

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY HON. ALHAJI COLLINS DAUDA, MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE 2016 GHANA URBAN FORUM HELD AT EUSBETT HOTEL, SUNYANI ON TUESDAY, 12<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2016**

**Nana Chairman  
Hon. Regional Minister  
Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives  
Representatives of Cities Alliance, GIZ~SfDR  
Our Development Partners  
Distinguished Invited Guests  
Friends from the Media  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I extend to you warm greetings from H.E. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana, Co-Chair of the Eminent Group of Advocates for the Sustainable Development Goals and Champion of the African Urban Agenda. We acknowledge this honour to our first gentleman and are committed to enhancing his image in this regard.

**Nana Chairman**, it is worth emphasizing that the Ghana Urban Forum serves as an important platform for the discussion of rapid urbanisation and its impact on our communities, towns, cities and their economies and climate change and its effect on development. This year's Ghana Urban Forum, is being organized under the Theme, "**Localizing the New Urban Agenda: A Catalyst for Financing Urban Infrastructure for Equitable Economic Growth in Ghana**". It is timely because the forum comes at a time when we have just formulated the Local Economic Development (LED) policy which seeks to identify district potential resources which can be developed into full-fledged businesses for increased economic development. **For example**, one of the challenges of urbanisation is the enormous gap between the demand for urban infrastructure services and the capacities of our MMDAs to finance urban infrastructure.

Happily, Government has identified this challenge and has made funding available to MMDAs through the District Assemblies Common Fund, the District Development Facility (DDF). Other Government interventions include the provision of funding under the Urban Development Grant of the Local Government Capacity Support Project for Metropolitan and Municipal Assemblies, the Ghana Social Opportunities Project (GSOP), the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area Sanitation and Water Project (GAMA) and the Ghana Urban Management Pilot Project (GUMPP), which seeks to improve planning, investment in infrastructure and ensure the financial autonomy of our cities.

Furthermore, through the introduction of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Policy, MMDAs are being encouraged to enter into partnerships with private entities to raise funding for capital-intensive infrastructure for the economic development and growth of our cities and towns and to create employment opportunities for the youth.

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**, I am happy to announce that, the Government is also making efforts to pass the Local Government Borrowing Bill which is an important Legislation that will give opportunity to MMDAs to borrow from the capital market. It is my hope that the Local Government Borrowing Bill, when passed into Law, would enable MMDAs to borrow funds from the capital market to provide infrastructure and services for equitable socio-economic growth.

Let me also stress that the theme is important because it represents a critical milestone, in concluding the negotiations on the outcome of the Habitat III Conference scheduled for Quito. Ecuador 17-20 October, 2016.

**Mr. Chairman**, the rapid rate of urbanisation poses great challenges. These challenges need to be effectively managed to ensure that the potential economic and social development arising from urbanisation are optimised to reduce poverty, improve the quality of life of our people and to protect the environment. It is for this reason that the New Urban Agenda seeks to rethink urbanization in terms of the provision of infrastructure to provide urban services and ensure equitable economic growth for all.

It is quite commendable that Ghana is one of the first African countries to have developed and is implementing a comprehensive National Urban Policy and Action Plan. This represents a bold attempt to tackle the challenges of urbanisation comprehensively in order to facilitate and promote the sustainable development of Ghanaian cities and towns.

For instance, you will all recall that the African Urban Agenda initiative was jointly launched by H.E. John Dramani Mahama, President of Ghana and the then President, Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria at the UN General Assembly in September 2013. Following the launch of the African Urban Agenda, my Ministry hosted a Conference on the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and Africa Secretary General, to discuss the implementation of the New African Urban Agenda initiative and to prepare for the 2016 Habitat III Conference.

**Mr. Chairman**, the meeting was also attended by officials of the UN Habitat, the Cities Alliance Secretariat, GIZ, as well as officers from the National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana (NALAG). At that meeting, we highlighted the need to change the negative perception of the World on African cities, and this included the stereotypes used in describing urban realities in Africa.

In the light of the above, we identified three enabling vectors for understanding the New African Urban Agenda. These were:

- a. The development of a comprehensive National Urban Policy;
- b. The creation of a multi-stakeholder platform to debate urban issues; and
- c. To develop a renewed attention on urban economy and to consider our cities as engines of growth.

These called for renewed efforts, as a country, to embark on meaningful spatial planning, to provide basic urban services in order to deal with the challenges of urbanisation such as waste management and water supply and build fiscal systems that will finance urban infrastructure.

We have travelled a long way since then, and I am happy to report that as a Ministry, we have been working with our local and national level stakeholders and international partners to accomplish the above strategies.

**Mr Chairman**, it is important to note that as part of our preparations towards Habitat III we compiled the Habitat III National Report. This was accomplished through the participation of a multi-disciplinary national team of experts who prepared reports on specific subjects.

Secondly, we also established a steering committee consisting of representatives from the Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing, Ministry of Roads and Highways, Ministry of Transport, Department of Urban Roads, Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, Ministry of Finance, the Institute of Local Government Studies, Ghana Statistical Service, Environmental Protection Agency and other non-state actors such as the Peoples Dialogue, Housing the Masses, Global Communities to direct and support the team.

Thirdly, we held National workshops and seminars to obtain broad views and consensus from the private and public sectors. Such workshops and seminars also provided a forum for ordinary citizens to express their views on some of the Challenges of Urbanisation and how these could be resolved.

**Nana Chairman**, the first UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development was held in Vancouver, Canada in 1976. This was followed by a second conference held in Istanbul, Turkey in 1996. Habitat III, which is a follow-up to the Istanbul Conference, will be held in Quito, Ecuador in October, 2016.

It is worth noting that it was during the second conference that World leaders adopted the Habitat Agenda as a global plan of action for providing adequate shelter for all within the framework of a sustainable human settlement plan. Broadly, it was agreed at the Istanbul Conference that:

- a. Cities are the engines of global growth;
- b. Urbanization provides opportunities for economic activities;
- c. Local authorities must develop more efficient systems for solid waste collection, water supply, wealth creation and educational infrastructure;
- d. The participatory approach must be used to collate views from all sectors of the population to effectively deal with emerging challenges of urbanisation.

Happily, our annual forum affirms our commitment to honour the above.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**, I wish to emphasize that we would use the 2016 Ghana Urban Forum, to firm up Ghana's commitment to the next 20 years global plan of action, using the participatory approach to raise the awareness of our people and build consensus towards the New Urban Agenda.

It is important to note that Ghana's participation in series of regional and global meetings and dialogue sessions towards the New Urban Agenda has been significant and is widely recognised. For instance, the Habitat III Secretariat selected four (4) Ghanaian experts to serve on four Policy Units to contribute to the drafting of outcome documents that shall be adopted as the New Urban Agenda. Let us use this opportunity to commend these imminent Ghanaians, namely, Sylvanus Adzornu, Bernard Abeiku Arthur, Dr. Isaac Mensa-Bonsu and Dr. Esther Ofei-Aboagye very highly for their contributions.

**Nana Chairman**, finally, I also wish to express the gratitude of Government to our development partners, particularly Cities Alliance through the GIZ-SfDR who supported the Ghana Urban Forum and Ghana's participation in Global and Regional Conferences, Meetings and Dialogue Sessions towards the New Urban Agenda. We cannot also forget the significant support of AFD, SECO and the World Bank in providing technical and financial support which enables us to provide critical urban infrastructural interventions to enable us provide critical urban services to enhance the living standards of the citizenry. We cherish this important partnership and hope that other development partners and the private sector will emulate your examples by coming on board to help us deal with these urban issues in order to sustain our urban areas as engines of growth and centres of excellence for education, healthcare, entrepreneurship, technological innovation, and to create opportunities for jobs, employment and thus improve the standard of living of our people.

On this note, it is my pleasure and honour to declare **GUF2016** formally open. I wish you fruitful deliberations. **Thank you.**