

## MAHAMACONVERSATIONS

A #JohnMahamaLIVE Interaction.

Sunday, June 09, 2024

Hello everyone!

I am John Mahama, former President of Ghana and leader of the opposition National Democratic Congress in this year's presidential and parliamentary elections on 7<sup>th</sup> December. I am excited to welcome you back to my regular JohnMahamaLIVE sessions.

These live digital sessions will be part of a series of interactions I have christened 'Mahama Conversations', a platform to engage with Ghana's vibrant and dynamic youth and people. I want to share my thoughts, plans, and views directly with you, hear from you, listen to your concerns, and discuss the issues that matter most to you.

I have always believed that your voices are crucial in shaping the future of our country, and I am committed to working with you to create a better Ghana: Build the Ghana we want Together!

In the next few weeks, I will sit with and discuss another set of issues with a team of journalists to explore the solutions to our challenges together. So, let's get the conversation started tonight. Please post your questions under the live stream on my Facebook, X, or YouTube channel. You can also email me at [office@johnmahama.org](mailto:office@johnmahama.org).

Let me start by congratulating everyone who registered to vote in the just-ended exercise and will vote for the first time in December. In a very special way, thank you for responding massively and positively when I asked you to register for change! Your turnout exceeded the target set by the Electoral Commission.

I am very sure that, but for the geographical and economic restrictions harshly imposed by the government and the EC, many more of you would have been able to register to exercise your franchise on 7<sup>th</sup> December.

Currently, an exercise is ongoing to enable those eligible to transfer your votes, replace your lost or damaged voter ID cards, and apply for proxy voting if you will not be available on 7<sup>th</sup> December. We have only five (5) more days to go with this exercise. I urge all of you eligible to participate before the deadline, Friday, 14<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

This election is like no other. It is an election between Ghana and the New Patriotic Party administration. It is an election for change to reset Ghana's narrative and effect a course correction from our disastrous trajectory.

This change is ordained by God. It is a change to relieve our people from the hardship and poverty inflicted by President Akufo-Addo and Dr Bawumia's reckless administration. That change will put Ghana back on a path of progress and prosperity, enabling us to build the Ghana we want and create well-paying jobs for the youth through the 24-hour economy initiative and many other novel policies to be out-doored in the NDC manifesto.

This change will also see the most far-reaching and detailed investigation of the many allegations of corruption and scandals levelled against public officials and their families and friends. This change will help to abort this administration's plan to impose a pliant Vice President to cover up for them, thereby escaping the searing scrutiny of accountability.

However, as I have stated, this hot spotlight of accountability is reserved not only for this administration's appointees. It will also be available to sanction persons in my administration who engage in similar conduct. The same anti-corruption strategies and instruments I shall deploy to measure and punish the NPP government will also apply to my appointees.

My dear youth, the best of Ghana is yet to come. I have hope for the future, particularly as I return to the presidency as the experienced, visionary, and decisive leader ready to build the Ghana we want together with you.

The Electoral Commission has decided to conduct a mop-up voter registration exercise from 1<sup>st</sup> August to 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2024, realising that many could not participate in the just-completed exercise. I still do not understand why the Electoral Commission, in cahoots with the government, insists it will not bring the voter registration centres to your doorsteps as much as possible to enable you to register.

These are young people, many of whom are unemployed and are being taken care of by their suffering parents. They cannot afford the cost of transportation to the distant district registration offices, not to mention the long queues, intentional intimidation, and network anomalies that plague the exercise every so often. Even after successfully arriving at the registration centre, many of you had to cope with the disappointment of undue delays.

My fellow Ghanaians, place yourselves within the needless and avoidable ordeal of a young unemployed person (say between 18 and 25 years) without a passport or Ghana Card. If this young lady or gentleman manages to secure two guarantors, pays for the transportation of the guarantors to accompany them to a registration centre and due to network failure and postponements, this young person is unable to register via the guarantor system, what is the likelihood that he or she can return another day to register with two guarantors?

That leads to voter suppression. I will continue to urge the EC to prevent voter suppression by extending the mop-up exercise beyond its district offices to include all hard-to-reach areas. This will enable Ghanaians who have turned 18 or more to register from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August.

However, let me assure you that no matter the challenges or artificial mountains and obstacles they erect in your paths to prevent you from exercising your franchise, my victory in the polls shall be your victory. It shall be a victory for all the suffering Ghanaians.

A rising feeling of frustration and anger is bubbling among our youth. There is justifiable anger and frustration against this failed government! Anger against the economic mismanagement, hardships, widening inequalities in our country, and unprecedented corruption that has become the government's signature.

You have every right to be angry and disappointed in this government. This is understandable because this government has received more funds than any other government in our history, including windfall from the COVID-19 pandemic, which they mismanaged. The anger of the youth and the people of Ghana is perfectly understandable because they face the danger of unprecedented permanent unemployment if things do not change dramatically.

The real possibility exists of attaining the pension age of 60 without being employed if the NPP government stays in power. Meanwhile, for those in employment and contributing to SSNIT, there is no guarantee that the Trust can continue paying your pension claims when you proceed on retirement.

Let me add that the anger of the youth against the Bawumia-led Economic Management Team that has heaped daily hardships on Ghanaians is also understandable because of the combined effect of increasing our national debt from GH¢ 120 billion to a staggering GH¢ 658.6 billion. To put it simply, our national debt of 120 billion Ghana cedis in 2016, shared amongst our population, meant each of us owed 4,000 Ghana cedis. Today, our national public debt of 658 billion cedis, if shared by our population, means every Ghanaian owes 22,000 cedis.

The youth are also right to be angry at how the Domestic Debt Exchange (the haircuts) Programme has conspired to impoverish their parents, grandparents, and benefactors. Crude financial haircuts and other tax measures have collapsed many businesses that could have created jobs for the youth. This is a hopeless economic situation.

The youth are also angry at the poorly thought-through banking sector clean-out, which led to the loss of more than 10,000 jobs and the incursion of a debt of 25 billion Ghana cedis.

Notwithstanding all these socioeconomic difficulties, the youth continue to observe the opulence of the administration's officials and their families— chartering private jets at \$20,000 an hour for trips that our own Falcon executive jet could do. As the Minister for Defence explained, because it had no shower for presidential baths.

Ghana's youth have further experienced how a minister could stash millions in her home. Only God knows the full extent of Ghanaian taxpayers' money stashed away by many others in the Akufo-Addo and Bawumia government.

I say to the good people of Ghana that, working with Ghanaian and international anti-corruption partners, we shall do all that is humanly possible to retrieve such wrongly appropriated wealth.

The inequality and selective justice of this government are galling. Otherwise, how could Hawa Koomson, who fired a weapon at a registration centre and boasted about it, walk away free, and a parliamentary candidate for Awutu Senya East is detained partly because the very police that arrested her misspelt her name? If the government were seeking to break the spirit of Naa Koryoo with that politically organised arrest, they have instead handed over the Awutu Senya East parliamentary seat to the young woman who, by all standards, towers over and above the incumbent.

My dear youth, while I agree with your justifiable anger and disappointments, I urge you to keep hope alive. Have faith in God and the power of your thumb.

Ghanaians are in search of hope—hope they can believe in! Hope with the assurance that Ghana will be reset onto the path of progress and prosperity. Hope, knowing they can live in safe neighbourhoods and earn a living if they study hard, work hard, and live as law-abiding citizens. This is what Ghanaians are yearning for, and this is precisely what the NDC and I are presenting to you in this election of 2024.

Exercise your franchise by voting for me, John Mahama, on 7<sup>th</sup> December 07 and for the NDC Parliamentary Candidate in your constituency. As your selfless, truthful, experienced, and visionary leader, I need your vote to reset Ghana. I assure you I will work with you to build a country of shared growth and prosperity.

By resetting Ghana, I will repair the dangerous damage to our country's economy and people. Businessmen and women who government apparatchiks have given raw deals will have their say and can be assured of restoration. After a thorough and unbiased assessment, collapsed banks and financial institutions shall be restored. We will provide decent and well-paying jobs through my 24-hour economy initiative.

Let me be clear: I am utterly appalled and disappointed by the unprecedented unemployment rate we are seeing today. Perhaps if the government had not jettisoned the 40-year National Development Plan developed by the National Development Planning Commission during my presidency, they would have adopted and implemented my 24-hour economy initiative contained in that document. That would have saved Ghanaians from these levels of unprecedented unemployment. But, as they say, elections have consequences!

The stark reality is that the 8-hour work system is inadequate to create the production, productivity, and well-paying jobs required to revive Ghana's bankrupt economy. It is also inadequate to produce enough for export.

Extraordinary times require extraordinary interventions for extraordinary results; the 24-hour economy initiative is the answer for now and the future. It will create an enabling environment with deliberate policies for businesses, companies, and government institutions to operate 24/7 in a three-8-hour shift system.

In addition to the traditional 8-hour system, the two additional work shifts my administration will introduce will double, sometimes triple, or quadruple the number of jobs that participating public and private entities already generate.

This is the 24-hour economy optimisation strategy: Giving more to Society. Providing efficient service delivery and generating decent and well-paying jobs. The benefits will include but not limited to:

- 24-hour ports and harbour services
- 24-hour customs services
- 24-hour DVLA services
- 24-hour agro-processing factories

- 24-hour manufacturing industries
- 24-hour construction companies
- 24-hour diversified sanitation and waste management services
- 24-hour financial institutions
- 24-hour healthcare services – not just emergency care
- 24-hour community pharmacy care
- 24-hour tourism, creative arts and entertainment industry services
- 24-hour retail centres and more.

My track record in infrastructure development is well acknowledged. We shall provide more. It is a track record that built the Ghana National Gas Company and many power plants to fix dumsor. It is a solid track record of building ultramodern hospitals such as the University of Ghana Medical Centre (UGMC), the Ridge Hospital, the Bank Hospital, the Maritime Hospital, the Dodowa Hospital, and several others across the country.

Whenever I visit patients in these hospitals or read reviews on people’s lived experiences at the UGMC, I feel proud of our work in government. I am poised to do more.

My track record, fuelled by vision and experience, providing roads, interchanges, and schools; constructing Terminal 3 at the Kotoka International Airport; transforming the Tamale and Kumasi Airports into international airports and to also operate at night; securing funds to build new terminals for both the Tamale and Kumasi airports and innovative thinking that secured us one of the most efficient ports in Africa. We will do much more.

We will start the plans and feasibility works toward establishing a new city, in which we would move government services and agencies to decongest the capital city, Accra. We will redesign growing metropolises like Aflao, Ksoa, and others across the country and build modern markets and trading centres there.

As has already been estimated, the Ghana Police Service alone, at its present capacity, will require 25,000 new and additional personnel to manage the 24-hour economy’s additional working shifts. Remember that the police service, as it stands now, even without the 24-hour economy initiative, already requires extra staff and motivation to meet the optimum police-to-population ratio.

We will adopt a multi-stakeholder approach because the beneficiaries of the 24-hour economy are diverse: unemployed youth, including unemployed graduates, farmers, traders, small and medium-scale businesses, students who need vacation jobs, and the underemployed. No one will be left out.

I am determined to provide the necessary incentives, such as favourable tax measures, cheaper and reliable power, financial support through the Ghana EXIM Bank, oil revenue, and the National Women’s Bank, which we will establish, to soften the ground for both public and private participants who sign up to the 24-hour economy initiative to have a smooth take-off.

My dear Ghanaian youth, I urged you to register for change, and you did. Thank you once again for heeding my call for change. Let me reassure you that we shall protect your votes!

This election will not be business as usual. Through our party executives, we are recruiting competent, committed, and loyal agents at the constituency and branch levels. I have also tasked the NDC Elections and IT Directorate to rely on our party's robust database to generate potential polling agents.

In addition, I am recruiting volunteers, willing young Ghanaians, ready and willing to join our campaign efforts in the communities to drive the demand for Change. We shall collate our results on time, as we did during the Assin North by-election and the just-ended Limited Voter Registration Exercise. And on 7<sup>th</sup> December, if the EC makes mistakes, we shall promptly correct them.

Change is coming, and change must come because we cannot look unconcerned for one dollar to cross the GH¢20 mark under the watch of the Chairman of the so-called 'solid' Economic Management Team.

Change is coming, and change must come because the unemployment rate can possibly cross the 20% mark under the watch of the driver's mate, having increased from 8.4% in 2016 to 14.7%.

Let me end it here and answer some of the questions you sent about the issues I raised tonight.

Thank you.