



INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

DECEMBER 10 2015

BRITISH COUNCIL HALL, ACCRA

WELCOME REMARKS BY JOSEPH WHITTAL BY **DEPUTY COMMISSIONER, CHRAJ**

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Ministers of State

Development Partners

Students from various Institutions

Our brothers and sisters from the disability community

Members of the Media

Commissioners and Staff of CHRAJ

Our Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great pleasure that on behalf of the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and on my own behalf, I welcome all of you to this year's “**International Human Rights Day**”.



In particular, I would like to welcome and to recognize the presence of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Director who would deliver the message on behalf of the United Nations Secretary- General, Ban Ki Moon on this occasion.

The theme for this year's international human rights day celebration is **“Our Rights. Our freedoms. Always”**.

International Human Rights day is observed on the 10th of December every year. It commemorates the day in 1948, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

This year's human rights day is devoted to the launch of a year long campaign for the 50th anniversary of the two International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which were adopted by the United Nations General assembly on 16th December, 1966.

Ladies and Gentlemen

“Our Rights. Our freedoms. Always” aims to promote and raise awareness of the two covenants on their 50th anniversary next year. The theme for the campaign revolves around the centrality of human rights and freedoms such as freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear which underpin the international bill of rights which are as relevant today as they were when the Covenants were adopted 50 years ago.



Ladies and Gentlemen

Ghana as a country has ratified the two core Covenants on human rights i.e the ICCPR and the ICESCR and gone further to guarantee them in our 1992 Constitution as well as domesticate most of their provisions through the passage of various Acts of Parliament. Our Independent Judiciary and the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice continue to promote and protect the rights and freedoms of thus guaranteed through individual case litigation and investigations. Our redoubtable Supreme Court has equally through its special and exclusive jurisdiction of interpretation of the provisions of the Constitution expanded the meaning and scope of the rights and freedoms contained in these two Covenants and thereby making rights and freedoms truly ours.

The rights and freedoms contained in the ICCPR and the ICESCR would remain mere paper guarantees of rights and freedoms more especially economic and social rights if the Executive, which is the Arm of Government with the duty to fulfill the freedoms from want does not adopt a rights –based approach to national development. It is therefore heart warming to indicate that for sometime now Ghana’s national development framework and annual budgeting has increasingly adopted a rights-based approach.

While commending successive Governments for mainstreaming human rights into national development planning, on the occasion of this year’s human rights day and as we usher in the



Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and a year long campaign to mark the 50th anniversary of the ICCPR and the ICESCRs the Commission calls upon Government and all State institutions to deepen the human rights-based approach to national development already begun in order to truly make human rights truly “Our rights. Our freedoms. Always”

On this day it is equally important to recall the very important role that civil society and especially the media play in protecting and safeguarding our rights and our freedoms, always. They, together with the Commission have often drawn attention of the public when freedoms and rights and being endangered with a call to their protection. The Commission looks forward to a more fruitful relationship with civil society and the media and all our stakeholders in the ensuing campaign in 2016 on the two Covenants.

Thank you all for your presence