wishes to all of you. Indeed, this is one visit I have been most anxious to undertake for some time now. The reception you have accorded us, is indeed a clear demonstration of the deep and unalloyed affection you have for the Leadership and people of our country, Ghana.

2. Our Parliament is indeed grateful for this opportunity to exchange ideas and share experiences with Honourable Members of Parliament and also to brief you generally on my country and also on aspects of our system of democratic governance.

Honourable Members of Parliament,

3. To begin with I wish to speak briefly about my country, Ghana. Ours is a tropical country located in the coastal area of Western Africa. It covers an area of

92,098 square miles (238,533) square kilometres and faces the Gulf of Guinea of the Atlantic Ocean on the South. The Ivory Coast borders it on the West, Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta) on the North West and North and Togo on the East. The climate is influenced by the hot dry continental air mass that originates in the Sahara Desert in the North and by the tropical maritime air mass that moves from the South-West across the Southern Atlantic. Except in the North there are two rainy seasons during April and June and September and October with an average annual range of rainfall between 40 and 50 inches and an annual mean temperature of from 78 F (26 C) to 84 F (29 C) inland. There are about seventy-five different tribes speaking a number of local dialects but the official language adopted is English. The religions of the people are Christianity, indigenous religion and Islam. About two-thirds of the population live in the rural areas. One-third of the total land area is covered by forests with one-eighth of the land area suitable for agriculture. The capital is Accra. Ghana's population is estimated at nearly 16.0 million.

4. Ghana has a developing mixed economy based on agriculture and mining. Despite economic difficulties it is still one of the most developed countries in tropical Africa. It is among one of the lowest Gross National Product per capita countries in the world, though it is above average for West Africa. Agriculture accounts for nearly 50 percent of the Gross National Product and employs more than half of the work force. Cocoa produces nearly 50 percent of foreign exchange earnings. Other economic products are timber, coffee and palm products. Cassava, maize, yams sorghum are some of the main staples. Main minerals produced for export are gold, diamonds, manganese and bauxite. Manufacturing is dominated by import - substituting industries producing food products, beverages, tobacco, textiles, timber wood products and refined petroleum. Electricity is obtained from the hydro project

at the Volta River dam at Akosombo. The country's Balance of Trade fluctuates with world cocoa and gold prices and budget deficits are financed by banking and non-banking financial institutions. Main imports are petroleum products, machinery, transport equipment and chemicals and main exports include cocoa, timber, gold, diamonds, manganese and bauxite. Prominent among Ghana's trading partners are the United Kingdom, United States of America, Germany and the Netherlands.

5. Ghana is a Member of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the Africa Development Bank and the World Trade Organisation. Since the early 1980's Ghana has gone through various stages of Structural Adjustment which have given a boost to its economy.

6. Ghana is a Member of the British Commonwealth of Nations. On the political scene, I wish to recount briefly the chequered experience of Ghana's progress towards democratic rule since its Independence from British Colonial rule on 6th March, 1957. The search for stable democratic system for Ghana has not been without its painful experiences. Within a period of one generation Ghana has seen three democratically elected governments swept away by military interventions. The uprisings of 1966, 1972 and 1979 and 1981 did create a deep suspicion in the minds of many Ghanaians that the systems of Government that were put in place as democratically elected were not meeting the aspirations of the people. Events in Ghana since the promulgation of the Fourth Republican Constitution in January, 1993 have, however proved the skeptics wrong. Many Ghanaians have endeavoured to see the Fourth Republican Constitution succeed because of their belief that only a stable democratic system of government can end poverty, the economic decline and the general state of crisis. Suffice it to say that our country is now resolved, in the light

of traumatic experiences associated with the spate of military interventions to stick to the spirit and practice of democratic governance which has enabled us to take our rightful place in the community of democratic states of the world.

7. What then have been the structure, functions and achievements of Ghana's Parliament over the past Four Sessions of the First Parliament and the two Meetings of the First Session of the Second Parliament of the Fourth Republic?

Current Parliament of Ghana - Structure, Functions and Performance

8. The basic structures and mechanisms used by Parliament to function since the First Session of the First Parliament of the 4th Republic and which still exists in a slightly modified form are as follows: Parliament comprises of 200 Members of three political parties and 2 Independent with a Speaker and 2 Deputy Speakers, a Majority Leader who is the Cabinet Minister responsible for the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, a Minority Leader (representing 66 Members). There are 27 Committees (11 Standing and 16 Select) the areas of responsibilities of most of which correspond to the work of various departments of Government and the public sector. Each Committee has a Chairman and a Vice Chairman. A Parliamentary Service Act, Act 460 of 23rd November, 1993 with its enabling Regulations approved as C.I. 11 of June, 1995 is in force. Under the overall authority of the Speaker, the Administration of Parliament is headed by a Clerk of Parliament with a number of Deputies and Assistants, an Editor of Debates and Parliamentary Reporters as well as other administrative and clerical staff. With the passage of the Parliamentary Service Act and the enabling Regulations, Parliament has taken the necessary steps to establish a solid Parliamentary Administration to provide conditions and scheme of service for officials of Parliament which have immensely facilitated the conduct of its operations

over the past four and half Sessions.

Functions Of Parliament

9. The Constitution requires Parliament to perform a wide variety of functions. Parliament's main task has not been necessarily to make laws or govern, but has also secured full discussion and ventilation of views on all matters placed before it. In this sense, Parliament ensures that Ministers are always liable to be required to explain and publicly justify their policies and their actions, that Parliament may be said to be the custodian of the liberties of the people.

10. Parliament also constitutionally discharges other very important functions in an inter-related network of functions and responsibilities both within the parliamentary system and also with bodies such as the Executive, the Judiciary and the Council of State, as well as political parties, professional, trade and business organisations, the Bank of Ghana, various departments of state, the Commission on Human Rights and administrative Justice, the National Media Commission and National Commission for Civic Education, among others. It is clear therefore that when Parliament approves or makes laws, it does so in the context of a much broader framework of responsibilities and actions that affect practically all major areas of national importance and the national interest.

11. Parliament also performs deliberative, investigatory and regulatory functions. In its deliberative functions Parliament considers a broad range of domestic and foreign policies and actions. In its investigative functions Parliament has the constitutional authority and duty, through its Standing and Select Committees to investigate and inquire into the activities and administration of ministries and

departments as may be necessary from time to time. The Committee System also enables Parliament to examine and assess legislative proposals in detail. A very critical aspect of Parliament's investigative function is located in the Appointments Committee. This Committee examines persons nominated by the President for appointment as Ministers of State and their Deputies as well as candidates for appointment as Chief Justice, and Justices of the Supreme Court and the regional representatives of the Council of State. In respect of its regulatory role, Parliament is called upon, by constitutional provision, to make laws to regulate the establishment and functioning of political parties and professional, trade and business organisations. The Leadership of the country have also recognised the overriding necessity for the Executive, Parliament and the Judiciary to work together as the three main branches of the Government linked by the common bonds of national interest and a shared responsibility to promote national development. The powers entrusted to each of these branches of Government are seen to operate as complementary processes, independently exercised at the institutional level but consciously directed to produce, in the final analysis, a co-ordinated and harmonious totality that serves the supreme interest of the nation. There has, therefore been a unifying spirit of nationalism exhibited over the past four and half years of Parliament amid traditional diversity of powers.

12. The activities undertaken by our Parliament, its performance and achievements over the past Four Sessions and Two Meetings have been modest but most encouraging. The initial thrust of business of Parliament during the First Session was to meet the constitutional deadline of establishing a number of commissions and other bodies within the first six months after the first sitting of Parliament in 1993. Parliament has debated, considered, amended and passed Bills mainly initiated by the

Executive. Some of the important bills were the Parliamentary Service Bill, the Serious Fraud Office Bill, the Local Government Bill and the Criminal Code Amendment Bill, the Finance and Appropriations Bills and the District Assemblies Common Fund Bill.

Parliament And Financial Management

13. Financial business and consideration of bills has taken much of the time of our Parliament. In the performance of its democratic functions, Parliament also accepts and debates major policy issues. In the conduct of a democratic Government the Executive state their purposes and objectives to give their opponents the opportunity to challenge and point out what they consider as errors and deficiencies of policy. Parliament has generally served as the principal organ for this kind of policy review. There are also stated occasions in Parliament when the general public policies of Government are declared and debated. The President's speeches at the Opening of Parliament prepared by Ministers serve as general declarations of the aims and intentions of Government and provided opportunities in the ensuing debates on the speeches for Ministers to explain their policies more fully and for their opponents to criticise. The Budget Speeches of the Ministers of Finance constituted other occasions when the general lines of Government policies were exposed for comments.

14. The deliberative function of Parliament which is sometimes called the function of criticism, is exercised in the main by substantive motions which lead to debate. During the past Four and half Sessions, Parliament deliberated on motions such as those on major foreign policy and Ministers and Members' Questions and Statements

which are popular parliamentary mechanisms. Parliamentary Investigative Committees demonstrate their ability to handle details of the policies, activities and administration of the functions of ministries and departments critically by looking closely at sectoral and departmental matters. Heads of Government Agencies are generally placed on the alert in the formulation of their policies and in the preparation and execution of their annual plans, programmes and budgets and also in the administration of their agencies.

15. Ghana has also been gender-sensitive in the selection and approval of candidates to fill vital positions in the political and public sectors of the economy. This move is the result of the recommendations made at the Beijing Conference which are now being implemented in earnest by all Agencies in Ghana. Indications are that women Parliamentarians in Ghana would equally benefit from the recommendations made by the Beijing Conference.

Honourable M.P's.

Relations Between Ghana And Cuba

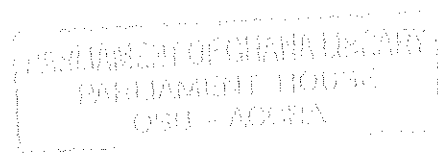
16. I deem it only fit and proper on this occasion to recount briefly the cordial and fruitful relations that have existed between the sovereign Governments and peoples of Ghana and Cuba. These relations date back to the early days of Ghana's Independence when the Government of the First Republic of Ghana sought the friendship of progressive States, including Cuba. Before the establishment of formal diplomatic relations, Ghana shared with Cuba identical views on many global issues. After the overthrow of the Government of the First Republic in 1966, Ghana's Mission in Havana was closed down, but in the 1970's, contacts were re-established and the Supreme Military Council (SMC) Government decided to concurrently

accredit Ghana's Permanent Mission in New York to Cuba. Ghana-Cuba relations made remarkable turn-round with the dawn of the June 4, 1979 Revolution and the subsequent visit to Cuba that year by Flt.Lt. Jerry John Rawlings, AFRC Chairman, for the non-Aligned Summit. In July 1984, the Chairman of the PNDC, Flt.Lt. J.J. Rawlings again, paid a visit to Cuba at the invitation of the Cuban leader, Fidel Castro Ruz. In January, 1993, a high-powered Cuban delegation, led by the Cuban Vice-President, Mr Juan Almada Bosque, visited Ghana and participated in the activities marking the inauguration of the Fourth Republic of Ghana. Another Cuban Vice-President, Esterban Lazo Hernandez, led a Cuban delegation to Ghana in April 1993, during which he briefed Ghanaian officials about difficulties facing Cuba.

17. Relations between Ghana and Cuba remained cordial, constantly lubricated with high-level official visits, including that of President Fidel Castro in May, 1994 while he was on his way to South Africa to attend the inauguration of Mandela as President. The Cuban Foreign Minister, Mr. Roberto Robaina, also visited Ghana in January, 1994. Ghanaian official visitors included Tsatsu Tsikata, Chief Executive of GNPC, and Kojo Yankah, then Deputy Minister for Information, who led a delegation to the World Solidarity Conference for Cuba in 1995. Besides, the Seventh Session of the Ghana-Cuba Inter-Government Joint Commission for Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation took place in Accra in April, 1994. Four months later, in August 1994, a 13-member Ghanaian delegation arrived in Cuba for discussions on mining and electricity technology, and in December of the same year, Ghana participated in the 11th Havana Trade Fair.

18. From 27th to 31st May, 1996, the 8th Session of the Joint Commission was held in Havana. The Ghanaian delegation was led by Mr. Edward K. Salia, then

Minister of Transport and Communications, while Mr. Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz, Minister of Foreign Trade, led the Cuban delegation. During the session, the two sides agreed on six major issues, including evaluation of the implementation of the Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation Programme for the period 1994 - 1996, economic and commercial objectives as well as bilateral Trade. Both sides also approved the Cooperation Programme for the 1996 - 1998 period, which included cooperation in the fields of health, agriculture, tourism, mining, energy, education, civil aviation, and science, technology and environment. The 9th Session is scheduled to take place in Accra in May, 1998.



Ghana-Cuba Economic Co-operation

19. The frequent exchange of high level visits resulted in various technical co-operation activities and boosted trade and economic relations between the two countries. It was during this period that Ghana and Cuba signed a master Protocol on Economic, Scientific, Educational, Health and Cultural Co-operation. Under this broad protocol, Cuba offered to train Ghanaian children at the Kwame Nkrumah School on the Isle of Youth from 1984. About 600 Ghanaians received pre-University level training. Another 185 and 325 Polytechnic and University students respectively received training in Cuba. In all, about a thousand Ghanaians benefitted from this training scheme before it was wound up in the early 1990s owing to the extreme economic difficulties Cuba began to face. Cuban technicians also came to assist Ghana in rehabilitating abandoned sugar industries with a comprehensive programme as to how to rehabilitate the State-owned Komenda Sugar Plantation. Disappointing Financial constraints however, prevented the implementation of the projects. In the case of the salt project, Cuban experts did extensive work on salt producing areas of Ghana in the Ada area and also in the Central Region. The result

is the Ghana-Cuban joint salt venture at Songhor Lagoon area in Ada. For a while in the decade of the '80's however, trade between the two countries blossomed. Ghana exported soap products and timber to Cuba in return for the latter's sugar. At one stage, the value of this trade was about U.S. \$25 million. In the medical field thirty-three Cuban medical experts are currently rendering dedicated services in rural areas throughout the country. Cuba is also helping to set up a medical faculty for the University of Development Studies at Tamale. Cooperation in all the above fields got up to a very good start and was of a special benefit to Ghana for a while. Unfortunately, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the socialist bloc and Eastern Europe, on which the Cubans had depended for the last three decades, Cuba was forced to scale-down the levels of activities under the headings mentioned earlier.

Honourable M.P's,

The Non-Aligned Movement

20. It is significant to note that both Ghana and Cuba have been committed members of the Non-Aligned Movement since its establishment. The policy of non-alignment reflected and still reflects a legitimate concern to avoid compromising sovereignty and independence. Among the principles and objectives of the Movement are individual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in each others internal affairs, equality and mutual respect, peaceful co-existence and economic co-operation and eradication of racism and racial discrimination. In conformity with its policy of non-alignment, Ghana had to take a position on the Helms-Burton Laws when it was passed by the United States against Cuba on 12th March, 1996. This law was passed to punish those countries that invest in the Cuban economy and thereby tighten the 37-year-old economic

blockade against Cuba. Parliament of Ghana denounced the legislation soon after it was passed and the Government condemned and still maintains its stand against the extra-territorial effect of the law as a violation of the principles of international trade and the concept of sovereignty and called for the withdrawal of the law. Since then, the international community, including the European Union, Japan and two other NATTA members of Canada and Mexico and almost all the Latin American countries have rejected the Law.

21. Finally, as a Member of NAM, Ghana will continue to make its contribution towards the achievement of the objective of a world of peace in which the rule of Law, equal opportunity, dignity, social justice and greatest material and spiritual prosperity for all members of the international community can be sustained. Ghana's stand on this issue was clearly restated at the recent Africa-Cuba solidarity conference in Cape Coast, Ghana.

CONCLUSION

22. This concludes my speech for this occasion. With this encouraging performance Report on Ghana's Parliament and the very cordial relationship that continue to exist between the Governments of the Republics of Ghana and Cuba, Ghanaians must in concert resolve to sustain the development of the quality of our democratic governance, political and economic stability and progress in the country. In our relations with Cuba therefore Ghana is always encouraged by Cuba's current determination to build a society that will ensure the welfare of all her citizens as a national policy.

23. One clear and happy development discernible all over the world now is the

universal attraction of the concept of democracy and a surge for it as a focus on human rights and as a sure medium of national development. For Ghana, democracy as a system of government has re-asserted its primacy and brought into sharper focus the relevance of parliamentary institutions in further promoting the cause of representative democracy, notwithstanding the transitional difficulties and hurdles which are inevitable in any resurgent society. Ghana can now look forward to unity, development and stability as the basic ingredients of good governance.

24. Finally, all Ghanaians have been called upon to recognise that Parliament is a premier publicly acceptable institution open to all our people to come forward to participate in its work by listening to debates, liaising with Members of Parliament and submitting petitions to Parliament for consideration. For all Ghanaians in future therefore Parliament should protect the socio-economic infrastructure for the achievement of socio-economic development which will ultimately lead to the increased welfare of all our people.