**POLITICAL SPEECH**

**FOR**

**DAVID OFORI**

To all of the members of Parliament, distinguished guests, advisors, and friends (**or use appropriate wording for greeting**), I want to take a moment to thank you for giving me the honor and privilege of speaking before you today. As a proud Ghanaian (**American?**), I hold the welfare of this country close to my heart. My quest for education, my sensitivity to this country’s issues, my passion for Ghana’s success in Africa and in this world, and my search for solutions to sustain our land and its people are what motivate and drive me every day. I am here, with all of you who, I am certain, have **also** pledged to do whatever is necessary to strengthen our country, its people, its resources, and its place in the global economy,

The author, E.A. Bucchianeri once said, “It was not curiosity that killed the goose that laid the golden egg but an insatiable greed that devoured common sense.” I’d like to explore this theory in relation to Ghana, its resources, its traditions, and how I see moving forward into the future. **GREED**. There is **NO PLACE** for any of that on our path to strengthening our country’s resources while negotiating a proper place within the international marketplace. I will re-state this now and unequivocally…. There is **NO** **PLACE** for short term personal satisfaction in the long game that will act to secure Ghana’s proper place as a meaningful supplier of natural resources to the world and beyond. Please **do** **NOT** forget that there is a large difference between being blessed with natural gifts and knowing how to manage them effectively. It is very clear to anyone that knows the situations we face that those gifts meant for all of our countrymen appear to be mismanaged by a select few.

We know that Ghana is blessed with an abundance of natural resources, and its mineral reserves – particularly bauxite, manganese, diamond, oil … and especially gold, as well as natural gas, salt, and silver – are among its most precious. Comprised of a wondrous mix of elements and compounds formed over Millenia of geologic creativity, our minerals are, in effect, sacred. They are imbued with the potential to make nations ….. and preferably **THIS ONE**, wealthy, self-sufficient, powerful, modern.

They are arguably second only in importance to its most precious, yet often fragile, treasure- its **HUMAN** resources… the proud and noble people of Ghana. Though these treasured elements are largely unseen to most people and accessible only through extractive mining, our reverence for our minerals should be felt as profoundly as one honors the beautiful land upon which we, as a people, live and thrive. It is the same land upon which one’s cows graze and one’s food is grown; it’s the land that supports the ballast for our commerce and industry… it’s where this Parliament finds its footing, it’s the land on which one’s farm and home sit; it’s where the family…. **YOUR** family lives. It’s the land upon which our ancestors have passed…. The land that serves as the foundation of our history…that maintains our progress…. and stands in anticipation of our future.

In the pantheon of resources we can claim with pride is gold… it glows, it sparkles… it’s no surprise it is the envy of the periodic table of the elements. What is true is that we, the people of Ghana, should be its most stalwart guardian, yet we are not! We have a system that arguably falls short of the reverence, care, and sustenance such a treasure has earned. We endured the constraints of colonialism and managed to break free from those shackles. Ironically, now it is not foreign powers who control our government, it is allegedly our own leaders –at every level of government … constitutional… duly elected… tribal and traditional – and the system under which they operate, that seem willing to allow their country…. **OUR** country, to be sacrificed for greed based gain while our communities and constituents pay the price.

Other nations reap the benefits of Ghana’s natural resources, ravaging our lands and triggering environmental hardship, leaving Ghana no better off economically than where it was fifty years ago – and far worse off environmentally and socially. This leaves a negative legacy of land degradation, serious deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and increased pollution of our drinking water and heavy metal resources, all of which foster a toxic environment fostering malaria, mercury intoxication and a host of occupational injuries that are the direct consequence of lax or no regulations in mining. The world is in debate over the consequences of global warming. We are all… as both active and passive participants, contributing to the imminent disaster we can call, “**Ghanaian** **Warming**.” You can sit in your comfortable seats in your bespoke suits and promote the negative narrative, “Oh **NO**… that’s **NOT ME**” but the truth is that each and every one of us is responsible…. Either by **acts of omission**… by keeping silent…or by acts of **commission**… by doing your “thing” …. whatever is best for your own self interests, regardless of the damage being done…. Damn the torpedoes of **TRUTH**!!… Every man for himself! The negative results of such a lack of integrity, empathy and accountability have a ripple effect: it yields irreversible damage to farming land, disruption to local food markets and supplies, and all trickle down to the basics…the people that **YOU** represent. It is your constituents that suffer, and let’s face it, ultimately **YOU**…. from the humiliation and heartache of being displaced from the homelands where they have lived for decades or even centuries. The economic and social costs of such irresponsible mining… from increased school dropout rates to violent conflicts between competing miners, immigrants, and police, leave our country in turmoil. The related Illicit Financial Flows syphon government revenues that **SHOULD** be used to support economic, social, and infrastructure improvement. As gold prices soar, increasing numbers of citizens, corporations, and nations turn to mining. As the abuse continues, the government appears to turn a blind eye, and more particularly, a **greedy** eye, emphasizing personal interest over national well being. It’s time to advocate for the people of Ghana.

We are at a critical tipping point in the well being and bolstering of the Ghanaian future. It is urgent that we flip the switch, take a brutally honest approach, do the proper research, establish ethical, profitable procedures… all with the clear and dedicated intention to rework the narrative. It is time to operate for the future of this country and for all Ghanaians. We know that current conditions don’t work… what we… and you in positions of influence are mandated with, is discovering the means and the way forward for our country. Think about it… how great might our nation be if our own companies were extracting and selling our mineral resources? The potential is enormous. We could be world leaders in the field of mineral exports… the people could reap the economic benefits from the infrastructure development it would afford – it would be **possible** to truly take care of our own rather than weaken our economy. It would define Ghana’s **GLOWING GOLDEN ERA**… it is an image I keep and a goal I hold as I envision this new reality. Remember, **THIS** is **OUR** homeland. In the past we have been responsible for Ghana’s weakening. It’s time to come together and collaborate for our uplift!

I want to be very clear… I am not here to speak to you about all that appears to be wrong with the Ghanaian way and it’s systems of rule. I **AM** here to offer partnership… to work with you to discover the most effective way to honor our country, it’s people, it’s resources, and its place in the global firmament. I’m here to offer a vantage point, one that has benefited from years of observation, research, and comparison. I’m here to offer perspective from the outside looking in and from the inside, understanding the composition and process required to make this country great. I am here to present to you whatever curiosity, common sense, and wherewithal it would take to get the job done properly… to make this glorious Ghanaian machine work, function and grow. When I see that, for all intents and purposes, our technology, commerce, industry, and legislation have not advanced in **FIFTY OR MORE YEARS**, I become infuriated. That’s the **BAD NEWS**… the good news is that it lights a spark within me, one that is dedicated to this country… one that wants to make Ghana more glowing than the gold it possesses. I believe what is going on is **NOT OKAY**. I also believe that we can work together, find the common ground, and agree on and implement equitable, profitable solutions to build Ghana now and into the future. Let’s do this together. I look forward to further meetings with you, to design plans and implement programs and policies that will secure Ghana’s success. Thank you all!!