

SPEECH BY

**HER EXCELLENCY MRS. ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA AND
CHAIRPERSON OF THE AUTHORITY OF ECOWAS HEADS
OF STATE AND OVERNMENT**

AT THE INAUGURAL CEREMONY OF

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

JANUARY 7, 2017

H.E. President Mahama;
H.E. President Elect Akufo-Addo;
Excellencies Heads of State and Government here seated;
Your Excellency, Representative of the Chairperson of the African
Union Commission,
Your Excellency, President of the ECOWAS Commission,
Mr. Speaker, and Honorable Parliamentarians;
Your Honor, Madam Chief Justice and Associate Justices;
Cabinet Ministers;

Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
Officials of Government;
Highly Esteemed representatives of International Organizations and
partners,
Traditional Chiefs and Elders,
Members of the Prelate,
Members of the Fourth Estate,
Distinguished ECOWAS Citizens of the Great Republic of Ghana,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I bring you warmest greetings from the people of the Republic of Liberia. It is with great pleasure that I stand here today on behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to convey very warm and most fraternal congratulations to the people of Ghana for once again making the region proud.

Today marks a very historic day in the ECOWAS Community and Africa as a whole, as we witness another democratic transition in the Republic of Ghana.

Today, we witness the completion of a democratic process of peaceful transfer of power from one administration to another. You Ghanaians make us proud. After hard fought campaigns, you have put differences aside and come together as one people to celebrate this victory. We must remember that this event is the fruit of many years of hard labor. Democracy is the fruit of the sacrifices of many generations and must not be taken for granted. Thank you, people of Ghana for your political maturity and sense of patriotism in reaching thus far.

We commend the professionalism and commitment of the Independent Electoral Commission and all political parties for applying the needed restraint that paved the way for the peaceful conduct of the Elections.

The peaceful transition of power in accordance with the will of the people is a sacrosanct pillar of democracy. Where the people are free to speak, free to move and free to choose their destiny, there will always be peace. When there is peace, every child gets a chance to grow to his or her potential in an environment of tranquility.

On behalf of ECOWAS Heads of State and in my own name, we extend our greatest salutation to His Excellency John Dramani Mahama for his leadership in organizing a free, fair and transparent electoral process. Giving the people the freedom and the space to choose their own fate is the greatest act of leadership. We are proud of Ghana today, but this is not unexpected. Ghana has been the bastion of democracy for many decades after years of turbulence. John, as you leave the State House, please remember and cherish the fact that you have many roles to play in the future. Ghana, Africa, and the world

needs your creativity and talents. Personally, I am thankful for the cordial relationship that developed between our two countries in finding solutions to the burning problems of our nations and our sub-region. Thank you for demonstrating to all that indeed, there is life after the pinnacle of power. I look forward to joining you in that track when I turn over to a new administration a year from now.

Excellencies, Heads of State, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:
When ECOWAS was founded about 40 years ago, every one of the 16 countries, with very few exceptions, was under military rule or one party system. Today, we can say that ECOWAS as a region is the lead in democratic transition. The majority of our leaders today have reached power through the democratic process. We must ensure that there is no roll back. We must make sure that this social dispensation is never lost for we cannot afford to go back to the days of military coups and social unrest.

We are therefore confident that our region is transitioning to a stable and mature democratic culture, as demonstrated by the peaceful elections and smooth transitions of power in Cabo Verde, Cote D'Ivoire, Nigeria, Benin, Niger and now again Ghana.

As a region, ECOWAS has made great strides towards integration, with one passport, a court, a parliament and other institutions. This makes us the most integrated community at the regional level. We still face serious challenges when it comes to the free movement of people who travel by road because they cannot afford air transport. We must ensure that ECOWAS will be truly borderless and that a truck going from Lagos can reach Dakar without harassment and administrative bottlenecks that constrain trade among our countries. Total integration will only be possible when people can move, live and work freely in any part of ECOWAS. This is a priority of our

Region as we work for the transformation under ECOWAS Vision 2020 and the evolution from ECOWAS of States to ECOWAS of Peoples.

While recognizing the relevance of all of these programs, we are particularly concerned about the potential political upheavals within our Community which have implications for sustainable peace and economic development. All members of ECOWAS are concerned over the increasing incidence of terrorism as intensified in Mali and Burkina Faso. We are encouraged by the recent victory of the Nigerian Government in the effort to remove the Boko Haram scourge.

ECOWAS faces the most difficult situation in The Gambia. After accepting his loss in the elections, President Jammeh reversed course and questioned the results of the elections. He has submitted his grievances to the Supreme Court which will start its review process on January 10. ECOWAS is closely following the process and the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria His Excellency Muhammadu Buhari is leading the effort, as ECOWAS Mediator.

We call on the people of The Gambia to follow the example of Ghana and put the interest of the nation above all personal interests. ECOWAS stands by the people of The Gambia and will exercise every effort to ensure that peace and democracy prevail. We stand with the people of The Gambia and we want to assure them of our unwavering adherence to the principles of democracy in our entire sub region.

To you, Excellency President Nana Akufo-Addo, we applaud your longtime work and commitment to peace and democracy. We have no doubt that you will strengthen those ideals and will continue the political actions that have made Ghana a great nation and an example

for all of us. We warmly welcome you into the Authority of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government and look forward to the experience and contribution that you will bring to our debates in efforts to integrate our countries further, economically, socially and politically. Actors may change from time to time, but the spirit of unity, peace and solidarity of ECOWAS remains always alive.

Mr. President, you have assumed the leadership of this great country at a very difficult time, when the world is experiencing sluggish growth, low commodity prices; particularly, from developing countries, weak global trade, and diminishing capital flows, terrorism, drug and human trafficking, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and the impact of climate change; but I know that the stubborn spirit of optimism and hope, with which you have reached this far, will continue to inspire your action to keep the people of Ghana buoyant during your tenure.

Ghana has always been an active member of the ECOWAS Community and we have no doubt that you will continue to assert Ghana's proactive participation in the activities of the Community, as we work towards the attainment of our goals. With you as the newest member, I encourage Ghana's continued commitment to the core programs of the sub-regional body, including the consolidation of sub-regional Peace and Security, the conclusion of negotiations and Legal Actions, improvement of financial and economic stability.

I will be looking forward to hosting you and your delegation in Monrovia during the fifty-first Ordinary Summit of the Authority of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government, to be convened in May of 2017.

President Akufo-Addo, once again, on behalf of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, we congratulate you and the gallant people of Ghana.

Like the ancient Ghana stood more than a thousand years ago, modern Ghana is a shining star today. Let the light shine even brighter.

Let me conclude by thanking the people of Ghana, sister African countries and the international community who turned up en masse today to celebrate this momentous occasion.

Long live Ghana!

Long live ECOWAS!

Long live Africa!

I thank you.

