



National Day Address by H.E. Philipp Stalder, Ambassador of Switzerland to Ghana

Honorable Afriyie Akoto, Minister of Food & Agriculture, our esteemed guest of honor today,
Honorable Members of Parliament,
Nana nom – Nii Meh – Naa Meh,
Your Excellencies & representatives of the Diplomatic Corps,
Dear Swiss compatriots,
Distinguished guests,

It is a privilege to stand before you and to celebrate the Swiss National Day a few days in advance of the official date which is the 1st August. For obvious reasons, it's our first official National Day reception in three years. We were or still are a bit traumatized by the pandemic. At least we can say that in Ghana we have not seen deaths and infections on the scale that was seen elsewhere and for some of us, Ghana was almost a kind of refuge.

Again, it is a pleasure that I have the opportunity to celebrate this event with you today, and to end my journey with this special occasion as I depart Ghana for good in just a matter of days.

I have definitely called this country my home for the last three years and three months. So, let me take this opportunity to warmly thank you all for an excellent cooperation, your sympathy & your friendship. The peaceful, tolerant, humorous and enduring spirit of Ghanaians has impressed me tremendously and is something that I will not forget. For me, this is also the hope of this country - its people and especially the talented youth with all their ambition and their aspiration to strive for a better life.

This strong potential of the ordinary Ghanaian remains to be tapped to fuel the development of this nation. What I see daily are young people, who are eager to participate, and are waiting to make their mark. My attention specially goes to the youth and innovative segment of society who need to be given a push to succeed. I note in particular that this can come with prudent policies, with legislation as well as an open participation in the political discourse. I don't suggest that there is no participation possibilities. Far from that. Ghana is and remains a robust democracy which deserves all our support and recognition. But do we - and by that I mean the elite and people in decision making positions - listen enough to the voice and the needs of the youth and underprivileged groups? I am not only referring to Ghana, but also to Switzerland and many other parts of the world. When young people comment passionately via social or other media, we must understand that it is *their* future laying ahead of them.

When I speak again of legislation and the legal frame for living harmoniously together in prosperity, I duly noted Ghana's efforts for a review of its 30 year old constitution since my arrival to Accra. So, the question to be answered by Ghanaians is whether an adjusted and modernized constitution would bring benefits to the nation. Although the constitutional review process has currently come

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to a halt, I remain optimistic that already existing valuable proposals can bring forward the discussion and allow Ghana to prosper further.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I know you would rather continue your conversations than listen to a long speech, but allow me to take a moment to recall the excellent relations between Ghana and Switzerland. This relationship is a long and a very solid one. It's based on many shared values and interests, including democracy, a commitment to peace and security, a belief in the importance of free trade and investment and deep people-to-people links. Furthermore, a strong focus of our diplomatic relations and our presence in Ghana lies on sustainable economic development, with our technical assistance provided by SECO, the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs. Together with our partners in Ghana, we carry out many projects to foster the private sector and support the youth.

Our political relations were taken one step higher when Ghana's President H.E. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, visited Switzerland for a historic State Visit in February 2020. Only a few months later and despite of the first year of the pandemic, Switzerland and Ghana signed an innovative Climate Protection Agreement, which brings the cooperative approaches of the Paris Agreement to life. This bilateral agreement was the first with any African country and as a recent visit from a delegation from Switzerland has shown, it will bring concrete results, for example in the form of clean cooking and solar lighting to the benefit of many Ghanaian households.

Let me depict what the elders say: *Bepɔ, ye foro no nkyɛn-nkyɛn (Hills are best climbed diagonally) depicting that a hard problem is tackled in unconventional ways.*

Switzerland like Ghana has an impressive reputation as a nation committed to peace. It is also well known that Ghana is one of the most significant contributors to peacekeeping and peace operations in Africa. Therefore, we closely work together with the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center where we organize several training courses a year for military and police personnel as well as for civilians from Ghana and ECOWAS member countries.

Let me mention here another promising avenue for further cooperation. In June, Switzerland was elected as a member of the UN Security Council with 187 out of 190 votes for the period 2023–24. It's Switzerland's first time sitting at the table in New York since we joined the UN rather late in 2002. Our tenure will overlap for one year with that of Ghana and I am convinced that our two nations - together with many other like-minded befriended countries - can strive for a more sustainable and inclusive development for the world at large, and for the African continent.

When we look at the global stage, for peace-loving Swiss people, the Russian attack on Ukraine and ongoing war since February still comes as a shock. Is the blunt violation of international law an expression of geopolitical tectonic shifts? Do we have to realize that the liberal world order, democracy, human rights and freedom are coming under increasing pressure, be it in Europe, Africa or elsewhere in the world? If the answer is yes, we all should play our part that mankind won't return to an era marked by conflicts and political, economic, and ideological antagonisms.

My remarks would not be complete without a reference to the strong economic ties between our two countries. Over many decades, Swiss companies have contributed to the development of Ghana through taxes they have paid and the people they have employed. The country is Switzerland's third biggest trade partner in Africa with a considerable trade plus in favor of Ghana. As I said, some of our companies have been in Ghana for over 50 years and the story goes on as they pride themselves on the transfer of knowledge, skills and expertise to their Ghanaian workforce. Just last month, we witnessed the substantial expansion of a factory of a multinational

Swiss company in Tema, which was commissioned in the presence of President Akufo-Addo. This is a testimony of the commitment of the Swiss private sector to grow with Ghana.

This leads me to the end of my speech. I hope that I could motivate you a bit to reflect on the depth of our relationship with Ghana. It was a real privilege & honor to serve Switzerland's interests in Ghana, to work closely with all of you and to modestly contribute to the further development of this friendship between our two countries! A big 'thank-you' goes also to my team at the Swiss Embassy who have supported me in my endeavor to boost bilateral relations and represent my country. My team also did a wonderful job to make this National Day reception happen today!

Now, enjoy the evening with us with good food and conversation and perhaps with a selfie in front of our red carpet banner or the graffiti wall symbolizing the Ghanaian-Swiss friendship. It was created as a live performance at our last Swiss National Day reception in 2019. Last but not least, let me also mention our musical performance today. It's my dear friend and Swiss compatriot Beda Ehrensberger who brought his band with him to entertain us.

On this note, Hon. Afriyie Akoto, dear guests, I have the honor to invite you all to raise your glasses for a toast to the President of Ghana, H.E. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, and to the bond of friendship between the people of Switzerland and Ghana.

Thank you for your attention. Long live Ghana and long live Switzerland.
