



**ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY PRESIDENT JOHN DRAMANI MAHAMA  
OF GHANA AS CHAIR OF THE AUTHORITY OF HEADS OF STATE  
AND GOVERNMENT OF ECOWAS**

[Yamoussoukro, Cote D'Ivoire- Saturday, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2014]

Your Excellency, President Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of La Cote d'Ivoire and outgoing Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS,

Excellencies, Presidents and Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS,

Distinguished Representatives of Heads of State,

Representatives of all multilateral and international organisations,

Honourable Ministers,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am truly honoured, deeply humbled, and filled with a great sense of responsibility, by your decision to elect me as the new Chair of the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS. On behalf of the Government and People of Ghana, I accept this important opportunity to serve the people of our ECOWAS subregion.

I wish to thank you, Excellencies, Presidents and Heads of State, as well as Representatives of Presidents and Heads of Government, for the confidence that you have expressed in my abilities, by electing me, one of your younger counterparts, to assume this mantle of ECOWAS leadership, in the service of ALL our people.

I wish to offer my sincerest, heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to my senior brother and our host today, President Alassane Ouattara, for the excellent leadership he has provided over the last two years as Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government.

President Ouattara has done a great deal to advance progress on several issues that are very important for the improvement of the lives of our people in this region. He has worked very hard to strengthen our regional integration.



He has provided experienced and wise leadership in the process of advancing our discussions and negotiations on the Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union, and bringing us to the point of conclusion with very few outstanding issues to be addressed.

President Ouattara has led us remarkably in dealing with various political crises that have emerged in our ECOWAS region during his tenure, especially in Mali and Guinea-Bissau. He has also played a strong leadership role in uniting the whole of our region to support our two member states to set them back on the path of peace, progress and prosperity through democratically elected governments.

I also wish to acknowledge his leadership in helping to drive progress on the issue of our common desire to improve the state of our economic infrastructure that would support our integration agenda, enhance our competitiveness and improve the standards of living of our people. In this regard I wish to cite two key projects, the Lagos-Abidjan Highway and the West African Power Pool.

Our outgoing ECOWAS Chairman has also spearheaded our efforts to achieve our goal of advancing our monetary union and has given invaluable guidance to both myself and my brother President of Niger who were given the task of coordinating this effort.

Please, join me to thank President Alassane Ouattara for the committed and excellent leadership he has provided in making ECOWAS more respected and truly relevant today than ever before. I also wish to thank President Ouattara for every support, advice and encouragement that I have received and hope to receive from him.

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,

My nation's first President, the great pan-Africanist leader, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, was a remarkable visionary, who saw beyond partisan, personal and petty interests, to advocate for a free and united Africa. Dr. Nkrumah believed strongly that we, as Africans, were bound by a common destiny, and should unite to succeed. Indeed, he said at Ghana's independence on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1957 that, "The independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent."

Today, Dr Nkrumah's dream for the unity of Africa is more relevant, more pressing and more desired than ever before. The liberation that Dr Nkrumah called for is not just political, but also economic, social, and developmental.



In line with this vision, the Economic Community of West African States remains a key vehicle for making our unity a reality. When we achieve true integration among ourselves in ECOWAS then our subregion would, once again, lead the way for the rest of our African continent.

Excellencies, we have come very far in our quest to unite our people, integrate our region and open new doors of opportunity and prosperity for every child, woman and man in West Africa. But we have more urgent work to do to speed up and guarantee tangible benefits for our people. Our vision of a high quality of life, better conditions and improved social services for our people can only be achieved when we reject every effort to divide us, and instead focus on being more united and resolute behind our common cause. The need for us to be united is clear and urgent. Our people are counting on us to serve them and deliver the prosperity they deserve.

I wish to touch briefly, Excellencies, on three key areas that I intend to focus on during my tenure as the Chair of the ECOWAS Authority.

First, peace and security: our region requires continued stability and security if we are going to succeed in attracting the investments that are much needed to help us achieve rapid and sustainable development for our people. I will therefore build on the achievements of my predecessors, and consolidate the peace in Mali and our entire subregion. With the support and cooperation of the international community we want to see the people of Mali enjoy the admirable position they once occupied in Africa as a stable, peaceful and democratic nation.

We will also work to support our sister nation of Nigeria in their fight against the menace of murder and destruction caused by Boko Haram. We need to deploy every effort to address the challenge of youth unemployment in our region. This challenge has clear peace and security implications and we need greater focus on it.

Secondly, Excellencies, we will be focusing a lot of attention on the Economic Integration and Development of West Africa. Regarding the Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union, everything must be done to ensure that the people of West Africa are given an agreement that delivers the best results for their upliftment and prosperity. We will also do more to promote trade among the member nations of ECOWAS, recognising that increased trade among ourselves would significantly enhance our collective economic prosperity.



I have been privileged to serve with my brother President Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger on the Presidential Task Force for facilitating and monitoring the implementation of a single ECOWAS currency. We will intensify our efforts in this regard.

Excellencies, my third area of focus will be the development, expansion and rehabilitation of infrastructure that can help our region to develop faster. We will galvanise support behind the West African Gas Pipeline Project so we can guarantee energy security for our people. We will also strive for progress on the Abidjan-Lagos Highway and the expansion of Ports and Harbours that serve, not just individual countries but, all of the West African region.

These are just a few of the key areas of immediate focus that we will pursue during my tenure as Chair of ECOWAS.

Excellencies, I will be counting on your support, guidance and goodwill. I believe that, for the sake of the millions of West Africans who are looking up to us, I can count on your full cooperation for our success.

I wish to thank you, once again, for electing me to the ECOWAS Chair.

May God bless our nations.

God bless ECOWAS.

God bless West Africa.

God Bless Africa.

I thank you.

**END**