

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC

H.E. NANA ADDO DANKWA AKUFO-ADDO

**AT THE NATIONAL LAND CONFERENCE HELD AT THE
ACCRA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE ON
WEDNESDAY, 7TH DECEMBER 2022**

Nana Chairman and President of the National House of Chiefs

Minister for Lands and Natural Resources

Ministers of State

Deputy Ministers of State

Members of Parliament

Members of the Judiciary

Chairman and Members of the Lands Commission

Executive Secretary of the Lands Commission

Development Partners

Nananom, Niimeɪ, Naamei

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I recall, that when I inaugurated the members of the Lands Commission on 1st September, 2021, the Chairman of the Commission, the hardworking Alex Quaynor, Esq., promised that the Commission under his leadership was going to pursue reforms. Today, I am happy that the Commission is putting its words into action, through this important Conference on leveraging land policy and legislation for socio-economic development.

Nana Chair, the importance of land to our socio-economic development cannot be overemphasised. All human activities revolve around land. Land is the fulcrum to the success of all sectors of the economy such as Agriculture, Mining, Security, Manufacturing, Finance, Trade, Education, Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy, Health among others. Hardly, anything gets done without land. Indeed, the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) estimates that some ninety percent (90%) of our population derive their livelihoods directly or indirectly from land. Growing population, however, coupled with competing uses of land, continues to put immense pressure on our land resources.

Apart from its importance to development, land in our country is of cultural significance. Our traditional political systems and our political economy, revolve around our land ownership and tenure. Our quest to transform our national economy and bring about the much-needed development and prosperity to our people, cannot, therefore, be achieved if we fail to anchor an effective land administration.

The dynamics of land tenure and land rights, the relationship between population growth and land rights evolution, and the competition between different land uses such as mining, agriculture and infrastructure, demand that we take bold decisive actions to ensure that our land resources are well managed for optimum returns.

It is for this reason that during the first term of my presidency, we prioritised the passage of Land Bill, which had been in the draft stage for over twenty (20) years. The Land Act, 2020 (Act 1036), which I assented to on 23rd December, 2020, revises, harmonises, and consolidates laws on land to ensure

sustainable land administration and management, as well as effective and efficient land tenure system.

But laws, in themselves, do not resolve problems. It is their application and effective implementation that will yield the needed results. That is why this Conference, which brings together different people from different sectors, to deliberate on the nexus between land and socio-economic development is so crucial.

The very nature of land demands that its effective and efficient management requires the collaboration of different actors. Stronger partnership is required between Government, including the Judiciary, traditional authorities, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and the private sector, to fashion out pragmatic and workable relationships between land ownership, land tenure and land use, which will create the needed balance in our cultural, social, economic and political development.

Nana Chair, successive Governments have sought, through numerous initiatives to improve Ghana's land administration regime. The most significant intervention has been the Land Administration Project (LAP), Phases 1 and 2, which sought to lay the foundation and consolidate urban and rural land administration and management systems for efficient and transparent land service delivery. These interventions have yielded some results, such as the reform of the Lands Commission through the enactment of the Lands Commission Act, 2008 (Act 767), the establishment of five (5) Client Service Access Units (CSAUs) at the Lands Commission to enhance service delivery, the establishment of Customary Land Secretariats, reforms in the judiciary through the establishment of specialised land courts and the

automation of some courts, the enactment of the Land Use and Spatial Planning Act, 2016 (Act 925), the introduction of a new three-tier Spatial Planning Model, and the development of a National Spatial Development Framework and two (2) Regional Spatial Development Frameworks.

Nana Chair, despite these interventions, our land administration is fraught with several challenges. There is, therefore, the need to do an objective analysis of the current land tenure system, assess the continued efficacy of the customary system of land ownership and its dynamism and adaptability to meet the growing demands from various users of land.

Over the years, customary system of land tenure, including the “abunu” and “abusa” systems, had been the pivot around which our farming practices revolved. Unfortunately, in our urban areas, customary land system has been the bane of most of our problems, including double sale of land, wrongful sale of lands by people without capacity, multiple claims to land by different stools, skins, clans or family, among others. We must therefore take a critical look at land administration and develop a model that works for us.

Fortunately, the Land Act, 2020 (Act 1036), provides a strong foundation for fashioning out a workable and efficient land administration. The Act has far-reaching provisions that if implemented, will go a long way to build the effective land administration we desire. Key among them, the establishment of Customary Land Secretariats to see to the management of stool, skin, family and clan lands, restrictions on large scale disposal of family and clans lands without the concurrence of the Regional Lands Commission, the power of the Commission to survey and demarcate land, the provision for electronic conveyancing, the detailed provisions for the compulsory acquisition of land

including the payment of compensation, the management and use of public lands, and the provisions for divesting of vested lands.

The Act, also, addresses the challenges associated with boundary demarcation and clarifies rights and interests in land, and persons with capacity to alienate land. It provides stringent jail terms for various offences related to land, such as landguardism, falsification of records and fraudulent transactions in land administration.

I am happy to learn that the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources and the Lands Commission are leading in sensitisation and education on this important piece of legislation, and it is my hope that this Conference, will provide another opportunity to discuss the effective implementation of this law.

Nana Chair, I cannot conclude without mentioning the issue of digitalisation. I must commend the Commission for the progress made in moving some of its services online. But in this age of technology, it is unacceptable that we still operate in a largely manual environment. We cannot deliver an efficient land administration if documents on land have to be processed manually. We must therefore expedite action on the digitalisation agenda, and ensure that the Commission goes fully digital. As you go into technical discussions, it is my hope that this will be a key on hour agenda.

Nana Chair, land remains the number one factor of development. We must all therefore work together to build an effective and efficient land administration to propel our development. I urge all of you to use this Conference to foster stronger alliances and networks that will provide opportunities for continuous sharing of ideas and experiences within the land sub-sector. Let me assure you

of Government's commitment to work with you to deliver a land administration system that is fit for purpose.

Nana Chair, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, on this note, I have the singular honour to declare the National Land Conference duly opened. I wish you fruitful discussions, and look forward to the outcome of this Conference.

May God bless us all, and our homeland Ghana, and make her great and strong.

I thank you for your attention.