

## Remarks Following a Meeting With President John Evans Atta Mills of Ghana March 8, 2012

*President Obama.* Well, it is a great pleasure to welcome President Mills and his delegation from Ghana. This gives me the opportunity to return the extraordinary hospitality that they showed not only me, but also Michelle and Sasha and Malia, and when we had the opportunity to visit last year.

There are sometimes—there's sometimes a tendency to focus on the challenges that exist in Africa and rightfully so. But I think it's important for us to also focus on the good news that's coming out of Africa, and I think Ghana continues to be a good-news story.

This is a country that has established a strong tradition of democracy, and President Mills and I were comparing notes—we're both up for reelection—but what we agreed to is the fact that regardless of who wins and who loses, our countries' commitment to making sure that the people have a voice and determine who it is that represents them in their government is what gives both our countries such strength.

And Ghana has proven, I think, to be a model for Africa in terms of its democratic practices. And I very much appreciate the efforts that President Mills has taken not only to ensure fair and free elections, but also to root out corruption, increase transparency, make sure that government is working for the people of Ghana and not just for the few. So we're very appreciative of those efforts.

In addition, Ghana has become a wonderful success story economically on the continent. In part because of the initiatives of President Mills, you've seen high growth rates over the last several years. Food productivity and food security is up. There's been strong foreign investment. That trade and investment benefits folks back home here in the United States as well.

In fact, the President's Government recently is collaborating with a number of American businesses to build infrastructure inside of Ghana, which will create thousands of jobs here in the United States. And the trade that we engage in creates jobs for tens of thousands

of people back in Ghana. So that's a good-news story.

And what we've also been able to do is collaborate with the Ghanaian Government through the Millennium Challenge Corporation—they are a grant recipient—and it has helped to improve a wide range of infrastructure and institutions inside of Ghana. Our Feed the Future program—we've been able to help increase productivity there. And the Partnership for Growth—that is also another mechanism where we're collaborating, for example, on power generation and credit to small businesses and medium-size businesses inside of Ghana.

Ghana's also been a leader, a responsible actor on the international stage, working in the region to help stabilize and reduce conflict there. They've been a strong partner with us in the United Nations on a whole range of international issues. And as important, President Mills has consistently spoken out on behalf of human rights and making sure that everyone is treated fairly and not discriminated against inside of his country.

So I am very proud of the friendship and the partnership between Ghana and the United States. I am confident that it will continue well into the future, beyond the tenures of these two Presidents. And I'm looking forward to having an opportunity to visit Ghana once again sometime in the future.

But in the meantime, Mr. President, welcome to the United States, welcome to your delegation, and we wish you all the best.

*President Mills.* Thank you, Mr. President, for this very warm reception. My delegation and I are really honored to be here today. First, to say a big thank you to you, Mr. President, for the honor done us by singling us out for your first visit to Africa on assumption of office. It's really inspired us.

And I'm also here to also thank you for the help that we have been enjoying and for the high level of cooperation and collaboration that exists between our two countries. We share the

same values of democracy. We have come to accept that democracy is the only way.

And democracy goes with development. And if you come to Africa, our people are yearning for only one thing: improvement in their daily lives. And there can be no development without peace, which means that we should do the things which will ensure that there is peace and that there's no room for conflict.

The United States has been a model, and I'm happy that we are cooperating with one another on all kinds of fronts and they are yielding results. And I was telling Mr. President that when one of the roads was commissioned, and it was built with money provided by the MCC under our first compact; you should have seen the joy on the faces of the Ghanaians because there had been a radical transformation in their lives. I mean, that is what governance is all about: to see people happy because they now have what they did not have.

So I've assured the President that we have elections this year, but we are going to ensure that there is peace before, during, after the

elections, because when there is no peace, it's not the leaders who will suffer, it's the ordinary people who have elected us into office.

So we have a big challenge, and we know that some of our friends in Africa are looking up to us, and we dare not fail them. I have no doubt at all that we have embarked on a useful journey, and we'll get to the very end. I've told him that both of us are facing elections, but our ships will be able to sail safely to their final destination, I want to assure you.

So thanks a lot for the wonderful reception. We'll go back with happy memories. And of course, this will also reassure our people that the kind of cooperation, which started with Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, our first President, is growing from strength to strength.

*President Obama.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*President Mills.* Thank you, Mr. President.

*President Obama.* Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:55 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

## Statement on International Women's Day March 8, 2012

On International Women's Day, the United States celebrates the many achievements and milestones in the ongoing struggle for gender equality around the world and reaffirms our commitment to accelerating progress. We are committed to a future in which our daughters and sons have equal opportunities to thrive, because when women succeed, communities and countries succeed. With this promise in mind, we are launching new initiatives on women's political participation and economic empowerment, combating violence against women, promoting women's roles and perspectives in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and supporting the work of U.N. Women and other key partners.

Experience shows that true democracy cannot be built without the full and equal partici-

pation of half our population. Women's economic empowerment is essential for economic recovery and growth worldwide. Successful transitions in the Middle East and North Africa will depend on women's ability to shape their countries' futures. From Egypt to Yemen and beyond, over the last year, we have seen women lead local and national efforts to protest corruption, demand accountability, and establish new institutions.

The United States also recognizes the need to elevate the perspectives of particularly marginalized women worldwide, including refugees and displaced persons, ethnic and religious minorities, and women with disabilities. On this day, and every day, we stand with the women and men who bravely champion dignity, freedom, and opportunity for all.