

**ORGANISED LABOUR MAY DAY ADDRESS**

**READ BY DR. YAW BAAH**

**(SECRETARY GENERAL OF TRADES UNION CONGRESS - GHANA)**

**AT THE NATIONAL MAY DAY PARADE HELD AT BLACK STAR SQUARE**

**ACCRA, WEDNESDAY, 1<sup>ST</sup> MAY 2024**

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**THEME**

**"ELECTION 2024: THE ROLE OF WORKERS AND SOCIAL PARTNERS IN  
SECURING PEACEFUL ELECTIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT"**

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***Your Excellency, The President of the Republic of Ghana; Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo***

***Your Excellency, The Vice President of the Republic of Ghana; Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia;***

***Honorable Ministers of State;***

***H.E. Ambassador of Cuba to Ghana, Sister Annette Chao Garcia;***

***H.E. Ambassador of State of Palestine to Ghana, Brother Abdalfatah Alsattari;***

***The Inspector-General of Police, Dr. George Akuffo Dampare;***

***Secretary General of OATUU, Comrade Arezki Mezhoud;***

***Ladies & Gentlemen;***

***Comrades***

**Once again we have gathered to celebrate May Day, the day for international workers' solidarity. We are not celebrating the day in Accra alone. Workers across the country have gathered in their various regional capitals to celebrate this important day.**

**On behalf of the working people of Ghana, I would like to welcome the President and the Vice President of the Republic of Ghana to this parade. It is important to note, once again, that the President has honored all our invitations to May Day parades since he assumed office in 2017. It is also significant to underline that, perhaps, this is one of the few occasions where we see the President and the Vice President coming together to grace the same occasion. This is an indication that our President and the Vice President appreciate the invaluable contributions workers are making towards Ghana's development.**

**I would also like to welcome all our special guests to the Parade. Special welcome to Her Excellency Sister Annette Chao Garcia (Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba) and H. E. Abdalfatah A. K. Alsattari (Ambassador of the State of Palestine).**

**In the last eight years or so we have established a very strong bond with the working people of Cuba. Every year, a number of trade unionists from Ghana join our brothers and sisters in Cuba to celebrate May Day. This year alone 40 delegates from Ghana are in Cuba. This is important because we want to demonstrate to our Cuban sisters and brothers that we share their pain and suffering resulting from the unnecessary and unjustified blockade which was imposed on Cuba by the United States over 60 years ago.**

**We use this opportunity to call on President Joe Biden to end this blockade. We urge the Government of Ghana to use whatever influence it has to get the African Union to impress upon President Joe Biden of the United States of America to end the blockade because innocent Cubans are suffering. We also call on the United Nations to use whatever means available to stop the senseless war in Gaza.**

**Comrades, we are celebrating this year's May Day at the time Ghanaian workers and their families are grappling with high cost of living and inflation of over 25 percent. Exchange rate of the cedi is now almost GH¢14 to one US dollar compared to about GH¢4 in 2016. That means workers who earned monthly salary of GH¢1000 in 2016 took home the equivalent of about US\$250. Today, GHS1000 is only US\$71. The depreciation of the Ghana Cedi at this monumental scale (i.e., 250 percent depreciation in the last eight years)**

represents a huge decline in living standards of Ghanaians, generally, and workers in particular. This is so because of our over-reliance on imported goods such as medicines, refined petroleum products and food whose prices are directly affected by the exchange rate of the Ghana Cedi in terms of the major international currencies such as the US dollar and the Pound Sterling.

Furthermore, as we all know very well, Ghanaian workers rely on loans to meet very basic necessities such as rent advance, children's education and even food. Today, we are paying interest rate of over 30 percent to access loans. In the informal sector, interest rates can be as high as 50 percent or even higher. Our children graduate from the universities and colleges but they cannot find jobs after we have spent so much money on their education. And there seems to be no end of this socio-economic hardship in sight.

We were told that an IMF bailout would help. But we know that an IMF bailout cannot be a solution to Ghana's self-inflicted economic hardship. The relatively high wage increases we negotiated for workers in the last two years have lost their real values. So, comrades, we have a lot of work to do to protect the working people of Ghana.

Brother Chairman, let me shift our attention to the theme of this year's May Day celebration: ***"ELECTION 2024: THE ROLE OF WORKERS AND SOCIAL PARTNERS IN SECURING PEACEFUL ELECTIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT"***.

As in the previous election years, we chose this theme to emphasize the need for all Ghanaians to work hard to maintain peace in Ghana. As we all know

**Ghana has not done too well in economic management. But, at least, we are enjoying relative peace, compared to other countries in the sub-region. The peace we are enjoying is priceless and so we should never allow partisan politics to destroy it. Peace is the only thing left for us and we should do everything we can to keep it.**

**It is against this backdrop that the Executive Committee of TUC selected Dr. George Akuffo Dampare, the Inspector-General of Police, for a Special May Day Award in recognition of his excellent leadership of the Ghana Police Service and his invaluable contribution to peace and security in all parts of Ghana since he was appointed the Inspector-General of Police in 2021. You will all agree with me that since Dr. Dampare assumed office in August 2021 we can all feel peace in Ghana. He has overseen some by-elections and, in all cases, there was peace. With Dr. Dampare in charge of the Ghana Police Service we should be confident that we are going to continue to enjoy peace before, during and after the general elections in December 2024. We have asked the President of the Republic to present this special award to Dr. Dampare at this parade, on behalf of the working people of Ghana.**

**On 25th April, 2024, at the pre-May Day Forum held at GNAT Hall here in Accra, the Electoral Commission, the National Peace Council and the Ghana Police Service were invited to explain what they are doing to ensure a peaceful election in December 2024. They assured us that they are fully prepared for the elections. But, like any good thing in life, we all have to work hard for peace because peace will not happen automatically. It requires patience, tolerance and respect for one another. The security agencies must be properly equipped**

**and be ready to deal with anybody who will attempt to deny Ghanaians the peace we are enjoying. Churches and mosques must not only continue to pray for peace but they should also preach peace. Civil society organizations must monitor the elections as neutral stakeholders. The Electoral Commission must be adequately resourced and equipped to conduct free and fair elections. The courts must be ready and adequately equipped to deal with all election-related disputes promptly. Political parties must respect the choices of the electorate and accept the results of the elections. Each and every Ghanaian must do whatever he or she can so that together we can achieve a peaceful election.**

**Brother Chairman, let us turn our attention to working conditions in Ghana. In spite of the existence of relatively strong institutional and legal frameworks for industrial relations, many Ghanaian workers still suffer wrongful terminations and dismissals. Some are not allowed to exercise their constitutional right to form or join trade unions of their choice to protect their social and economic interests. Too many workers suffer injuries and death at their workplaces. And many more are denied justice in disputes with their employers. Wages are so low that you wonder how the employers who pay such wages feel when their employees earn such slave wages. Because of the low wages many retirees are receiving monthly pensions that are so low that they cannot meet even the very basic necessities of life.**

**We have to keep together and continue to work as Organised Labour to protect the interests of workers. I am very proud to announce that, after persistent demands for adequate legal protection for workers, the President responded positively and charged the Minister for Employment, Labour**

**Relations and Pensions to ensure that the National Labour Act, Act 651 is reviewed before the end of this year. Considering the amount of work the Labour Law Review Committee has done, we are confident that we will have a new Labour Act by the end of this year. I would like to commend the Honourable Minister Ignatius Baffour Awuah, the Chief Director of the Ministry and the Chairman of the Labour Law Review Committee, Mr. Kizito Ballans and all the members of the Committee for the good work they are doing to get a new law. We are expecting the labour bill and the occupational safety and health bill to be passed into law by the end of this year.**

**Comrades, you may recall that, since 2020, a very significant proportion of those who retired exclusively under the National Pensions Act, 2008 (Act 766) received lump-sum benefits that were below the amount they would have earned if they had retired under PNDCL 247. That was why we demanded lump-sum top-up for all of them. At the 2021 National May Day Parade, the President promised to pay the lump-sum top-up. The payment delayed but today, I am very happy to inform you that, finally, government has released funds to pay the lump-sum top-up for all those who retired in 2020. We expect the same treatment for those who retired in 2021, 2022 and 2023. We will not rest until all eligible retirees receive their lump-sum top-ups.**

**Before I conclude, Mr. President I would like to bring to your attention something of grave concern to Organised Labour. It has to do with delays in the payment of pension contributions. Currently, government owes the public sector second-tier schemes pension contributions to the tune of almost GH¢1 billion. I am happy to announce that government has reached agreement with Organized Labour to pay the arrears in cash and in government papers. Once**

again, we thank Hon. Ignatius Baffour Awuah, the Minister for Employment, Labour Relations and Pensions and Hon. Mohammed Amin Adam, the Minister for Finance, for making this possible.

We are also very concerned about government's failure to pay first tier pension contributions to Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT). We are keenly following the recent developments at SSNIT because SSNIT is the backbone of the social security system in Ghana. Mr. President, we have a number of questions about SSNIT. We would be very grateful if you could invite leaders of Organised Labour to discuss SSNIT and other pertinent issues at your earliest convenience.

Chairman, I would like to conclude the address now with some special appeals to our President. The first appeal is about ILO Convention 190 concerning violence and harassment at work. Mr. President, we believe that Ghana can ratify this convention now. The second appeal is about *dumsor*. Mr. President, it is regrettable that Ghanaians have to experience *dumsor* again after all what we went through in the past. Please do something about the *dumsor* now.

On behalf of the working people of Ghana I would like to thank you, once again, Mr. President and Mr. Vice President for gracing this occasion. We thank all our special guests for joining us at this parade. We thank the National and Regional May Day Planning Committee members who worked tirelessly to ensure a successful 2024 May Day celebration across the country. We thank the Ghana Police Band and the Ghana Prisons Band. We thank the media. We thank all workers who joined us to celebrate the 2024 May Day across the

country. Lastly, I would like to congratulate Dr. Dampare and all May Day award winners.

**May God Bless Our Homeland Ghana and Make Our Nation Great and Strong!**

**Long Live International Working Class Solidarity!**

**Long Live Organised Labour in Ghana!**

**Long Live Ghana!**