
**REMARKS BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE TRADES UNION
CONGRESS (TUC), BROTHER KOFI ASAMOAH,**

**AT A FORUM ORGANIZED BY THE WILLIAM OFORI-ATTA
HERITAGE**

***THEME: ONE NATION, ONE PEOPLE, ONE DESTINY – SUSTAINING
GHANA’S DEMOCRACY***

14 AUGUST 2013

Mr. Chairman,

Invited Guest,

Representatives of political parties;

Comrades,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the leadership of the Trades Union Congress (Ghana) and the working people of Ghana, I commend the organizers of this forum. As we have just been told this forum is to discuss what we all agree as the most pressing political issues affecting our country today, namely:

- the so-called ‘supreme petition’;
- the verdict expected from the Supreme Court; and
- the implications for the peace and security of the country.

Brothers and Sisters, in many ways we appear to be back to 2012. The political temperature has reached a crescendo. Many Ghanaians are justifiably frightened. The political atmosphere today is similar to what heralded the December 2012 Elections. And at this point in 2012, the TUC committed itself and the working people of Ghana to resolutely defend and uphold the democratic foundations of our nation. We promised to organize and resist any attempt by any group of persons

that intend to subvert the current democratic dispensation or threaten the peace and stability of Ghana.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, today the TUC reaffirms these commitments. We will not do anything that will disturb the peace of Ghana. At the same time, we will do our best to prevent the disruption of the prevailing peace.

Ladies and gentlemen, this evening's discussion is crucial for obvious reasons. Without a sensible, coolheaded and constitutionally legitimate approach to receiving the verdict of the Supreme Court, the stability and peace of this country could be compromised. And that will be bad for Ghana and the rest of Africa.

Already, the African continent is suffering a huge peace and development deficit. In the last decade or so, we have seen signs of progress, though many of our democratic experiments seem unsettled.

I recall the address of our Senior Brother Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of the United Nations, at the Ghana@50 anniversary lectures in 2007, where he noted that *“Peace may be spreading on the continent, but a continent at peace – which is what we all want – remains an idea in search of realization”*. He continued, *“we seem to have understood the high cost of persistent conflict: the years of squandered development, the enormous loss of life and displacement of people [and] the untold suffering”*.

I agree with him totally. Ghana has been enjoying relative peace. Therefore, it will be unwise to push ourselves to the brink of war. We may never recover from a large-scale conflict and we may indeed set the stage for the worse. We must all get involved in maintaining the peace we are currently enjoying in Ghana.

Thankfully, the need for peace is well recognize especially in the last few months as the Supreme Court proceedings drew to a close. Already, various groups including our political parties have organized forums upon forums preaching peace. Our radio and television stations are now full of peace messages. And personally I'm hopeful, that Ghana will scale over this hurdle. We changed governments in 2000 and in 2008 under very threatening conditions. But we managed against all odds to remain a peaceful and stable country.

Ladies and gentlemen, the challenge will be what we do with a nation that has been characterized by a growing level of political polarization. The challenge of moving forward! No matter the outcome of the petition, we have a huge task of healing the soul of the country.

Brothers and sisters, in 1992 we, the people of Ghana, adopted a Constitution which reflects our hopes, aspirations, dreams, principles, rights, duties and responsibilities. Article 1(1) of the 1992 Constitution states that the sovereignty of our Country resides in us, the people of Ghana, in whose name and for whose welfare the powers of government are to be exercised in the manner and within the limits laid down in the Constitution. The Directive Principles of State Policy in chapter six (6) of our Constitution is a brilliant piece of development blue print for our country and in times like these we need to reflect on the provisions in there.

Among other things, the chapter states that, we, as a people, declare in this Chapter that our State shall protect and safeguard the independence, Unity and territorial integrity of Ghana; That, we want a State that seeks the well-being of all our peoples; That, we want measures to put in place to: foster a spirit of loyalty to Ghana that overrides sectional, ethnic and other loyalties, promote among the people of Ghana, the culture of political tolerance, and take steps to eradicate corrupt practices and abuse of power.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, the question I ask particularly of the politicians who have had the unique privilege of ruling Ghana whether they have exercised the powers of government in the interest of the people of Ghana? Our politics since 1992 has become avenue to pursue personal interests of few in society rather than the pursuit of the collective good. Arguably, politics has become the quickest route to riches of unimaginable proportions. In furtherance of the sectional interests of the few, the political class has sowed and is now reaping from the seeds of disunity.

In the process, a potentially rich country has become led on the road to pauperization. Many of our citizens in whose welfare the powers of government are supposed to be exercised are living a meager existence. Large swathe of young women and men coming out of our schools are not finding work that matches the skills and competencies. Those with the means to travel are seeking greener

pastures, and the country is losing their invaluable contributions. The rest join the infamous informal economy where they earn very little even as they work long hours throughout their lives.

Mr. Chairman, these young people scattered throughout the country have and continued to be denied economic justice. They are not alone. The large prevalence of child labour we see on our streets is a powerful testimony of how many Ghanaian families have been left out in the sharing of the national cake. The young, frustrated and restless people are the real dangers to the current peace and stability of this country. The large army of child labourers with virtually no opportunity to build their human capital will surely constitute the future threat to our country's peace and stability.

Brothers and sisters, the Supreme Petition has confirmed a number of things we have known about ourselves, and our political system and political elites it has churned out. The first is that we have been paying lip service to the rule of law throughout the Fourth Republic. We have failed to invest in the institutions that have been established for good governance and rule of law. Secondly, this country has moved back on nationhood as we more partisan and less nationalistic. Even more alarming is that partisanship has been woven around ethnicity. And politicians continue to tear this country apart along the lines of ethnicity and partisanship. In the process, our development efforts have been reduced to a cacophony of noises that is being interpreted as “ka bi ma menka bi”.

For us, the working people of Ghana, a peaceful and civilized working environment is a *sine qua non* for the creation of decent employment and prosperity for workers and their families. We cannot achieve this goal if there is violence, civil strife and political unrest and instability in the country. Ghana has suffered directly and indirectly from the conflicts in our sub-region. This reflects in the development deficit and poverty we are experiencing in our country. We all witnessed the suffering our neighbours had to endure. Of course, we do not want this to happen in Ghana.

What is happening now at the Supreme Court is a demonstration of political maturity of Ghanaians. We in the TUC congratulated the petitioners for going to court to have their grievances addressed. They and indeed all Ghanaians have

demonstrated faith in our courts. We also welcomed and I believe, all Ghanaians have seen the wisdom in the decision to live-telecast the programme. Thus far, we believe we have already added to our democratic laurels. Now, just as the law is in the bosom of the courts, the decision lies with the 9-member panel. Ghanaians expect that justice will not only be done but more importantly justice will be seen to have been done.

At this stage let acknowledge and congratulate the Chief Justice and the members of the panel for the exemplary leadership they have provided for our country so far.

Very soon, the verdict will be announced. The fate of the country is their hands. We trust their collective judgement. We urge leaders and members of the major political parties to denounce violence. No matter the outcome Ghana must not be torn apart. This country must not go to war on the altar of anybody's political expediency. Yes, politics has divided us like never before. But this is the time to show to the world that Ghana has matured politically. It is time for politicians to show leadership and demonstrate to Ghanaians that indeed they are worthy of the political leadership they seek. Leadership on both sides must transcend their parochial partisan interests; work across the aisle, build bridges and unite Ghanaians for the task of conquering poverty and ignorance. It is simply not possible to move Ghana to the next stage of development when after every election, nearly half of the population sits on the fence in opposition while the other half that form the government engages in self- and group-enrichment. Ghana deserves better.

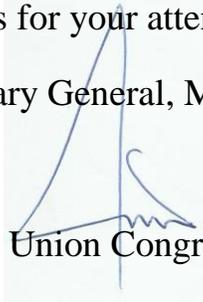
Brothers and sisters, we must take a closer look at the way we have conducted governance since the fourth republic began. In the view of the TUC, the style and posture of governance neither promote inclusive development nor social and political cohesion. Politics and politicians have trump common sense, traditional wisdom and expert knowledge. Our politicians of today know it all! You must either be a fool or belong to the other side if you disagree with them. This governance posture must change. And it must begin with the dissolution of all so-called communications teams. In particular, those in government must allow the information services department and the public relations units of the various

ministries, departments and agencies to disseminate government policies and programmes.

Mr. Chairman, the TUC remain ready to support all peace initiatives. We will do our best to ensure that Ghana remains peaceful. And Afterwards, we entreat all of you to join hands with us and all progressive forces to fight for economic justice which in the view of the TUC will be the bedrock for a peaceful Ghana in the years ahead.

Thanks for your attention.

Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Asamoah



Trades Union Congress