



**SPEECH BY COMMISSIONER OF CHRAJ, JOSEPH WHITTAL AT THE  
30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION LAUNCH OF THE COMMISSION  
HELD ON THURSDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2023 AT THE CONFERENCE HALL OF  
CHRAJ HEAD OFFICE**

The Representatives of the Office of the Attorney-General,  
Office of the UN Resident Coordinator,  
Electoral Commission,  
National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE)  
Public Service Commission,  
National Media Commission,  
Economic and Organised Crime Office,  
Bank of Ghana,  
National Petroleum Authority,  
Ghana Chamber of Mines,  
Ghana Airport Company Limited,  
Amnesty International Ghana,  
Centre for Democratic Development (CDD),

Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition, (GACC)

Ghana Integrity Initiative, (GII)

Deputy Commissioners,

Directors and Staff of CHRAJ,

The Media,

All other Protocols duly observed,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

it is indeed a great pleasure to welcome you to this program and to give a short speech at such a momentous occasion of the launch of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice.

30 years in the life of an institution is a major milestone worthy of celebration where we can pause briefly and take stock and reflect on our achievements and the challenges that remain in order to strategize on how to move the institution to a higher level.

The 1992 Constitution of Ghana in Article 216 provides that: **“There shall be established by an Act of Parliament within six months after Parliament first meets after the coming into force of this Constitution, a Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice...”**

Incidentally, 30 years ago on this day 6<sup>th</sup> July 1993, the first President under the 4<sup>th</sup> Republican Constitution, His Excellency Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings duly assented to the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice Act 1993 (Act 456) to establish the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice which has over the years striven to perform its functions as set out under the 1992 Constitution in Article 218 and Section 7 of the CHRAJ Act 1993 (Act 456).

The Commission has triple mandates comprising Human Rights, Administrative Justice and Anti- Corruption making it one of the few National Institutions in the world with all the three mandates under one institution. There is currently a Bill being worked on by the Office of the Attorney-General for Parliament to amend Act 456 to add an additional fourth mandate which will make the Commission the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) of Ghana in accordance with the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT).

On the day we launch the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations of the Commission it is fitting to recognize the contribution of our founding Trinity of Commission Members, Management and staff whose pioneering work provided the Commission with the appropriate takeoff from which subsequent Leadership, Management and staff continued. The credibility and legitimacy the Commission enjoys in the country and internationally is attributable to this salutary takeoff. The initial Trinity of Commission Members was constituted by Justice Emile Short, Mr. Benjamin Oppong and Justice Angelina Domakyaareh. They were ably assisted by a pioneer Management comprising Dr Benjamin Kumbuor Director Operations, Mr Kwesi Ainooson, Director Administration and Captain (Mrs) Chris Dadzie, Director Legal and later Public Education Mr. Eshun, Director Finance and later replaced by Mr. Brown. They contributed immensely in giving the Commission a sound beginning.

The role of Anna Bossman who became the Acting Commissioner when Emile Short went on secondment to the UN Rwandan Tribunal at Arusha Tanzania must equally be noted as another major contribution to the making of what the Commission has become. On a day such as this, the present Commission Membership or Trinity constituted by Mr. Joseph Whittal, Commissioner,

Mr. Richard Quayson Deputy Commissioner and Ms Mercy Larbi Deputy Commissioner appreciate the past leadership and Management of the Commission and say Ayekoo !! for a solid foundation laid by them upon which we can build on.

## **THE THEME OF THE 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS**

The Half-year long 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations will be held under the theme: *CHRAJ at 30: Promoting and Protecting Human Rights and Ensuring Transparency and Accountability in Public Service Delivery*

This theme appropriately captures the triple mandates of the Commission and gives stakeholders the opportunity at a glance to know what the Commission has been able to do in its core functions of promoting and protecting human rights as the National human rights Institution and as the Ombudsman of Ghana with the function of exercising administrative oversight over the actions and decisions of public sector institutions and officials in the delivery of public service; and as the Constitutional Agency for investigating allegations of corruption and ensuring ethical standards in the delivery of public services in accordance with the Constitutional Code of conduct in these 30 years.

## **SOME HIGHLIGHTS**

Permit me to briefly highlight some of the key achievements the Commission has chalked in promoting and protecting human rights and entrenching a culture of respect for human rights in the country:

- The Commission led in advocacy against the practice of Trokosi as a dehumanizing traditional practice- Now criminalized under the Criminal and Other Offences Act

- Led in promoting the fight against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as a dehumanizing cultural practice- now driven underground and criminalized.
- Early and Forced girl-child marriages- now criminalized under the Children's Act and still fighting with other stakeholders such as MGCSP
- As de facto National Preventive Mechanism conducted prison and other detentions inspections such as police cells, institutional cells to make sure persons deprived of their liberty are treated according to the international Minimum Standard Rules for persons deprived of their liberty or the Nelson Mandela Rules.
- Investigated and resolved over 300,000 human rights complaints against public institutions and private enterprises and persons
- Carried out a human rights Baseline Assessment of Ghana as a prelude to developing a National Human Rights Action Plan for the country in accordance with UN Standards- for mainstreaming human rights into development programming.
- Conducted a Baseline Assessment of Business and Human Rights in Ghana in accordance with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights
- Presently working with the Office of the Attorney-General developing a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights-
- Monitored the right to vote and prepared reports with recommendations on the Presidential and Parliamentary Elections of 2008, 2012, 2016 and 2020 General Elections
- Prepared State of Human Rights Reports on Socio-Economic Rights in Ghana particularly on Education, Health, and Sanitation

In the area of ensuring transparency and accountability in the delivery of public service for the past 30 years some highlights of achievements of the Commission include:

- Developed and issued Guidelines on Conflict of Interest for Public Officials on how to identify and manage conflicts of interest in the course of performing their official duties.
- Developed along with other stakeholders such as the Public Services Commission the generic Code of Conduct for Public Officers
- Led in the development of the National Anti-corruption Action Plan (NACAP) 2015-2025- the first comprehensive Anti-corruption Strategy of Ghana
- Presently coordinating and Monitoring the implementation of NACAP.
- Acts as the Focal Point for the Review of Ghana under the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)
- Investigated several high-level corruption cases against all governments under the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic

In the area of bringing the services of the Commission closer to the ordinary person, the Commission has been able to expand its geographical reach by opening offices in all the 16 Regions and 175 District Offices. These offices are manned by a staff strength of over one thousand officers.

Succeeded in aligning the Commission work streams and Departments along the Constitutional functions thereby bringing clarity in its operations and for future growth of the Commission. From an initial 3 Head Office Departments, the Directorates have expanded to ten.

On the international level the Commission continues to provide leadership as President of Network of National Human Rights Institution of West Africa with the Secretariat headquartered in Head Office of CHRAJ. The Commission is also currently the Vice Chairman of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions and taking over the Chairmanship of the 46 Member Body in October 2023 while at the Global Level the Commission is a Bureau Member representing Africa on the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions with its Headquarters in Geneva.

### **SOME CHALLENGES**

The major challenge the Commission has faced over these years is inadequate funding for an institution that is for all practical purposes three institutions rolled into one but funded as if it is only one institution.

As a result of inadequate funding the Commission is constrained in the delivery of its multiple mandates.

Having worked with the Commission's legal framework for these 30 years, the Commission with the support of the Public Sector Reform for Results Project (PSRRP) has identified a number of challenges in the policies, processes and operations of the Commission's legal framework and will be prepare an amendment to the Commission's Act, Act 456 and its Constitutional Instrument C.I 67 for presentation and passage into law by Parliament.

### **PROGRAMME OF HALF-YEAR ACTIVITIES TO MARK 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

Activities marking the Anniversary Celebration commenced last month with a mega health screening exercise organized for head porters (Kayayee) here in

Accra. At today's launch, we shall unveil the theme for the 30th Anniversary Celebrations, the Anniversary Logo, the Brand Ambassador of the Anniversary celebrations

Later this month, the Commission will hold a Research Webinar. On August 31, there will be a nationwide health walk among other activities. In September the Regions will participate actively in the Anniversary celebrations through zonal online seminars. In October, there will be a high-level conference which will bring representatives of all the National Human Rights Institutions in Africa to Accra where the baton will be given to CHRAJ to host the Chairmanship of the Network of African Human Rights Institutions.

Ghana was recently reviewed on the 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023 by the United Nations Human Rights Council under the Universal Periodic Review. There is no doubt that Ghana has made quite some great gains in human rights protection and promotion. However, there remains some significant turf to cover. We must as a nation do more to protect the rights of 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.

As a country, we must take the fight against illegal mining "Galamsey" more seriously lest we risk mortgaging our future as a country where we may have to import water. We may also risk some of our products to the foreign markets being banned which might deny the country the needed foreign exchange for development. Business owners must do business legally whilst respecting the rights of all persons who will be affected by their operations.

Finally, as the findings of the CHRAJ-GSS Experiential survey on actual corruption in Ghana portrays, corruption is so endemic in the country to such an



extent that governments must moved beyond mere platitudes and self-glorification as to which government did better in fighting corruption and lead by example as well as adequately resource the institutions charged with fighting corruption in Ghana and strengthen them to lead the charge for transparency and accountability in the delivery of public service.

As a Commission, we remain committed to our mandate of promotion and protection of human rights, administrative justice, integrity and ethics in the public service, among others. We will do everything possible within the ambit of the Law and the constraints we find our self in to ensure that our vision and mission is a reality and not a mirage.

I wish to thank all our partners and institutions that have collaborated with us over the past 30 years. I also wish to express the Commission's gratitude to you all for taking time off your very busy schedules to attend this anniversary launch.

Thank you all for your kind attention.