



Coalition for Democratic Accountability and Inclusive Governance

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**COALITION FOR DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND INCLUSIVE
GOVERNANCE (Citizens' Coalition)**

Press Statement at Press Conference

Coconut Groove Hotel, Monday 4th July 2022 @ 10am

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen of the media, invited organizations and citizens of Ghana.

We have called you to this press conference to speak to the good people of Ghana, through you (the media), on our grave concerns about the prevailing socio-economic and governance challenges facing the country, and the formation of our coalition, **Coalition for Democratic Accountability and Inclusive Governance** or the **Citizens' Coalition** for short, and its objects and principles. We shall also highlight some immediate actions which must be taken to begin to address them.

The socio-economic and governance challenges we shall be highlighting today have reached critical dimensions. Ghanaians have, in recent months been experiencing a very rapid deterioration of their living conditions occasioned partly by the persistent depreciation of the cedi; leading to a severe weakening of the purchasing power of most working people, and the unprecedented steep rise in the cost of living as food prices continue to soar. Prices of petroleum products are on the rise; affecting cost of transportation amongst other things. Rent is equally high. These factors have invariably affected the cost of health care amongst Ghanaians, as well as other basic necessities. Then there is the monster of mass youth unemployment.

Sadly, measures taken by authorities so far do not seem to have the potency to mitigate these serious challenges. The popular refrain by our political leaders is that the prevailing socio-economic challenges are a global phenomenon occasioned by the combined effects

of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia/Ukraine war. This rhetoric by our leaders is almost to suggest that until these two separate events have ceased, nothing can be done to mitigate the challenges we face. It's also an implicit suggestion that Ghanaians should simply live through the crisis with stoic silence. This posturing of government has created widespread discontent among citizens and a majority of Ghanaians have become desperate.

Ladies and gentlemen, admittedly, our economic challenges have clearly been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects of the Russia/Ukraine war. But the problems go much deeper than these two factors. The underlining causes of these problems relate to the way in which, over the last three decades, successive governments and the bureaucracy have run the country and managed the economy, without any coherent planning. Our challenges are exacerbated by the indiscipline with which projects are implemented, poorly thought through public investment and a lack of any persistent and deliberate serious attempt at promoting local production capacity and industrialization. Our public expenditure is characterized by a needless waste of public resources without due regard to fiscal responsibility rules.

What is more frustrating and to put it bluntly, annoying/provocative, is the insensitive in-your-face opulence 'V8-lifestyle' of our elected/appointed public officials and bureaucratic elite—a lifestyle funded by the tax payer. Abuse of power and impunity have become a way of life of the political class, irrespective of which party is in office. Political party patronage, plain grand theft and corruption in high places have characterized successive governments. Electoral promises to fight corruption in government continue to remain just that—promises. We continue to witness one corruption scandal after the other; with the recent ones being more astonishing than the previous scandals. A recent example is the infamous criminal land-grabbing scandal of the immediate-past CEO of the Forestry Commission and Former General Secretary of the governing New Patriotic Party (NPP), the late Kwadwo Owusu Afriyie (known in political circles as 'Sir John'). This way of life of the political and bureaucratic elite can be traced to various causes including, but not limited to, the near monopoly of executive power in appointments to the public service and parastatals, which continues to be a conduit for political patronage and cronyism.

Meanwhile, the two main parties have captured the media landscape by allocating to their members and cronies, radio and television frequencies that they use to hunt down and let loose their hordes of paid party communicators to silence patriots who dare raise their voices against the continuing rape of the nation. To compound the crisis of leadership, the ugly role of unregulated party campaign financing has made our fledgling

democracy hostage to moneybags, who are not publicly declared and whose source of finance remain unknown and unseen. The danger with this mode of campaign financing is that criminal rackets may soon and easily become the major source of party financing which would further compound our governance challenges.

Fellow country men and women, we are gravely concerned that these developments, if not checked, would continue to pose an ever-increasing existential threat to our democracy. It would embolden misguided political actors and elements and even sections of our population, particularly our youth, who see no relief in the existing state of affairs, to consider as appropriate, disruptive and authoritarian alternatives to constitutional democracy.

This is why a number of civil society organisations and individuals have come together to form this non-partisan coalition/movement which would harness democratic processes of mass education and mobilization to stem the dangerous trend and assure democratic renewal, economic and social justice. This movement shall be known as the **Coalition for Democratic Accountability and Inclusive Governance, CITIZENS' COALITION** for short.

Objects and criteria and principles of membership

We invite all citizens and non-state organizations to join us in this quest to halt our democratic decline and secure inclusive governance and development. In that regard, every organisation or individual who wishes to be a member of the **Coalition for Democratic Accountability and Inclusive Governance (Citizens' Coalition)** shall subscribe to and act in accordance with the following objects and principles:

A Commitment to:

- I. putting the interest of Ghana first, above all else;
- II. accountable and transparent governance;
- III. a living wage for working people
- IV. youth employment, training and capacity building;
- V. an inclusive society and diversity;
- VI. social and economic equity in allocation of national resources, strategic planning and meaningful decentralization of power and resources;
- VII. freedom of expression and dissent including media freedom;
- VIII. respect for fundamental human rights generally an ethical conduct;
- IX. gender equality and equity in appointments and allocation of public resources and in public life, including economic participation;

- X. meritocracy in appointment of public officials;
- XI. promoting local manufacturing and industrialization;
- XII. democratic, transparent and accountable political parties;
- XIII. key policy and constitutional reforms to make our democracy work and produce dividends for the people;
- XIV. active support for Ghanaian farmers and entrepreneurs;
- XV. broad access to quality education and health for all irrespective of social and economic circumstances;
- XVI. Preserving and conserving environmental integrity and natural resources
- XVII. regional and continental integration;

Actively oppose:

- I. state capture by party or other private interests;
- II. public and private corruption, nepotism and patronage;
- III. abuse of power and impunity;
- IV. ethnocentrism and misogyny;
- V. religious extremism;
- VI. violence against citizens and groups by security agencies;
- VII. coups d'etat;
- VIII. authoritarianism and government repression;
- IX. electoral corruption, the use of violence and or vigilantism to resolve disagreements of any kind and/or to win political office;

Members of the Coalition shall not openly support, endorse, or be surrogates for any political party or political party candidate.

Our Mission is thus to **establish a culture of accountable and transparent governance that actively and consciously responds to the demands of citizens and promotes human rights, constitutionalism and the national interest.**

Immediate Demands and Actions on Accountable Governance

Today, 4th of July, 2022 marks the beginning of our resolve, as citizens, to insist on a firm adherence to the tenets of transparency, accountability and responsiveness from those to whom we have entrusted public power and national resources.

In this regard, we note that some members of the Coalition have been responding to recent issues and developments bordering on our collective socio-economic well-being as a nation and have made specific demands of government. We will like to use this opportunity to restate and update some of these demands and actions.

A. Corruption and the needless waste of Public Resources

Corruption in the public sector remains an existential threat to the consolidation of our democracy. It has eaten dangerously into party politics, public procurement and threatens to overwhelm the Republic. Despite government interventions like the establishment of the Office of the Special Prosecutor, the provision of some resources to some anti-corruption agencies and the passage of the Right to Information law, not much progress has been made in the fight against public corruption. Recent scandals such as the ‘contract for sale’ case involving the sacked CEO of the Public Procurement Authority (PPA), Mr. A. B. Agyei and the leaked copies of the last will and testament of the immediate-past Chief Executive Officer of the Forestry Commission, Kwadwo Owusu Afriyie, point to significant weaknesses in the design and implementation of some of the anti-corruption measures.

We wish to make the following demands of our government including specific anti-corruption agencies:

1. The Citizens’ Coalition echoes the call on the Auditor General to exercise his powers under the constitution to issue surcharges and disallowances against persons cited for various financial irregularities in the 2019 and 2020 Auditor-General’s reports. We note that in 2018, Mr. Daniel Domelovo, then Auditor-General, recovered over GHC 66 million back to government coffers through surcharges. Following his ‘forced’ exit from office in 2020, the Office of the Auditor-General is yet to issue any surcharge, disallowances and persons found to have misappropriated public funds. If the AuditorGeneral persists in ignoring his clear Constitutional mandate affirmed by the Supreme Court, our Coalition will take the necessary action to ensure that he complies with the Constitution of Ghana.

2. The Citizens’ Coalition is worried by recent publications by the Fourth Estate, in May and June 2022, showing the wanton disregard of the already weak asset declarations

regulatory framework under article 286 (1) of the Constitution and the Public Office Holder (Declaration of Assets and Disqualification) Act 1998 (Act 550). According to information from the Auditor-General published by the Fourth Estate, about 10,000 public office holders have failed to comply with the asset declaration regulatory framework to declare their assets and liabilities. The Citizens' Coalition demands that the Auditor-General directs all defaulting public officers to comply with the Constitutional requirement immediately. We also note that under the Constitution, CHRAJ is also mandated to take appropriate action against defaulting public officials. In view of this, we respectfully urge CHRAJ to immediately act on a petition presented to it by 5 private citizens on June 14, 2022. We are requesting CHRAJ to take appropriate action against defaulting public officials, including but not limited to initiating legal action against defaulters to compel compliance or in lieu of compliance, have the courts impose sanctions on them, pursuant to CHRAJ's mandate under the Constitution and the CHRAJ ACT. It is our firm expectation that by the end of August 2022, all defaulting public officers would have fully complied with the asset declaration regime

3. The current asset and liabilities disclosure regime is porous and fails to meet the objectives for which it was put in place. It therefore must be addressed if we are to make any headway in terms of fighting public corruption. We demand to know the current status of the Conduct of Public Officers Bill which has been in and out of Parliament for about a decade. Further, we demand that the Attorney-General presents a credible version of the bill to Parliament for immediate scrutiny and passage. Government has rightly identified the legislation as important for regulating public ethics and addressing significant weaknesses in the asset disclosure and conflict of interest regimes. Members of the Citizens' Coalition have been key advocates for the passage of this legislation and will continue to provide technical support to Parliament for its quick passage.

4. The Citizens' Coalition welcomes the long overdue inauguration of the OSP Board. Government has positioned the OSP as the vanguard of the fight against corruption, particularly corruption involving politically exposed persons. We urge government to provide adequate resources to the OSP to ensure its operational and functional independence. Anything short of that will betray this government's commitment to establishing a functional OSP. We also entreat the OSP to deal promptly with a number of legacy cases from the Martin Amidu tenure so we can build and sustain confidence in the office and its work.

B. The purported reclassification of the Achimota Forest Reserve and matters arising

It has been a little over a month since the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, Honorable Abu Jinapor, announced the inauguration of a Ministerial Committee to investigate the Achimota land issues and related matters. There has not been any formal communication as the work of the Committee. Also, following the announcement of the committee and all the information released, critical observations made by IMANI Africa and Occupy Ghana lead us to the conclusion that the Executive Instruments (E.I. 144 and E.I. 154) should be suspended and/or revoked forthwith for the following reasons:

- I. First, we question the legal propriety of the purported return of a portion of the forest lands to the Owoo family in light of decisions by the Supreme Court that lands compulsorily acquired by the State before the coming into force of the 1992 need not be returned to its original owners as the Constitution does not operate retrospectively and doing so would 'create chaos and confusion in the land administration sector of the country'. [See the case of *Nii Kpobi Tettey Tsuru v Attorney-General [2010] SCGLR 904*]
- II. Second, the purported return of a section of the forest land to the previous owners (the unknown 'Owoo family') is unwise from a public policy perspective. It has the potential to trigger mass demands across the country by owners of lands compulsorily acquired by the state, for the State to release lands to them. Given the patronage nature of our politics, our political leaders are more likely to kowtow to these requests for reasons of political expediency. Curiously, the Lands Minister who is acting on the authority of the President (the constitutional trustee of public lands) in this purported return of lands failed to provide any solid reasons as to why the trustee-President has taken this decision which clearly is not in the interest of the beneficiaries of the trust (citizens of Ghana).
- III. Third, it is doubtful whether the redevelopment of the forest (be it the much touted 'Eco-tourism park' or other development) would be compatible with its highly sensitive environmental status, where critically endangered species have found sanctuary.
- IV. Further, given the general mismanagement of public lands by successive governments, one wonders how well the Achimota Forest lands would be managed once this purported reclassification of the forest is actualised. In many instances, public lands have been commercialized and or sold – often for cheap – to politicians and their cronies in a manner which smacks of complete disregard

for the broader national interest. The revelations in the widely circulated leaked copies of the last will and testament of the immediate-past CEO of the Forestry Commission and a former General Secretary of the NPP, the late Kwadwo Owusu Afriyie (aka 'Sir John') lends credence to this informed suspicion.

In view of these concerns, we join many other organizations and Parliament's call for a public inquiry into government's policy in returning lands to previous owners. We also, respectfully urge President Akufo-Addo to immediately suspend the Executive Instruments (EI.s 144 and 145) and all ancillary plans to redevelop the only greenbelt in Accra. We also respectfully urge the Minister of Lands and Natural Resources to abort all plans towards implementing plans for the redevelopment of the forest. We also urge the leadership of the Lands Commission to act conscientiously in the discharge of their duties to safeguard the national interests as far as this matter and all public lands are concerned. As civil society leaders, we would continue to deliberate on possible actions to be taken in respect of this matter in the coming weeks.

C. Government's steps at implementing the Agyapa Royalties Agreements and matters arising

On 17th May 2022, a group of 24 CSOs organized a press conference in response to statements made by the Finance Minister indicating the government's firm decision to bring the Agyapa Royalties back to Parliament for consideration. The group observed that though the President promised before the 2020 general elections to have the Agyapa Agreements resubmitted to Parliament for a thorough scrutiny, that promise appears to have been disregarded as the Ministry of Finance and the Minerals Income Investment Fund (MIIF) have initiated steps at the SPV on the London and Accra Stock Exchanges. Given the significant concerns raised by CSOs, the OSP and other independent watchers about value for money, the duration of the agreements and corruption risks, it is reckless for government to push the deal through and go ahead with implementation. We urge government to suspend all steps at implementing the deal for a more thorough public scrutiny of agreements.

D. Accounting for COVID-19 Funds

The Citizens' Coalition has closely followed the issues related to government's accounting of COVID-19 expenditure. It is imperative that the expenditures made in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic for which Ghanaians continue to pay levies, are

properly accounted for. We welcome the Speaker of Parliament's ruling to task the Parliamentary Select Committees on Health and Finance to look into reconciling the figures. That work will deal with the disbursements made for COVID-19 but it does not deal with accounting for the actual expenditures which needs to be addressed urgently by the Auditor-General. Given the recent public allegation by the Second Northern Regional Vice Chairperson of the NPP, Madam Felicia Tetteh, that some monies were disbursed to various structures of the governing party under the guise of COVID-19 related expenditure, we respectfully urge the Auditor-General to conduct a forensic audit of the COVID-19 Funds. We demand that the Auditor-General acts with extremity on this matter in the interest of public accountability.

E. Affirmative Action Bill

The Affirmative Action Bill has been in and out of Parliament for well over a decade. The President promised in his 2021 State of Nation address that the Bill will be resubmitted to Parliament. Till date, it is still at Cabinet level, with no clear timelines as to when it will be resubmitted to Parliament for consideration and passage.

For almost a year now the Gender, children and Social protection ministry has been without a substantive minister, this has obviously impeded the work and commitment of the ministry to push not only the AA bill but to address the increasing poverty levels amongst children and poor households.

Is the Government truly committed to bridging the gender and social inclusion gap? We wonder .

The state of Ghanaian women is precarious indeed- female unemployment rate according to the recent census is currently at over 15% not accounting for all the unpaid work that many women are engaged in and the violence many continue to experience at home and work.

The bill is about promoting inclusion, fairness and justice for all in society, particularly women and girls. It is wrong and unacceptable that out of the over 6,000 Assembly Members across the country only 460 are women. In essence, even though women form the majority of the population, when it comes to making decisions at the national and local levels of our government – decisions which directly and indirectly affect their lives in the places they live---they don't have a say. This is shameful and must change. We urge the President and his Cabinet to act with dispatch on this Bill and have Parliament consider and pass it as soon as possible.

Conclusion

After 30 years of practicing democracy in the 4th Republic, we risk reversing the gains we have made as country and placing the future of the youth in jeopardy. Most of the challenges we face in the governance arena and its impact on the health of our economy are occasioned by the sheer disregard for basic tenets of inclusive governance, transparency and accountability. The breakdown in these systems has allowed for impunity to thrive as there is little restraint on how persons clothed with executive authority exercise their discretion. The Citizens' Coalition respectfully asks all citizens (home or abroad) to wake up to their responsibilities under the Constitution and insist that the right thing is done. Democracy is not for a lazy society and we must demand that our elected and appointed officials, with whom we have entrusted our national resources, do right by this nation, and exercise their power in pursuit of our collective welfare. Ghana is the only home we have and we must ensure it is worth living.

In the coming weeks, the Coalition will share with the people of Ghana our thoughts and demands on other pertinent issues including the critical challenges with the economy (including youth unemployment), education, health, internal security and the potential threats of terrorism, among others. We shall also share with you a series of activities and engagements we have planned so you can join us to create the society and the Ghana we desire and deserve.

God bless Ghana!

Thank you for your attention!

Signed

1. Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII)
2. Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana)
3. Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA)
4. African Centre for Energy Policy (ACEP)
5. IMANI Africa
6. Africa Education Watch
7. STAR-Ghana

8. SEND Ghana
9. TUC
10. IDEG
11. Parliamentary Network Africa
12. One Ghana Movement
13. Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association (GIBA)
14. NETRIGHT Ghana
15. Citizens Movement against Corruption (CMaC)
16. Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI - Africa)
17. Centre for Local Governance Advocacy (CLGA)
18. West Africa Civil Society Institute (WASCI)
19. Penplusbytes
20. ISODEC
21. Africa Center International Law and Accountability
22. Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC)
23. Youth Bridge Foundation
24. Citizen Movement Ghana - CMG
25. Fourth Estate
26. TWN- Africa
27. Africa Education Watch
28. NORSAAC
29. Community Development Alliance (CDA-Ghana)
30. OXFAM
31. Abantu for Development
32. ACEPA-Africa
33. Odekro

34. West Africa Center for Counter Extremism

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2. Martin Kpebu
3. Samson Lardy Anyenini
4. Clara Kasser-Tee
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