



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY HON. IGNATIUS BAFFOUR AWUAH (MP), MINISTER
FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR RELATIONS**

ON BEHALF OF

**H.E NANA ADDO DANKWA AKUFO-ADDO
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA, AT THE**

**108TH SESSION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR
MIGRATION (IOM), PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA SWITZERLAND ON WEDNESDAY,
29TH NOVEMBER, 2017**

Your Excellency Ambassador Martha Murras, Chairperson of IOM Council,

Your Excellency, Ambassador William Lacy Swing, Director - General of IOM,

Your Excellency, Ambassador Laura Thompson, Deputy Director General,

Excellencies, Ambassadors, Diplomats and Representatives of Member States and Observers,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen;

I am highly honoured to be part of this 108th Session of the Council of the International Organization for Migration which is taking place today. I consider this event significant for a number of reasons. First of all, it coincides with the conclusion of the consultation phase of the Global Compact for Migration. And secondly it follows the 1st Anniversary of IOM's admission into the United Nations system.

I wish to add my voice to the many others in congratulating you, Ambassador Martha Murras on your election as Chairperson of IOM. With your kind permission, may I also welcome the Republic of Cuba and Cook Island as the two new members, and to congratulate the Kingdom of Kuwait on her observer status.

Chair, I have the privilege to deliver to this august body, the goodwill and felicitations of H.E Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana to the able IOM leadership and your Bureau for achieving the visible successes we all see at this 108th Session of the Council. Chair, I join my peers and all others who spoke before me, to echo my deepest acknowledgement of the commitment of the Organization for the task of ensuring safe and orderly regular migration across the globe. I further commend IOM for delving into new opportunities and areas as a specialised organization within the UN and the global multilateral system, and in particular, for the support the organisation lends to African countries, including Ghana.

That said, I read the statement of His Excellency the President of Ghana:

“There is no doubt that we all live in an era of unprecedented surge in human mobility. More than one billion people are on the move around the world.

Article 21(1) (g) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana recognizes the free movement of people as a human right fundamental to the individual, including the right to leave and to enter Ghana. The Laws grant individuals immunity from forcible expulsion from Ghana. Thus, Ghana supports and is committed to free movement of persons on the continent without prejudice to national security. We have, as a result, gone to the next step to implement a migration-sensitive policy of issuing Visa-On-Arrival to our African brothers and sisters.

The World currently faces refugee crises involving the unprecedented movement of people who are displaced within their countries of origin, or the movement of people from countries of origin to some other destination countries in search of personal security, better opportunities and improvement of livelihood, among others. Climate change has been identified as one of the key drivers of migration. No doubt that climate change affects livelihoods and wealth creation by persons disproportionately by impacting on land, and natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, desertification, among others.

Excellences,

Countries all over the world need to prioritize social solidarity mechanisms globally. This can be achieved by aligning the tenets of Global Compact on Migration with Agenda 2030. To this end, as Co-chair of the United Nations Secretary-General's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Advocates I have pledged my commitment and maximum support in ensuring the full implementation of the migration-related SDG targets, which include;

- **SDG 4.b.** By 2020, to substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment into higher education, including vocational and technical training and information and communications technology, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries.
- **SDG 5.2** To Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking in persons and sexual and other types of exploitation.
- **SDG 8.7** Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.
- **SDG 8.8** Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.
- **SDG 10.7** Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.

- **SDG 10.C** By 2030, reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent.
- **SDG 16.2** End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.
- **SDG17.18** By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

Countries around the globe and the International Community must endeavour to implement these Goals, in a spirit of partnership in all areas of social, environmental, economic, and cultural practices to create meaningful well-being and sustainable peace for the benefit of all persons.

Chair,

It is my conviction that, we put aside excessive diplomatic platitudes and roll up our sleeves so that across the world, as key stakeholders, we walk the talk and not just talk the talk.

Chair,

As the world's migrant population grows and expands, one may ask: Is it not a paradox that hostility towards them appears to be growing from one country to another? I am personally appalled at the hostility being faced by migrants and the growing anti-migration sentiments being championed by some political leaders.

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

Reports in several countries around the continents, including unfortunately some members of the IOM, show that their citizens are anxious and apprehensive of the potential or perceived cross border transfer of hostility, precarious economy and

growing inequality. In reaction, xenophobia mongers are unscrupulously capitalizing on uneasiness to begin pointing fingers of blame at the migrant, who is considered the new comer, the stranger or the outsider, that becomes easy target for elimination, exploitation or oppression.

Chair. The threat of extremism, intolerance and xenophobia even in the most secured democratic countries is breeding a dangerous atmosphere of hatred and suspicion and has exacerbated human insecurity. In view of these challenging trends and potential recipe for global instability, the phenomenon of migration is increasingly becoming an emotive and polarized topic in many countries across the world and global fora of this kind.

The substance of abuse of human rights is on the rise, worse still, it is being diluted and condoned by some in authority, which in my conviction cannot be allowed to continue in the 21st Century. In our globalized village of today, we will only be playing the ostrich so long as we preach global peace without being pragmatic.

It against this background that Ghana joins all the UN members and members of IOM not only to condemn the atrocities of slavery reported in Libya, but more importantly, **Mr. Chair**, to first commend you for the quick response and to urge leadership to bring the perpetrators to justice in order restore sanity and human dignity to the victims and the affected countries. Indeed, our generation of leaders cannot allow the phenomenon of migration to become a source of further division among countries.

Ghana strongly believes that Governments must ensure that Human Rights are respected, and effectively and equitably accessible to each and every individual member of our societies, so as not to breed, foment or condone more discontent among people. Such an approach, among others, holds the prospect of real long-term benefits, globally.

Excellencies,

The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants admits that the multidimensional reality of migration must include collaboration across countries of origin, transit and destination. The Declaration also explicitly associates these concerns within the remit of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.

There have been a number of meetings and discussions among countries and International Organizations on measures to handle the challenges bedeviling migration across the world. Commendable among them is the Rabat Process Engagement.

Since 2006, the Rabat Process has been promoting policy dialogue for policy on migration issues through an approach that includes the link between migration and development. The Process is often cited as one of the most dynamic engagements on migration between Europe and Africa. Its focus at different levels of dialogue and the strategic framework which has evolved over time, can be ascribed or attributed to the cooperation and dialogue between Africa and the EU on migration which has gained prominence in recent times.

Ghana is aware that the EU community is currently at an important phase in its commitment to address irregular migration.

Laudable as these developments are, we are aware of recent calls also by some European leaders to curb migration by building capacities at the points of departure for migrants primarily in Niger, Chad and Libya by reinforcing their border security management. Ghana believes this should not be limited to these countries in the migration chain, but should be extended to other countries of origin. This in my view, will not only serve as a deterrent to potential irregular migration, but also help address human trafficking.

Excellencies,

Almost every day we see dramatic images of people making perilous journeys across the Mediterranean Sea to reach European shores.

At the 2015 Valletta Summit on Migration in Malta, the former President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz said, "The Mediterranean is the most dangerous route". This route is also responsible for the largest number of fatalities.

According to data from IOM, as at November 2017, about 4,995 people had been recorded dead or missing on the Mediterranean route alone. Sadly, this record represents an increase from the 2,925 casualties recorded in 2016.

This is not mere statistics as it may appear, but human lives. There is therefore urgent need to respond even more passionately to the arguments of the school of thought that walls and fences are the only way to deal with the escalating numbers of vulnerable migrants.

We cannot pretend to be unmoved by these images, and the need to take urgent action to stem the flow cannot come at another time than now. I wish to indicate therefore that, as laudable as the great efforts being made by the EU partners to focus on the situation in the countries of transit, may we not lose sight of the fundamental reason for such migration in the countries of origin; paramount being, unemployment.

Excellencies

Despite the enormous gains from migration, members should also not lose sight of the fact that the challenges require effective border management. The porous nature of borders in the African context calls for better standardized screening, registration and document issuance mechanism, which tallies with international standards.

I wish to reiterate that free movement brings in its wake related challenges such as, increased cross-border terrorists and gangs activities, increased human trafficking, increased smuggling, and obvious increase in irregular migration.

To ensure human security, Ghana has passed the Ghana Immigration Act, which permits Immigration officials at the country's borders weapons to protect all persons. The Government of Ghana is also putting in place measures to help improve the security services with modern logistics to operate more effectively and efficiently. The Government of Ghana will embark on a recruitment exercise to beef up the staff strength of the security personnel to ensure that all citizens and properties are protected.

Excellencies

Ghana launched our first ever National Migration Policy (NMP) in 2015, outlining government's objectives and mechanisms for managing migration. The Policy is to help better manage Ghana's internal, intra-regional and international migration flows for poverty reduction and promote sustainable national development.

The Migration Policy is also to promote the benefits and minimize the costs of internal and international migration through legal means with the rights and security of migrants well respected.

Excellencies

In order to implement Ghana's Development Agenda more coherently and effectively, the National Migration Policy has been linked with the National Development goals. This linkage goes beyond the attainment of quantitative goals and economic targets, but has been structured to help improve and enhance the living standards of Ghanaians and other nationals.

As part of the implementation process, the Policy is also in tandem with the Regional and Sub-Regional integration, especially, and thus inures to the benefit of immigrants in Ghana and Ghanaian emigrants in other ECOWAS member States and beyond.

Ghana, is now set to setting up a National Migration Commission as provided in the National Migration Policy. It is my hope that, the critical areas on migration, especially international migration would be critically looked at in order to build the synergy that will go a long way to benefit all. Additionally, we are in the process of developing a National Migration Profile. This migration profile would provide adequate knowledge about migrants and migration in general. The migration profile instrument will also be important in managing migration more efficiently.

Migration can contribute to Ghana's socio-economic development if well managed. There is a growing significance of migrant remittances in Ghana, which has also become an important source of income for many rural and urban households. A pilot household survey carried out by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) in collaboration with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) showed that cash received in remittances was 4,663.28 GHS per household (approximately 1,057 USD) in the last year and 79% of these remittances were spent on basic household needs.

Excellencies,

With the Ghanaian Diaspora being the utmost priority of this government, the Presidency has created an Office of Diaspora Relations. The Diaspora plays a key role in the development of Ghana. We recognise that the protection of Ghanaians abroad and migrants in Ghana must also be addressed.

Migration as I see now has attained attention on the global stage and has brought about various debates. The challenges in governing labour migration is on the rise and as most of us here are aware, these are due to changes in trends such as technology, evolution of employment relationship, erosion of social contract between States and other actors.

In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, member States of the United Nations resolved to create the conditions for “decent work for all”, recognizing “the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development”, and pledged that “no one will be left behind”.

Excellencies,

As part of efforts among member States to effectively manage the governance of labour migration, the Government of Ghana is in the process of developing a National Labour Migration Policy. This Migration Policy when developed, will create the framework for labour migration management in Ghana and clearly guide all related activities undertaken by the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations in the future. An action plan by the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (MELR) has been developed in the aim to develop the policy by the end of 2017.

The development of the National Labour Migration Policy in Ghana is expected to address the issues of Decent work deficits and labour migration costs, where migrant workers, especially the less-skilled, continue to suffer from significant decent work deficit, including violation of fundamental principles and rights at work and other infringements, when seeking to obtain employment in and outside Ghana.

It is my expectation that, the Policy will put in place mechanisms to assist Ghanaians who fall victim to human trafficking, to protect those who are vulnerable to being smuggled into other countries, and also to monitor existing Ghanaian regulations on recruitment agencies, provide pre-departure orientation for migrants, give financial education on how earnings are managed in destination countries and to take advantage of opportunities that are available outside Ghana.

Excellencies,

The Global Compact on Migration consultations have afforded countries a unique opportunity to gain insight on the international approach to migration. It is essential that voices of African countries be heard in the Global Compact for Migration. Ghana held its national level consultation in September this year and came up with key recommendations in the areas of:

- Contributions of migrants and Diasporas to all dimensions of sustainable development.
- Combatting human trafficking, smuggling of migrants and contemporary forms of slavery.

- Drivers of irregular migration and promoting safe migration.
- Protection of labour rights and a safe environment for migrant workers.

Migration as we know is inevitable, owing to demography and other socio-economic realities. It therefore behooves on us to ensure that migration is well managed. It is my expectation that the outcome of this IOM Council Session meeting will move us closer towards another path for results.

I would like to conclude my address by indicating that we should enhance our efforts to combat international crime, criminalize traffickers and smugglers, and work together against their threats by enhancing Immigration and Police cooperation in line with the United Nations Conventions on Transnational Organized Crime.

I assure members of the Government of Ghana's commitment to adhere to its obligation to implement best international practices".

I thank you.