



BRIEF OPENING REMARKS BY COMMISSIONER OF CHRAJ AT THE PUBLIC FORUM TO MARK THE 2022 INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY HELD ON TUESDAY 13TH DECEMBER 2022 AT THE BRITISH COUNCIL HALL, ACCRA

The Honorable Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, Godfred Yeboah Dame,

the UN Resident Coordinator in Ghana, H.E Charles Abani

the EU Ambassador to Ghana, H.E Irchad Razaaly,

the NCCE Chairperson, Ms Kathleen Addy,

Deputy Commissioners of CHRAJ, Mr Richard Quayson and Mrs Mercy Larbi,

Executive Director for Media Foundation for West Africa, Mr Sulemanah Braimah

Members of the Diplomatic Community,

Heads and Representatives of both Public and Private institutions here present,

the Media,

distinguished invited guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great honor and a privilege to be called upon to give brief remarks as the Chairman for this important Public Forum to mark the 2022 International Human Rights Day.

As we all know, on 10th December 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) and the 10th of December every year has since been observed as International Human Rights Day. However, because this year's day fell on a weekend, we have chosen to mark it with this important Public Forum today.

The Global theme for this year's celebration is **“Dignity, Freedom and Justice for All”**. We in Ghana have chosen to mark this day with the local theme: **“The State of Human Rights in Ghana: Progress, Challenges and Way Forward”**, as a way of assessing the state of human rights in Ghana and to make projections for the future bearing in mind the dignity, freedom, and justice for all persons in Ghana.

The Preamble to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights emphatically states that the *“recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”*

The UDHR is hinged on four main pillars namely: **“Dignity, Liberty, Equality and Brotherhood”**. René Cassin, one of the drafters of the UDHR, compared the UDHR to the portico or entrance of a temple. Samuel Moyn, a human rights scholar also described human rights as the “Last Utopia”, with the understanding that human rights is the best thing that has happened to the human race until something better comes up. It stands therefore to reason that, conscious promotion and protection of human rights will guarantee dignity, freedom and justice.

On 1st January 2016 the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at an historic UN Summit officially came into force. What is important about the implementation of the SDGs is that some studies and mapping carried out by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has found that about

ninety eight percent of the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets are directly linked to International Human Rights Instruments. Therefore, a commitment to the implementation of the SDGs in Ghana would directly or indirectly lead to the promotion and protection of human rights.

Ghana has submitted two Voluntary National review (VNR) reports on its implementation of the SDGs and is also the first country in Africa to align its national budget directly in terms of resource allocation to each SDG and targets. It would be of interest for civil society and academia to undertake research into the various SDGs and their targets having regard to the resource allocations and what has been achieved in order to make the necessary policy recommendations or commendations for the way forward.

In the area of meeting its reporting obligations under International Human Rights ratified and domesticated by the State of Ghana, the record is a mixed bag. Ghana has not been consistent with meeting recommendations it has accepted to perform by its peers at the Universal Periodic Reviews (UPR) at the Human Rights Council and other Treaty Bodies.

Similarly, Ghana's submission of periodic reports to the African Commission on Human and People's Rights pursuant to the African Union Charter has not been the best. Going forward, improvement in reporting obligations by Ghana as a State Party to International Human Rights Instruments it has ratified is recommended by the Commission.

As a country, although Ghana is held out by reputable Governance Research Institutions such as the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance as doing well in the area of governance and human rights consistently, a lot remains to be done by the state in the area of the respect, protection and fulfillment of human rights.

All said, Ghana has made quite some gains in human rights protection and promotion. However, there remains significant room for improvement. We must as a nation do more to protect the poor, vulnerable and marginalised including Women and Children, Persons Living with and affected by HIV/TB, Persons Living with Disability, Persons deprived of Liberty based on Law, among many others.

It is also crucial for me to state at this important Forum that, we need to take the fight against “Galamsey” more seriously. Business owners, both public and private must do business legally whilst respecting the rights of all persons who will be affected by their operations.

As a Commission, we remain committed to our mandate of promotion and protection of human rights, and we will do everything possible within the ambit of the Law to ensure true respect for the rights of all without “leaving anyone behind”.

As a Commission, we once again recommend to Government the adoption of the Human Rights-Based Approach to Development which is the development model recommended by the UN and its Agencies to State parties. This model is not new to the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. For, in addition to dedicating two chapters of the Constitution to guarantees of fundamental human rights and freedoms and Directive Principles of State Policy in chapters 5 and 6 which have been interpreted by the Supreme Court of Ghana to be justiciable, Article 34 (2) of the Constitution clearly opts for the human rights-based approach to development in the following terms:

The President shall report to Parliament at least once a year all the steps taken to ensure the realization of the policy objectives contained in this chapter [chapter 6], and, particular, the realization of basic human rights, a healthy economy, the right to work, the right to good healthcare and the right to education

Quite clearly, the human rights-based approach to development has been succinctly established in this Article of the 1992 Constitution and this should inform the model of Development Ghana should adopt going forward.

Every one of us here present today has a role to play in achieving a free and just society where the rights of all persons are respected, hence I call on you to **#StandUp4HumanRights**, so that we shall be able to secure a better future for ourselves and generations yet to come where **the dignity of all persons shall truly be inviolable**. I wish to thank you all for taking time off your busy schedules to attend this important Forum. I believe we shall have a very fruitful and fulfilling time together.

Thank you.