



Creating the Ghana We Want

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My friends, before we begin, allow me to take a moment and pay tribute to a man we all deeply respected for his intellect, his kindness, and his contributions to Ghana — Dr. Kwesi Botchwey.

I had the honor of knowing Kwesi for decades. What he meant to me as a friend, as a policymaker, and as a mentor is almost beyond words. He was a historic figure, one of our country's longest serving finance ministers. And he never stopped striving for a better Ghana.

He and I had many conversations over these past few months, regarding the very reason we are here today. I relied on his counsel and advice, and he never failed to give it. All of us here, I am sure, carry a heavy heart as we mourn the death of this great son of Ghana.

If you will, please, stand with me for a moment of silence in his honor, and to pay tribute to our departed friend.... In Kwesi's spirit, let us continue.

Thank you all for for coming together to join me and each other as we embark on something new for Ghana—something that will harness our shared hope for the future of this country, through a new sense of unity, urgency, and action.

Today, I am proud to officially launch what we call the **Compact for Political and Economic Transformation in Ghana**.

The Compact will be an agreement between citizens and government, regardless of who is in power, on the direction of travel for our country, and on the vision and principles that underpin our democracy. It will be an agreement on ways to address our most pressing challenges, head-on, by bringing more voices to the table and putting policy before politics. And it will be an agreement on the values we want to uphold as a nation.

These are lofty goals, but they are not unattainable. We need a new approach, and new solutions, to create the Ghana we want. The Compact will bring us closer to these solutions. It has concrete ideas, committed collaborators, and a clear way forward.

But the time to act is now. Let me explain why.

Two years ago this month, Ghana held its last national election. We know what happened. We saw deep political and social division. We saw a country in crisis. It wasn't the first time.

Recent elections have produced a deepening sense of worry about the foundations of our democracy—and in turn, the future of our country. The growing polarization of our politics is drawing us further and further apart when we need to be working closer and closer together.

In private and in discussion with colleagues, I began to consider some of the underlying factors that lead to these problems every four years:

- A Constitution that is no longer fit for Ghana's purpose
- A fiscal framework that has led to big budget deficits and excessive borrowing
- Frequent changes in policy direction, which makes development planning difficult, if not impossible, over the long term

These challenges alone are daunting. But there many more that touch all segments of society—and hold us back.

For example, we struggle to translate our abundant natural and human resources into economic and social well-being. We struggle to engage, inspire, and, most importantly, employ our youth—the very future of the country. And we struggle to honor the values that have long bound us as a people: hard work and ethical behavior, honesty and integrity, equality and respect.

The election in 2020 and its aftermath laid these struggles bare. And it proved to be a catalyst for me. *Enough is enough, I thought. We can't keep going on this way.*

I have spent my entire career—more than 50 years—in African development. I have had the honor and privilege of working closely with policymakers and leaders across the continent. I am a proud pan-Africanist. But I am foremost, a proud Ghanaian.

I was 13 years old at the time of independence. I grew up with Ghana, and I have lived through our post-colonial journey—the ups and downs, the successes, and the setbacks.

Ghana has so many reasons to be proud. We have been at the forefront of African independence, African democracy, and citizen empowerment. We are known as Africa's Black Star, but we are also Africa's North Star. We have led, and others have followed.

Yet, we have not fully realized our country's potential. We have not yet achieved the Ghana we want—for ourselves, or for future generations. This is why I developed the Ghana Compact: to seek a new, more hopeful, and inclusive way to tackle the fundamental challenges we face, and to do so with a sense of urgency that the situation demands.

We are quickly approaching another election cycle. Rather than repeat the patterns of the past, let us fix what has gone wrong, together, as a nation.

Before the 2024 campaigns begin in earnest, we have a window of opportunity to start doing things differently—to build a national consensus around Ghana's biggest challenges and opportunities and to set a unified vision with clear goals and measurable targets.

To create the Ghana we want, we need political and constitutional reforms that help end extreme political division and polarization.

To create the Ghana we want, we need policies that will lead to improvements in our fiscal health to unlock greater and more responsible investment in our country's development.

To create the Ghana we want, we need gender equality and major improvements in the health, education, and skills of our people.

And we need a committed vision of economic transformation and a strong system that will ensure leaders stick to the plans that will get us there.

This is what the Compact aims to achieve.

But please, let me be clear: this is just the beginning. Next year—and even through the 2024 election—is just the beginning. The Compact will put in place citizen-driven systems to monitor and measure progress towards our goals over the long term, across future elections and political administrations for the next quarter-century.

Therefore, what we start today is no small effort. What we seek of you is no small ask. To be successful, the Compact will need the commitment of all Ghanaians—regardless of background, religion, political party, age, or gender. It will need selflessness. It will need compromise.

But if we are successful, we will have laid the foundation for something truly incredible.

Agreeing on a common vision and a roadmap for Ghana will help make our elections more about the issues and less about the politics. It will help our governments focus on national interest over party interest. And it will help empower us as citizens to take more responsibility for our country's development as we journey towards a better, more secure future.

My journey will one day come to an end, and the future belongs to my children and grandchildren. And to your children and grandchildren. What kind of future will they have? What legacy will we leave them?

These are the questions to consider as we go forward—working together to turn our fortunes around to create the Ghana we want—for ourselves and for future generations.

Thank you.