

AmCham Annual General Meeting
Remarks by Ambassador Robert P. Jackson
Labadi Beach Hotel
November 17, 2016,

Good morning, everyone and thank you for joining us.

It is hard to believe that it was nearly nine months ago, shortly after my arrival in Accra, that Babs and I welcomed you all to our home for the very first time. That AmCham Breakfast event on March 1 was one of my official functions as the U.S Ambassador to Ghana. The time has passed quickly. I guess that old saying is true, "Time flies when you're having fun." I can honestly say that Babs and I have enjoyed our time in Ghana thus far. It has been a pleasure to get to know you over the past months. Many of you generously supported the Independence Day celebration at the Embassy, which highlighted the great work that American companies are doing here in Ghana through corporate social responsibility programs. That evening was a tremendous success with more than 1,600 guests. We look forward to organizing a similarly excellent event next year, and I extend my appreciation in advance for your continued support.

AmCham continues to expand its influence both here in Ghana and abroad. Your reputation in the United States and in the region is positive and well-established. Many refer to AmCham Ghana as the most effective American Chamber of Commerce in Sub-Saharan Africa. I commend Joe Mensah, the AmCham Board of Directors, and the Executive Secretary, Simon Madjie for your visionary leadership. AmCham Ghana continues to seek opportunities to advocate with the Government of Ghana on issues of critical importance to American companies-building bridges with other like-minded Chambers operating in Ghana and being a good partner and a friend of the U.S Embassy.

I recall how proud I was when I received a report from the U.S Embassy in Ethiopia back in August praising AmCham Ghana, and specifically Simon, for the support, guidance and mentorship you provided the American companies there seeking to strengthen their own Chamber of Commerce. You know you are a success when others seek you out to learn from your experiences and use you as a model. You are doing very good work here in Ghana. You are making a difference. You are helping us address tough issues that are critical to our mutual goal of increasing bilateral trade. Keep up the good work.

Last week, in the United States, we elected our 45th President, in just a few short weeks; Ghanaian citizens will also be going to the polls to elect the President and Parliamentary leadership who will represent them for the next four years. These are exciting days for both our countries. And while political discussions can become lively and heated at times, in both the United States and Ghana, we remain assured that both our nations are committed to peaceful and transparent electoral processes. In the end, the people's voice is heard, democracy prevails and the bilateral relationship is strengthened.

The U.S government is committed to supporting Ghana. Our interest is in seeing a free, fair, peaceful election that represents the will of the Ghanaian people. The government of the United States does not support a particular candidate or party. We will work with the elected government of Ghana, just as we

always have. Allow me to share a few insights into what the United States is doing specifically to support the election process here in Ghana.

We have been working to make sure institutions are strong; processes are transparent; and the electorate is well-informed. We have provided more than \$ 7.3 million in non-partisan technical assistance to civil society groups, non-governmental institutions, independent Constitutional bodies- including the Electoral Commission- to increase electoral accountability. Through our support, the Electoral Commission is implementing a number of outreach efforts, including:

- the launch and roll out of a communication strategy
- training of journalists and polling officials
- social media engagement, and
- the development of a new SMS election platform.

These tools will make Ghana's electorate better informed and more engaged.

We have also mobilized civil society groups to promote voter education, awareness and oversight. Through our partnership with the Center for Democratic Development (CDD), an independent, Ghanaian NGO, citizens have been engaged in pre-election observation, research and voter and civic education. CDD just recently launched civic education campaigns across 216 Districts to raise awareness of the voting process. CDD will oversee the deployment of 7,000 domestic observers on Election Day.

The U.S government is also providing support to mitigate the potential for conflict and promote peace. Our partnership with the United Nations Development Program has enabled us to strengthen the capabilities of the National, Regional and District Peace Councils, representing a wide range of media, traditional and religious leaders, women and youth organizations across the country to promote peace. We are also working with the West Africa Network for Peace Building to establish national and district level Election Early Warning and Response Groups. These early warning groups meet regularly both nationally and regionally to discuss early warning reports on potential triggers for violence and recommend response strategies to mitigate these threats. To ensure that early response recommendations are implemented, the U.S government has also provided sub-grants to local civil society organizations so they can implement various activities including:

- multi-media campaigns on peaceful elections
- empowerment programs for youth and women
- prevention of election-related violence
- monitoring and mapping threats of incidents of violence, and
- training of journalists

In addition to all these, the U.S Embassy will send out 50 election monitoring teams throughout all regions of Ghana to be our eyes and ears on the ground on Election Day. These teams will be trained by Ghana's Electoral Commission and will complement the hundreds of other Ghanaian and international observers who will be working together to verify the credibility and transparency of Ghana's election- the credibility and transparency that we are predicting. In addition, the National Democratic Institute will also deploy an independent international observation delegation to observe the elections.

During this election season, I have had many opportunities to speak privately with both the NDC and NPP presidential candidates. I am encouraged by the commitment of both candidates to a free, fair, transparent and peaceful election. I have no reason to doubt that both candidates desire the best outcome for their country.

I look forward to partnering with all of you here today in the lead up to the December 2016 elections and beyond. I know that, together, we can ensure Ghana remains a symbol of peace and democracy, and that this electoral process will support, as your national anthem says, "the cause of Freedom and of Right."

When the elections are behind us, I am optimistic that we can work to bring positive change in Ghana. Together, we will continue our active engagement with the government. We will advocate for policy changes that will make foreign direct investment more attractive to U.S companies. We will stress the importance of transparency in business transactions. We will push for Ghana to support greater investment in value-added processing to create jobs here in Ghana, develop its manufacturing sector and export more goods to the United States through the openings provided by the African Growth and Opportunity Act. We will also advocate for Ghana to open its doors for even more American products.

I frequently tell my staff at the Embassy that we are in the life-changing business. I truly believe that. While I know we face many challenges increasing our levels of bilateral trade with Ghana, it is a goal that I remain steadfastly committed to supporting. I am confident that with the support of the AmCham and the Ghanaian private sector, and with willingness of both our governments, we can make great strides in trade in 2017 - strides that will result in more jobs and economic growth for both our countries.

Thank you for allowing me the honor of joining you here today. Now, I would be happy to hear from you and take a few questions if you have any.