

SPEECH DELIVERED BY KWESI AMOAFU-YEBOAH, INDEPENDENT PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE ON NOVEMBER 19, 2007.

Distinguished Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen of the press. Good morning. Thank you very much for being here this morning. I believe I've interacted with some of you in the past, on other matters of national interest.

But, our purpose for gathering here today is for me to officially announce to you, and the people of Ghana, my intention to contest for the 2008 Presidential elections, as an independent candidate.....I bet the question on everyone's mind is WHY?

I believe this is a great time to live in our country Ghana. It's been 50 years since our founding fathers freed us from colonial rule. Between then and now, we have been tried and tested, and I must say, I am quite impressed with the resolve of Ghanaians as a people. And, I will not bet against my people!

I believe in Ghana and Ghanaians. I believe that when spurred on and motivated, Ghanaians can come together to solve our own crucial problems....And.....we have crucial problems to solve!

I believe Ghana, like any progressive nation, belongs to the youth. I believe those of us who have reached the constitutional age to hold high public office, must view ourselves as caretakers and holders-in-trust, with a fiduciary duty to the generations of Ghanaians to come. And, we must plan accordingly. We must resolve to leave a legacy that will make the next generation just as proud as we are, of our founding fathers.

I am an entrepreneur by choice, and an engineer by training. As an entrepreneur, I believe that problems are opportunities in disguise. Problems are conditions we must seek out and embrace. And, I love solving problems.

As an engineer, I have been trained to view problems with an analytical mind. I view problems first from the desired results, working in reverse to find solutions. And, I have spent several years doing this.

As an engineer I have been designing, testing and implementing complex systems and projects, in sometimes complex and hostile environments. So, without being conscious of it, I have been preparing and training for the job I am seeking. I am uniquely qualified to serve you, and uniquely trained for the task at hand.

As a person with a trained engineering mind, I will not deal with our complex problems in isolation, when they may, in fact, be complex pieces to a larger problem. I will seek holistic solutions, that have the best chance of achieving the results we want.

Fellow Ghanaians, there are problems in our society that need attention. And, there are problems with our economy that need attention....We need careful, well thought-out and constructive action NOW!....And, I will dedicate myself as your humble servant, to solving these problems. I don't belong to anybody. I have no party, and therefore I am not beholden to anyone, but the people of Ghana. I am a BLACK STAR in Red, Gold and Green! When I'm in office, Ghana is in POWER!

My fellow Ghanaians, I believe that our problems can only be solved by the Ghanaian people. The Ghanaian people have a vested interest, in making sure that we embark on the right solutions, so that we can pass on a better nation, to our youth, our children, and our grandchildren because the nation belongs to them. And, that is why I believe that growing the private sector is the key to solving of most of our problems.

In growing the private sector, however, we must be conscious of the fact, that our domestic capacity is low. We must take the necessary steps, to build capacity, and allow for the inclusion of indigenous participation, in all areas of economic activity, and at all levels.

It is no longer acceptable, for Ghanaian institutions to be divested to foreign ownership, or control, simply because "Ghanaians do not have money". In this age of global interdependence, capital is nothing more than a commodity that can be bought and sold. Ghanaian indigenous participation can be financed through a number of creative vehicles, as capital seeks to find its optimum price.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen of the press. I am not in any way against foreign investment, just as I will never advocate a total ban on foreign imports. But, I am deeply concerned about our nation's indiscriminate and overdependence on foreign capital, foreign aid, and foreign expertise, to propel our growth. It is simply dangerous!

Over the years, our overdependence on foreign resources: foreign aid in the form of donor contributions; foreign capital in the form of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI); and foreign expertise, has led to a loss of national initiative, and national pride, as well as capacity. Sadly, this is used as proof by some, that Africans, Ghanaians included; do not have the same intellectual capacity as other races. I'm sure you're just as appalled by this notion, as I am.

We must work to regain our pride, and our initiative, and build national capacity for ourselves, and the next generation. If we keep in mind, that we can never rise above the source of a hand-out, we will understand why we must work hard to regain our national sovereignty over our own economic decision-making, and our destiny.

Fellow Ghanaians we, the people, are the most important asset of this nation. We are the foundation, on which the future of our beloved nation rests. Together, we must form the focal point, of any credible plan of action, for our future growth.

Every woman, man, and child, has a role to play in our national development. In our quest for development, we must mobilize every available local productive resource we can muster. This includes productive efforts from both genders; men, and women, as well as our youth.

We must assimilate women fully into the formal sector of economic activity. And, under my leadership, I will not hesitate to institute affirmative action programs, to ensure that women have equal access to banking, technology and markets. Micro-credit schemes, while a step in the right direction, should become a source of secondary financing for women, and not the primary, or only source. It is not acceptable for women to be relegated to the fringes of economic activity, when in fact, women are the very source, and center of life. When a woman is just as productive as a man, she must earn just as much as a man! No-one should be second class!

My fellow Ghanaians, under my leadership, I will focus on developing, and implementing, private sector-friendly policies, that will ensure acceleration in the growth of our economy. I believe our biggest challenge, is job creation. Without jobs, there is no tax revenue. And, without tax revenue, there is no money for infrastructure development, provision of proper health care, improvement of our educational system or badly needed social programs for the very poor. Government cannot create jobs. Only the people can. That is why we must make the people the focal point of all our plans. When we grow the economy, we can create jobs.

You see almost everyday I encounter young people with brilliant ideas, brilliant business ideas. Ideas that if implemented could create profitable businesses, and employ people. But, they lack the capital to implement these ideas. They have no rich uncles or boaffoo (helper) to whom they could approach for seed money. Wouldn't it be nice if we had a system in place, that seeks to create a pool of boaffoo, that anyone could go to, with a business plan?.....My fellow Ghanaians, this is what I'll do as president.....

Our government today is too big for our size. I believe we can reduce its size dramatically, increase productivity, and get more value for money. Under my leadership, I will do just that!

By reducing the size of Government, we will save money, but we will also retrench some workers. So, we shall take part of the savings we get and use it to retrain retrenched workers, who can then be assimilated into the private sector.

The bulk of the savings, the remainder, will then be passed on to the Ghanaian people, in the form of tax incentives, if they invest in start-up, and growth-stage businesses. This action will have the effect of creating many little “uncles”, and “boafos” (helpers), to help create new businesses, and expand existing ones. The resultant effect will be the creation of new jobs for the jobless, better paying jobs for skilled workers, and a wider tax base for additional tax revenue to be used for infrastructure development, hospitals, schools, and all the social programs that remain so taxing on the national budget. Remember, there is no tax money unless people are working. As such, I believe the first and most important thing we must do is put our people to work. When unemployment is low, prosperity has a chance!

My fellow Ghanaians, it is very easy to look to government for solutions to our problems. But, the fact is, a democratic government is what you, and me, and us, together make it to be! A responsible democratic government, reflects, and derives its power from the will of its people. And, that is why we must elect a government that comes from you, the people. We must elect a government that wants to serve the people of Ghana, instead of one that wants the people to serve them! You must elect a President who wants to come to office to roll up his sleeves and work for the people of Ghana, instead of one who wants to come to POWER to lord over Ghanaians!

As a nation, we must come together to eliminate the social tensions created by exclusion due to ethnicity, nepotism, religious differences, party cronyism, and other issues, that cause divisiveness. The time has come, for us to put aside our differences and concentrate on, and harness, the power of what we have in common. This is no Party's time. **THIS IS GHANA'S TIME!** If we are united we will succeed; if we are divided we will fail.

Under my leadership, exclusion, alienation and political victimization, will be a thing of the past....Remember, I have no party and no obligation to anyone except you, the people of Ghana. I will need everyone's contribution in order to move our nation forward. Unity will be of utmost priority. If you are contractor, you need not carry a party card in order to get a contract. All you need is your “competence card”.

Fellow Ghanaians, If I am elected to serve, I will form a government from competent action-oriented Ghanaians, regardless of what party colors they wear. As an independent with no party obligations, I will be free to select from the best brains available on all sides of the political divide to get the job done. We cannot spark a fire unless we unite and concentrate all our might and power. There is no time for wavering!

Under my leadership, critical workers in government, and parastatal organizations, need not fear losing their jobs, because of a change in ruling party. I will keep the best Ghana has to offer; the capable, the committed and the competent.

I will work to restore the dignity of Ghana and Ghanaians, by changing the beggar mentality that has taken root in all aspects of our society, and eliminate our dependency on donor contributions for balancing our national budget.

To augment the revenue side of our national budget, I will propose an increase in real property taxes, of ½% of the assessed value, of developed properties with values exceeding GHc25,000. This action will have the effect of potentially raising a whopping GHc500 million annually. Specifically, part of these funds, will be used to support, a comprehensive environmental, and sanitation policy, that will seek to rid our cities, and urban centers, of the mounting filth, that continue to threaten everyone, and everything, from health to tourism.

Additionally, I will move to reduce the statutory costs associated with the importation of capital equipment and replace it with periodic property taxes. The effect of this will be to encourage newer, and higher value equipment that will yield more in overall tax revenue over the life of the equipment. In the case of emission producing equipment, this action will cause a reduction, in pollutants, that cause undocumented health problems.

My fellow Ghanaians, sacrifice is a pre-requisite to building a dignified nation. And, dignity we must have! We cannot be a dignified nation if we continue to depend on others for our existence.

I will work to instill in Ghanaians the culture of sacrificing for ourselves, our children and grandchildren, and future generations to come. I believe Ghanaians will understand, if it is communicated properly to them that donors from whom we seek assistance, must themselves sacrifice and continue to sacrifice, in order to support us. I believe Ghanaians will buy into a well thought-out, self-help plan, designed to pull us up by our own bootstraps. We have done it before, and we can do it again. I believe that everything we

need to succeed and win as a nation is within our reach. We must believe in ourselves, have faith in our abilities and trust one another.

I will work to concentrate capital in the hands of Ghanaians, regardless of which party colors they adorn. By so doing, Ghanaians will be in a position to participate in large national and international business deals, that can generate profits to be repatriated to Ghana, to create more jobs and more tax revenue to fuel the opportunity cycle. This action will help address our efforts at increasing the contributions of homegrown capital to total domestic investment. By maintaining the proper balance of FDI and homegrown capital, we can increase our net tax revenue from total domestic investment, raise our national pride and begin taking control of our own economy. We must take our destiny into our own hands!

Ladies and Gentlemen, today Ghanaians are unable to participate in large Government divestitures, such as Ghana Telecom and Agric Development Bank; we do not have a single indigenous construction company, capable of building a dam, our stadia or even our roads; and our major participation in the telecom sector, comes from the many under-employed people, who sit in the hot sun, under umbrellas, selling airtime for 20Gp at a time.

Under new Bank of Ghana rules, the indigenous bank may soon be a relic in our minds, because most of the local banks may have to merge or be absorbed, due to the challenges they may face in raising additional capital to meet the new limits required.

I support Bank of Ghana fully, on this new capital requirement for our banks. I believe it is testimony, to the fact that economic activity is increasing, and the receptacles of the rewards, of this increase in activity, must be on solid foundation. It is Government's responsibility, however, to find ways to shore up our local banks so that they may remain independent, if they choose to. It will be disastrous, if Ghanaians were to lose significant participation, in this sector as well. We must act NOW to take control of our own nation!

Fellow Ghanaians, this is our wake up call. We've been sleeping for far too long! Our people and our businesses MUST be allowed to learn and grow by doing. It is the only way!

If we continue to confine ourselves in a little "pot" and, continue to prune our roots, and our crown, we will remain a Bonsai Tree.....standing only 8 inches tall, at the age of 50 years. The "strategic investor" excuse is no longer acceptable!

My Fellow Ghanaians, we live in an era of new world order, where there are rules that govern world trade, and how sovereign nations relate to one another. While I believe some of these rules and trade agreements may not be fair, we must live up to our commitments, and adhere to these rules.

But, to safeguard our economy from the wrath of cheap foreign imports, that are threatening to kill our local industries and put our people out of work, we will engage our very best of minds, to look for ways to ensure the survival of our local industries such as textile, poultry, rice, book publishing.....and, we shall do so within the limits of global rules.

As a man with an electrical engineering background, and experience in the telecommunication industry in Ghana, I understand and appreciate, the positive effects telecom and ICT, can have on growth acceleration in our economy. The telecommunications industry is one of the largest contributors to GDP, and GDP growth. The industry can, however, do more to introduce state of the art technology, to propel the sector, and the nation to a new level.

Under my leadership, I will champion the adoption of WIMAX as the preferred technology for delivering wireless broadband to every corner of the country in order to bridge the digital divide that separates the urban from the rural centers of Ghana. By so doing, we will be able to raise the level of appeal, of some of our rural communities for business development, and decrease the attractiveness of rural-to-urban migration by our youth.

I will move to encourage the private sector, led by indigenous telecom industry participants, to seek the right partnerships with global giants such as Intel and Google, for the provision of state of the art software, hardware, and content, for acceleration in the take-up of wireless broadband for assured viability. It will be my key goal, to make sure that WIMAX spectrum stays in the hands of indigenous industry players. This is one of the ways we can correct the imbalance of FDI domination in this sector.

In conclusion, I would like to briefly outline the four (4) core components of my administration's platform, when I become President of Ghana:

1. Ghana's economic, social and political status at home, in Africa and the world at large in 25-years.
2. Establish and implement a development program that best leverages our national resources. We need to set clear, ambitious and well articulated economic goals for

the next 5, 10, 15, 20 years from now?

3. Ensure that our economic development is geared towards preserving control of our economy in the hands of Ghanaians without excluding foreign investment.
4. Strengthening democratic governance and institutions in Ghana.

Fellow Ghanaians, the foregoing are but a few of the areas of importance to the development of our nation. Over the next few months, I will be assembling a team of action-minded and competent Ghanaians to analyze and address some of the other areas of importance. Our findings and action plans will be published and presented to you, the people, in a manifesto to be launched early next year. In the meantime, you may join our movement by visiting us on the internet at www.kwesi4ghana.com.

On this note, I humbly take this opportunity to declare my intention to contest for the 2008 Presidential elections.

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen of the press. I am most grateful for your presence and attention this morning. I hope from now on, you will continue to offer me the platform to interact with the people of Ghana, on issues of national concern.

MAY GOD BLESS OUR NATION!

AND, LET US LIVE THE DREAM!

Thank You.