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BAWUMIA:

**'I AM
READY
TO LEAD'**

A
32-PAGE
SPECIAL

**NPP presidential
candidate's first
major interview**



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Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia: "I am running for president because I am deeply committed to the progress and prosperity of Ghana and its people. I am asking Ghanaians to give me a chance. I am ready to lead with integrity, humility, and vision, and I am confident that together, we can build a brighter future for Ghana."



MAHAMUDU BAWUMIA:

'I am ready to lead'

NPP presidential candidate's first major interview

Ghana's Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia is running for the nation's top job in the December elections. In his first major interview after clinching the ruling New Patriotic Party's nomination for president, he says he is "dedicated to building a future where our youth have access to quality education, our economy is vibrant and inclusive, and our society is built on the principles of fairness, justice, and equality." The vice president extols the achievements of President Nana Akufo-Addo's government and defends its handling of the nation's economic crisis, but he insists that he will be his own man if elected. "We have been together for a long time, but we are different personalities," he states. After seven years as the "driver's mate," Bawumia says he is now ready to be the main driver. In this wide-ranging interview with *Africawatch* editor [Steve Mallory](#) in Accra, Bawumia talks about himself, his plans and aspirations for the nation, and his belief that digital technology can transform Ghana, and makes a passionate appeal for the voters to give him a chance at the presidency. "I believe that I have the vision, the honesty, the integrity, the competence, the drive, the work ethic, the compassion and the innovative ideas to lead and serve Ghana as the president," he says. Please sit back and hear him.

Q: You are the first non-Akan presidential candidate of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP), as well as also the first person from the North and the first Muslim to lead the party. What do these historic firsts mean to you?

A: Well, I believe the primary criterion for my selection was competence and my

vision before any other consideration. So, my election was purely based on who I am and what the NPP believes I can offer. Of course, selecting a candidate from a group or background that has never been given the chance before means the NPP is inclusive and ready to give everyone a chance. This inspires hope and a future for

everyone.

My candidacy exemplifies the NPP's commitment to embracing diversity and fostering unity. I am most honored and privileged to be earning these firsts. It means I am opening the door to many from all parts of Ghana to aspire to become the very best in whatever they do. It is possible!

Q: Your campaign slogan is “It is possible.” But can you tell us why you are running for president?

A: I am running for president because I am deeply committed to the progress and prosperity of Ghana and its people. I have prepared myself for the job and I want to assure Ghanaians I am ready to serve with all my heart and energies.

Throughout my career in public service, I have witnessed first-hand the challenges faced by our nation and the immense potential that exists to overcome them. I believe that Ghana is at a critical juncture in its history, and decisive leadership is needed to address pressing issues such as economic development, social inequality, and infrastructure improvement.

As an economist by profession, I bring a unique perspective and skill set to the table, grounded in evidence-based policy-making and a pragmatic approach to governance. I am passionate about implementing innovative solutions to propel Ghana forward and improve the lives of all its citizens.

Also, the world is quickly moving into the digital age, and Ghana should not be left behind. I am deeply committed to harnessing the transformative power of digitalization to propel Ghana into a new era of progress and prosperity. Digitalization is not just a policy initiative for me. It is a fundamental pillar of my vision for the future of our nation.

I am dedicated to building a future where our youth have access to quality education, our economy is vibrant and inclusive, and our society is built on the principles of fairness, justice, and equality.

Running for president is not just about seeking power or prestige. It is about service to the nation and a commitment to making a positive difference in the lives of our people. It is about solving problems, and I am a problem-solver, as evidenced in my work at the central bank and as vice president. I am ready to lead with integrity, humility, and vision, and I am confident that together, we can build a brighter future for Ghana.

Q: In 2016, the constitutional law professor Kwasi H. Prempeh wrote that “Bawumia’s unprecedented visibility in the NPP campaign, his strong command of issues, as well as his cross-party appeal and likeability, have cemented his status as a star politician both in the NPP and on the national political scene... Added to his relative youth, this makes Bawumia the politician to watch – not only within the NPP, but also (and more



Bawumia shares a light moment with a disabled woman. He says he is at his happiest when he is in the company of vulnerable people – like persons with disabilities, particularly when he is able to bring some joy to their lives.

importantly) from the perspective of the NDC [National Democratic Congress].” Has this prophecy come true, or is it yet to come true?

A: I am not too sure about the prophecy bit, but Prof. Kwasi Prempeh is one of the most knowledgeable Ghanaians we have been blessed with as a country. It is the case that throughout my life journey, I have always endeavored to pursue excellence. Whatever I put my mind to, I try to do it to perfection. The successes that have come my way may not be far from what Prof.

Prempeh talked about, but I still believe there is more to be done and a lot more to come, by the grace of God. I am relentless in pursuing higher goals to transform our nation, Ghana.

Q: Before we go further, let’s first talk about yourself and your immediate family, so that those who don’t know you may know what you are made of. You have been described as an unassuming person. Is that an accurate perception?

A: If unassuming means modesty, I believe this perception may be largely accurate. I am always very aware of the temporary nature of our existence on this earth. So, I believe that what is important is loving thy neighbor as thyself. Material things are not important. When you die, you will leave all your houses, cars, and money behind. You will only go to your maker with your deeds.

So, I cherish and respect people. In life, you have to be modest and humble and help the less fortunate. For example, one of the happiest experiences I always have is when I am in the company of the vulnerable, like persons with disabilities, children, cured lepers, and the aged, and bringing some joy to their lives. I am happiest when I can be of assistance to the sick or the poor. That is what matters in life.

Q: Are you aware of the most common misconception people have about you?

A: I think from afar many people see me as a very serious person who is always engaged in intellectual pursuits and conversations. But that is not the case. I am quite relaxed, I enjoy music, football, and table tennis, and I laugh a lot when I am with my friends.

Q: Let’s look at your antecedents. Your father, Alhaji Mumuni Bawumia, was a teacher, lawyer, and a founding member of the Northern People’s Party in 1954, an ancestor of the ruling New Patriotic Party. He also served in several government positions. Your father had very big political shoes. How do you think you can live up to his legacy?

A: My beloved father had an enviable track record of public service. In addition to what you have mentioned, he was a town clerk and state secretary of the Mamprusi Native Authority in the northern part of Ghana. He was also a representative on the Northern Territories Territorial Council, a member of the Legislative Assembly in 1953, and ultimately became the first



Bawumia: “My vision is to create a tent big enough to accommodate all our people; to tap into the resourcefulness and talents of our people irrespective of ethnic differences and political and religious backgrounds; to channel our energies into building the kind of country that assures food security and a safe, prosperous and dignified future for all Ghanaians.”

Chairman of the Council of State in the Fourth Republic.

What is instructive is that he did not just hold positions, but he resolved problems for the benefit of his community and country. His role in promoting education, and in the social and economic development of the North during the pre-independence and post-independence eras of Ghana, is immense.

I agree that he has left large shoes to fill. He raised me to be a problem-solver also. I believe that he would be very proud of what I have done so far. It is still too early to tell whether I can fill his big shoes, but I am trying to do so.

Q: Your father had 18 children, five

of them with your mother. What did growing up in such a large family feel like?

A: Contrary to what popular opinion says, growing up in a large family, especially our large family, did not feel unusual at all.

Having many brothers and sisters gave me an opportunity to learn from different and unique characters and behaviors. It has helped shape me to become the person I am today, a leader open to different perspectives. A large family has its advantages.

Q: Your life, you have said, “has not been an easy journey. It has taken a lot of hard work, discipline and patience to get here.” You worked as a by-day

laborer on farms during holidays in secondary school, as a minicab driver in London, and cleaning dormitories while working on your Ph.D. in Canada. But your father was a high-profile politician, so why was life so hard for you?

A: I think most Ghanaian families did not have it easy. My late father was a modest man. He was not rich, but he provided well for us and put us through school.

He would always tell us that the best he was going to do for us was to provide us an education, and therefore we should take it very seriously. With what he earned modestly, my father supported his family of 18 children.

Q: Your mother, Hajia Mariama Bawumia, sadly, passed on in September 2021, aged 81. What can you tell us about her?

A: My beloved mother was devoted to her home, her husband, and to all her children, both biological and non-biological. She was an avid football fan, a Liverpool fan. She followed politics keenly. She was christened Susana and was one of the few girls from the North who gained admission to Wesley Girls High School. She was a brilliant student. When she married my dad, she converted to Islam, but she always taught us to understand and tolerate both religions. She had a very good sense of humor. I miss her a lot.

Q: You were not a mommy's boy, were you?

A: No, but I miss her, to tell you the truth.

Q: Let's take you to the political arena. You joined the political fray in 2008 when the NPP presidential candidate, Nana Akufo-Addo, nominated you as his running mate. What really inspired you to enter politics?

A: Admittedly, I had never in my life dreamt of becoming a politician, despite childhood exposure to politics. My father was a politician, and I remember him asking me if I was interested in politics. I said no. I told him I was more interested in economics. But somehow, I think destiny has a way of directing you to new paths.

When the president asked me to be his running mate, I was very surprised, but it turns out I had come to the attention of some of the Party elders. At the time I was a deputy governor of the Bank of Ghana. I had to take the tough decision of abandoning my career for the uncertain world of politics. I reflected deeply on it and prayed about it.

I realized that it was a God-sent opportunity to make a difference in Ghana, and to contribute to the development of our country at the highest levels. I was inspired by the vision and philosophy of the president and my inherent capabilities as a problem-solver. I knew I had something great to offer in support of the vision of the president and the NPP for Mother Ghana.

Q: You are the only person in the history of Ghana to have been selected as a vice-presidential candidate in four consecutive elections, from 2008 to 2020. What does it mean that President Akufo-Addo trusted you enough to select you four times?

A: I think the president, in all these



Bawumia's parents, Alhaji Mumuni Bawumia and Hajia Mariama Bawumia, in 1961. "I believe that he would be very proud of me," he says of his father. "It is still too early to tell whether I can fill his big shoes, but I am trying to do so." Of his mother, who died in 2021, he says, "She always taught us to understand and tolerate both religions. She had a very good sense of humor. I miss her a lot."



Bawumia with his wife, Samira. The Second Lady is involved in humanitarian projects and empowering women.

years, was looking for a vice-presidential candidate who was up to the task and possessed the requisite capabilities to be a good complement. I think I just rightly fitted that description.

A running-mate selection can be looked at from many angles, but I will not rule out trust, loyalty, competence, hard work, compatibility, and all the virtues one can think of. Over the years, he observed me at close quarters and was satisfied with my contribution to the ticket.

I believe the president has been vindicated in selecting me a record four times because of my contribution to our victory in 2016 and 2020, and my widely acknowledged performance as the best vice president in Ghana's history.

Q: One of the most significant events in your political career was when you testified as the key witness for the petitioners seeking to annul then President John Mahama's victory in the 2012 presidential election. Can you share your thoughts and feelings about that case?

A: Certainly. As a key witness in the petition seeking to annul the 2012 presidential election result, I felt a profound sense of duty and responsibility to ensure electoral integrity and uphold the democratic process in Ghana. It was a moment of great significance, not just for me, but for our entire nation, as we embarked on a journey to safeguard the sanctity of our electoral system.

Throughout the case, I was guided by a deep commitment to transparency, fairness, and justice. I firmly believed then, as I do now, that every vote counts and that the will of the people must be respected and upheld. My involvement in the case was driven by a genuine desire to ensure that Ghana's democratic principles were upheld, and that the outcome of the election truly reflected the collective voice of the Ghanaian people.

While the process was undoubtedly very challenging and intense, it was also a testament to the strength of our democracy and the resilience of our institutions. Ultimately, the Supreme Court's verdict and our ready acceptance affirmed the integrity of Ghana's electoral system and reaffirmed our commitment to democratic governance. Looking back, I am proud to have played a role in defending the democratic values that are the foundation of our nation. It was a defining moment in my political career, one that reinforced my dedication to serving the people of Ghana and upholding the principles of democracy, justice, and transparency.

Q: You have an extensive academic background. From 1988 to 1990, you worked as a lecturer in monetary economics and international finance at the Emile Woolf College of Accountancy in London. You also served as an economist in the International Monetary Fund's research department in Washington. Between 1996 and 2000, you were an assistant professor of economics at Baylor University in Texas. How has this knowledge translated into practical fruits for Ghana during your tenure as vice president?

A: Let me make a correction. At the International Monetary Fund, I was a summer intern (economist) at the research department during my PhD studies. I think in all these periods, my life was modeled as an economist or, if you like, an economic scholar. As a scholar, my articles and books were largely focused on identifying and offering solutions to the problems of developing countries and how to solve them.

The things I have been championing as vice president are not different from the things I learnt or read about in my academic life. They have led me to have a good blend of the theory and practice in supporting the president.

For instance, I wrote in my 2010 book about the need for African economies to embrace the era of digitalization as a means to overcome the many hurdles in life that we are confronted with as a continent. The fruits of this are the many life-changing digitalization initiatives that our government has undertaken, such as the digital address system, mobile money interoperability, national identification, paperless port systems, and so on.

These are what I call the soft development infrastructure that serves as the *sine qua non* to modern-day economic development. My previous jobs, as if by God's design, have adequately prepared me for my job as vice-president. I am not surprised about how productive I have been in that position, with the support of the president.

Q: In your role as vice president, what have been your best moments?

A: Whoooooo! I have derived a lot of joy from the implementation of policies such as the landmark Free Senior High School policy, the digital address system, Zipline drones, Ghanacard issuance, and mobile money interoperability, just to mention a few. The transformational nature of these policies and projects has brought smiles to my face.

To see how drones are saving lives daily across the country by the delivery of emer-



gency blood supplies and medicines is so heartwarming. To see children from very poor families able to attend senior high school at some of the best schools in Ghana brings me so much happiness. We solved the problem of financial inclusion through mobile money interoperability, which has resulted in Ghana being number one in Africa in terms of access to financial inclusion. Many of our initiatives have saved and transformed lives and brought me so many moments of joy. No government in the country, apart from ours, has been able to do any of this.

Q: Conversely, what were the worst situations you encountered?

A: I think the COVID-19 pandemic was one of the worst. It was a global pandemic that emerged without warning and brought the world to a standstill. The loss of lives, as well as the potential loss of more lives, was so scary. The president quickly put together a task force to deal with it. In the end, Ghana was acknowledged as amongst the countries in the world that managed

COVID-19 very well.

Another moment that was quite bad was the massive increase in inflation following the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war. Inflation increased from 12.7% in 2021 to 54% by the end of 2023. Along with it, the exchange rate for the cedi depreciated by some 30% in 2022. We had, along with many emerging economies, lost access to the international capital markets, and we were losing reserves quickly.

It was clear to me that Ghana was heading for a situation like what occurred in Sri Lanka, and we had to do something quickly. It was at this point that I came up with the idea of gold for oil. This allowed us to buy gold locally with our cedis and use the gold to pay for oil. This policy was critical in saving the economy from collapse and significantly reduced the depreciation of the currency.

Q: What are some of the lessons that you have learned so far from being the vice president?

A: The need to continue building a robust



President Nana Akufo-Addo hands over the New Patriotic Party leadership baton to Bawumia in Accra on November 4, 2023, with NPP National Chairman Stephen Ntim at right. “Being loyal to a president and having your own vision and priorities are not mutually exclusive,” Bawumia says. “The idea that I will be the same as President Akufo-Addo is a theory without any foundation. Yes, we have been together for a long time, but we are different personalities.”

you say to those who wrote you off and thought you would never make it to the top of your party?

A: I would like to thank them very much for actually spurring me on. Theirs was a mindset of impossibilities, but my mindset was one of possibilities. I believed that with hard work and God’s grace, I would be elected to lead our great party. I believed in myself. I knew it was possible, so the doubters only made me work harder. I thank them very much.

Q: Election Day 2024 may seem far off, but the electoral campaigns have already started. So tell us, what leadership qualities do you have that should draw Ghanaians to your candidacy? And what can you offer the country, if elected?

A: Honest and visionary leadership is key to the transformation of Ghana, as it is for any country. I want to see Ghana placed on a path of being transformed into an advanced economy. I believe that I have the vision, the honesty, the integrity, the competence, the drive, the work ethic, the compassion, and the innovative ideas to lead and serve Ghana as the president. I keep repeating it, I have never been president of Ghana before, Ghanaians should give me a chance and see what I can offer them.

I am a generational thinker. More importantly, I am consumed by a passion to see the transformation of Ghana in my lifetime. I believe that Ghana should not be left behind as the world moves toward the Fourth Industrial Revolution. My mindset is one of possibilities. I am not afraid to do what has not been done before. I believe anything is possible if we work hard at it. Ghana needs a leader with that mindset.

I believe that it is possible for Ghana to leapfrog many developed countries through our adoption of digital technologies and transformational policies. I entered politics to serve my country and Ghanaians. My passion is solving problems, and Ghana needs a problem-solving leader.

economy that can withstand exogenous shocks, hence the need for special initiatives such as the Bank of Ghana gold-purchase program, the Gold for Oil initiative, and leveraging the private sector to reduce the fiscal burden through the provision of critical infrastructure and services domestically.

The nation should accumulate more gold reserves, we should implement a new independent fiscal-responsibility council, and we should move at least 10% of GDP of government spending overtime to the private sector, to reduce borrowing and the accumulation of debt. We also need to expand the tax base with the introduction of a simple and transparent system that would make compliance easier and increase revenues.

Q: You won the 2023 NPP presidential primary with 61% of the vote, and carried 14 of Ghana’s 16 regions. You described the victory as “the greatest honor of my life,” as it was the highest percentage any first-time presidential

candidate had garnered in the party’s history. What were the main things that attracted so many party members to support you?

A: I believe the party rewarded hard work, sacrifice, loyalty, and competence. The party generally thought that I deserved to lead at this time. I believe I had shown loyalty to the party, fought for the party, and given the party reason to believe in me.

I was also instrumental in our victories in 2016 and 2020, and I defended the party in court after the 2012 elections. I believe the party was also of the view that I was the best candidate among the contestants, with the best chance of beating former President John Mahama in the December presidential election. My credentials were solid. That is why I am asking Ghanaians to give me a chance.

Q: You have gone from the “politically unknown deputy governor of the Bank of Ghana” in 2008 to being the leader of the NPP today. What would

Q: Tell us about your vision for the nation.

A: My vision is to create a tent big enough to accommodate all our people; to tap into the resourcefulness and talents of our people irrespective of ethnic differences and political and religious backgrounds; to channel our energies into building the kind of country that assures food security and a safe, prosperous and dignified future for all Ghanaians; to create sustainable jobs with meaningful pay for all; and for Ghana to participate fully in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, using systems and data. I have a vision of a prosperous and happy nation.

Q: You surely must remember this quote: As “vice president, I am like a driver’s mate.” What exactly did you mean?

A: I was trying to make the point that as vice president, you do not have any constitutional authority. Your role is to support the president and do what he assigns you to do. In that sense, you are akin to a driver’s mate.

If I am elected as president, however, I will have constitutional authority to take the decisions I want to take. At that time, I can assume the role of the main driver to execute my own vision and plan. That is the analogy I tried to paint.

Q: One of your strong supporters, Kofi Bentil, who is a policy analyst with Imani Ghana, wrote some time ago that he had assessed the field of presidential candidates, and decided, “you were the best ... your refusal to condemn your own team was a positive mark of ‘teammanship.’ You showed loyalty to the team. Regardless of what happened, you did not go out denigrating your own team even when they failed. You stood and took responsibility.” What is your response?

A: I deeply appreciate the support and acknowledgment from Kofi Bentil and others who recognize the importance of loyalty, responsibility, and teamwork in leadership. Throughout my political career, I have remained steadfast in my commitment to serving the best interests of Ghana and its people, while also fostering a culture of unity and collaboration within our political team.

Indeed, loyalty and teamwork are essential values that underpin effective leadership. I firmly believe that leadership is not just about individual achievements, but also about inspiring and empowering others to work together towards common goals.

Regardless of challenges or setbacks, it is imperative that leaders maintain a sense



On February 7, 2024, Bawumia addressed the Ghanaian people about his candidature, vision, priorities, and some solutions for the challenges facing the nation in a major speech, which he titled “Bold Solutions for the Future.” He told the nation: “I offer only what has guided me throughout my life. Hard work, personal integrity, accountability.”

of unity and solidarity within their team, fostering an environment where everyone feels valued and supported.

Taking responsibility for both successes and failures is a hallmark of true leadership. While no team or individual is immune to mistakes or shortcomings, it is how we respond to these challenges that ultimately defines our character and integrity. As a leader, I have always striven to lead by example, demonstrating accountability and resilience in the face of adversity.

I remain committed to upholding the principles of teamwork, loyalty, and responsibility in all aspects of my leadership. Together, with the support of dedicated team members and the Ghanaian people, I am confident that we can overcome obstacles and achieve our shared vision of a prosperous and inclusive future for our beloved nation. I believe we can.

Q: Some people have expressed concerns that you cannot become your own man if elected president, considering the years you have spent with

President Nana Akufo-Addo and your loyalty to him. How do you allay such concerns?

A: Being loyal to a president and having your own vision and priorities are not mutually exclusive. John Atta Mills was a vice president to Jerry John Rawlings, but he was his own man as president. Joe Biden was VP to Barack Obama, but he is his own man as president. The fact is, no two leaders are the same. There is evidence of several vice presidents emerging as presidents and yet having different leadership styles from their predecessors. The idea that I will be the same as President Akufo-Addo is a theory without any foundation. Even twins born from the same womb cannot be said to be the same.

It goes back to what I said earlier about the “driver’s mate.” If I am elected, I will have constitutional authority to take decisions that are different from President Akufo Addo’s. Yes, we have been together for a long time, but we have different personalities. If I am elected, I will assume the role of the main driver to execute my own vision and plan. So, Ghanaians should



NPP leaders enthusiastically celebrated Bawumia's nomination as the party's presidential candidate for 2024, and reacted heartily to his "Bold Solutions for the Future" speech at the University of Professional Studies in Accra on February 7, 2024.

give me a chance and see what I am made of as a main driver.

Q: In your speech accepting the NPP's nomination on November 4, 2023, you said that you have seen the hardships many Ghanaians are going through, and assured the people that the solution will come via "an economic recovery [which] is underway." Later, in a campaign speech on February 7, you said the key economic indicators are improving. You and President Akufo-Addo have been at the helm for seven years. Why has your economic-recovery program taken so long to bear fruits, and when will the people of Ghana feel its real results?

A: To answer your question fully, it is important to recall that there was an economic problem when the NPP assumed office in 2017. We were confronted with declining economic growth along with several problems and challenges. Notwithstanding the difficult economy we inherited, we started with a clear, decisive, and deliberate program to stabilize the economy, significantly enhance social protection for the vulnerable, industrialize

our economy, tackle youth unemployment, and empower farmers. Between 2017 and 2019, all the key economic indicators such as economic growth, agricultural growth, industrial growth, inflation, interest rates, fiscal deficit, exchange-rate depreciation, and trade balance were moving in the right direction.

However, between 2020 and 2022, we experienced severe challenges, triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war, resulting in the greatest economic depression in the world since the 1930s, with most countries recording negative GDP growths.

We also inherited a banking crisis, which resulted in the expenditure of some GH¢25 billion (equivalent to over \$4 billion at the time) to save the banking system from collapse. In addition, we incurred a cost of \$1 billion annually by way of excess-capacity charges for energy that we did not consume. This was the result of ridiculously expensive power-purchase contracts that we inherited from the previous government.

The combined effect of these global and domestic developments, resulted in a slow-down of the economy, increased rates of inflation and exchange-rate depreciation,

and increased borrowing levels to finance the expenditure.

Q: But that was in 2017, a good seven years ago.

A: No, some were in 2017, but others, like the Russia-Ukraine war, started two years ago. But the good news is that our current data shows that the economy is recovering from the crisis we faced. Inflation has declined from 54% in January 2023 to 23.2% in February 2024. Economic growth is rebounding. Spending is under control, and the fiscal deficit as a percentage of GDP has declined from 10.8% in 2020 to 4.2% in 2023.

The debt-to-GDP ratio, after increasing to 76.6% in 2021, has declined to 66.4% in 2023. And exchange-rate depreciation has also slowed down sharply. Between February and December 2023, it only depreciated by 9%. We have also created 2.1 million jobs in the last seven years, the highest by any government since independence.

So we are on the right path. However, there is still more to be done. With sound policies such as enhancing the role of the private sector along with fiscal and administrative decentralization, improving





A street scene in the Ghanaian capital, Accra. Despite the hardships caused by recent economic challenges, Bawumia says “the lives of Ghanaians have improved significantly after seven years of our government from what they were during the government of John Mahama. There is no dispute about it. Why do I say so? Because the data says so!”

our systems and the way our institutions function, which I offered in my vision statement to Ghanaians on February 7, and with the support of all stakeholders, we will bounce back. The future of Ghana is bright and safe in the hands of the NPP.

Q: This must be another quote that you cannot forget. At an NPP rally in 2016, you declared: “Patients are suffering. Students are suffering. Traders are suffering. Pensioners are suffering. Drivers are suffering. Contractors are suffering. Civil servants are suffering and farmers are suffering. Fishermen are suffering and men are suffering. Women are suffering and children are suffering. And Ghanaians as a whole are suffering.” Seven years on, are Ghanaians better off under your government?

A: Sure. I can say without any fear of contradiction that notwithstanding the recent economic challenges, which have resulted in hardships for many Ghanaians, the fact remains that the lives of Ghanaians have improved significantly after seven years of our government from what they were during the government of John Mahama. There is no dispute about it.

Why do I say so? Because the data says so! You would recall that in the previous government we endured four years of power outages (which we called “dumsor”), which collapsed many businesses and increased unemployment. There was no chalk in schools, and teacher and nursing training allowances were cancelled.

There was a near-collapse of the National Health Insurance Scheme and the National Ambulance Service. There were increases in electricity tariffs by an average of 50% annually. And many parents could not afford the fees to send their children to senior high school.

Since coming into office, we have implemented many policies to reduce the suffering of Ghanaians. The electricity tariffs over the last six years have seen the lowest increase (11%) for any seven-year period over the last 30 years! We also provided free electricity for lifeline users for a year and a 50% reduction in tariffs for all other consumers during COVID-19.

We have restored the cancelled teacher and nursing training allowances. We have created more jobs than any other government. Ghana’s per capita income increased from GH¢7,756 in 2016 to GH¢19,464 by the end of 2022. In dollar terms, it increased from \$1,978 to \$2,353.

Q: But have these nice figures translated into better and deeper pockets

for Ghanaians? Some people say they have not seen in their lives what you are talking about.

A: If you let me finish, they will see that their pockets and lives have been bettered by our policies and programs. For example, we have implemented free senior high school education, which has resulted in an increase in enrolment from 800,000 students to 1.4 million students (a 75% increase in seven years). And parents have saved the fees that they would have paid to take their children to these schools. Have their pockets not become better?

In addition, we have implemented free Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and invested an additional GH¢6 billion to build and equip TVET institutions. We have also revived the National Ambulance Service by implementing the one constituency-one ambulance scheme.

We have also introduced drones to deliver medicines to rural and remote areas, and covered childhood cancers and hydroxyurea treatment for sickle-cell sufferers under the National Health Insurance Scheme.

Besides, we have made it very easy for Ghanaians to, apply for a passport, renew national health insurance, purchase electricity credit, and clear goods at the port, through digitalization.

We have also provided financial support of GH¢1.45 billion to 444,367 small and medium enterprises (SMEs). So yes, I believe the lives of Ghanaians have improved. But this does not mean that Ghanaians are not experiencing some challenges. We definitely have a lot more to do to reduce the cost of living and create more jobs. This is what I am determined to do as president, if I am given the chance.

Q: One of the factors underpinning economic and social performance in the country is the strength of the cedi. In April 2017, at a town-hall meeting to assess your government’s first 100 days, you humorously said that the free fall of the cedi had been arrested, and the Inspector General of Police (IGP) was keeping it in custody. Your exact words were: “When we came in, [the cedi] was running. Essentially we have arrested it, and the IGP has the keys, he’s locked it up. We want to make sure we pursue sound policies to keep the cedi stable.” At the time, the exchange rate was four cedis to one US dollar. Today, it is 13 cedis to US\$1. In your February 7 speech, you stated that “the depreciation of the cedi under our government is lower than



A 20-cedi note, worth US\$5 in 2017 and about US\$1.50 at the current exchange rate. But the currency's value declined more under the previous government, Bawumia argues: "Whether you look at the average or the cumulative, the depreciation of the cedi has been lower under our government, notwithstanding the severe global shocks we have endured. That is the basic truth."

what we inherited from the 2013-2016 period," based on the average depreciation over the past seven years. Is it valid to use the average for President Akufo-Addo's tenure, when the value of the cedi has dropped significantly?

A: Why not? We use averages to measure progress in statistics and economics all the time. It is a valid comparison of the management of the exchange rate under our government, versus under the NDC government.

The point is that notwithstanding the major global and domestic challenges we have been through, it is remarkable that whereas the exchange-rate depreciation between 2009-2016 averaged 13.9%, between 2017-2023 it averaged 13.1%. That is a fact.

Q: Are you not shifting the goalposts?

A: No, if you want to quarrel with the use of averages, let's look at the cumulative

depreciation of the cedi. The data shows that from 2009-2016, the cedi depreciated cumulatively by 71.1%, and between 2017 and 2023, the cumulative depreciation was 64.6%. So whether you look at the average or the cumulative, the depreciation of the cedi has been lower under our government, notwithstanding the severe global shocks we have endured. That is the basic truth.

Q: On the campaign trail in 2016, you said that "you can engage in all the propaganda you want [about the economy]. But if the fundamentals are weak, the exchange rate will expose you. That was true then [in 2014] and is true now [in 2016]." Is it still true now in 2024 under your government?

A: Absolutely! It is still true, and I will continue to stand by that statement. We saw that between 2017 and 2021 when the fundamentals in terms of the fiscal deficit, inflation, GDP growth, external balances, and international reserves were fairly

strong, the exchange rate was relatively stable.

But following the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, the banking-sector crisis, the excess-capacity energy payments, and the lack of access to international capital markets, the fundamentals of the economy were weakened, and the fiscal deficit and debt levels increased. Inflation reached some 53% at the end of 2022 and you saw the exchange rate depreciate by some 30% in 2022.

The fundamentals have strengthened recently, with declining fiscal deficit, declining inflation, improved external reserves, and so on, and this has resulted in a relative stability of the exchange rate. So my statement still holds true.

Q: All well and good, but let's look at another of your quotes. You said in August 2020 that the Akufo-Addo government, which you are part of, has done better in all economic sectors

than the previous NDC government. “Comparing the NPP and NDC governments’ records on the economy is like comparing day and night, because we have a superior record,” you said. What is that superior record?

A: I will tell you. The records are clear on the economic performance of the two parties since the inception of the Fourth Republic.

On GDP growth, it is worth noting that between 2013-2016, Ghana’s GDP growth averaged 3.9% [annually]. During our first term (2017-2020), GDP growth increased to an average of 5.3%.

Including the years after COVID-19 and the global slowdown, Ghana’s GDP growth declined to an average of 4.9% between 2017 and 2022. What is remarkable about this performance is that economic growth under our government is still stronger on the average than in the 2013-2016 era.

On agricultural GDP growth, we witnessed it double from an average of 2.9% between 2013-2016 to an average of 6% between 2017 and 2022.

We have made a lot of progress in agriculture, even though there is more to be done. Rice imports, for example, have declined by 45% (from 805,000 metric tons to 440,000) between 2021 and 2023! Our goal is to be a net exporter of rice by 2028. It is clear that some of our policy interventions, such as planting for food and jobs, have borne fruits.

Industrial GDP growth also followed a similar trend. After averaging 3.3% between 2013 and 2016, it increased to an average of 7.5% between 2017 and 2020.

Industrial growth, however, declined after the global crisis, with a recorded average growth rate of 5% between 2017 and 2022. Again, what is remarkable about this is that industrial growth under our government is still stronger on the average than it was from 2013-2016.

Our programs and policies such as the revival of AngloGold Ashanti (Obuasi mine), Ghana Publishing Company, Ghana-post, the State Housing Corporation, and the State Transport Corporation, and the attraction of international automobile companies to Ghana have clearly yielded positive results.

Furthermore, Ghana’s trade balance (the difference between exports and imports) prior to 2017 was in persistent deficit for the best part of 30 years! Between 2013 and 2016, the trade deficit averaged \$2.5 billion a year. The trade balance improved significantly to a surplus that averaged \$1.8 billion between 2017 and 2020.

Ghana has continued to record a trade surplus which has averaged \$1.9 billion



Bawumia: “We should note that during the period 2017-2023, the government had to borrow to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic (GH¢8.1 billion), to save the banking system from collapse (GH¢25 billion), and to pay excess energy-capacity charges of \$1 billion a year ... Notwithstanding these three major events, the total borrowing as at 2023 by our government was virtually the same as in the period 2009-2016. Without them, the borrowing under our government would have been much lower.”

between 2017 and 2022, a better performance than in the 2013-2016 period when there was no global crisis. This is evidence that we have indeed increased productivity and exports relative to imports.

Ghana’s gross international reserves also increased from an average of \$5.8 billion in the 2013-2016 period to an average of \$7.9 billion between 2017 and 2022.

Q: Is that so?

A: Yes! In the area of bank lending rates, the story is the same. The rates averaged 27.5% between 2013 and 2016. During our first term, average bank lending rates declined to 23.7%. Following the global and domestic crises, they increased slightly, resulting in an average of 25% between 2017 and 2022. Even though bank-lending rates increased to 35% in 2022, on the

average, interest rates were lower in the 2017-2022 period. So the data supports my 2020 assertion.

Besides the macro economy, we have a superior record in the provision of infrastructure such as roads, interchanges, airports, fish landing sites, classrooms, public libraries, courts, rural telephony, free senior high school education, free TVET, digitalization, health care, and much more. Virtually every sector!

Q: Critics of the government say it has piled up more debts for the nation than any other government since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1992. How do you respond to that?

A: I am glad you have asked this question, because there has been so much misunderstanding on this debt issue. Now

what does the data say? Looking at our cedi-denominated debt, the data shows that between 2009 and 2016 (NDC Government), the total debt stock increased from GH¢9.7 billion to GH¢122 billion (1,157%).

Between 2017 and 2023 (NPP Government), the total debt stock increased from GH¢122 billion to GH¢610 billion (400%). The period between 2009 and 2016 saw the fastest rate of debt accumulation in the Fourth Republic.

Also, about half our debt is denominated in U.S. dollars and is converted into cedis at the prevailing exchange rate, thus one cannot ignore the exchange rate's effect on the numbers. Let me give you an example.

If Ghana borrows \$100 and the exchange rate is GH¢1:\$1, then our debt stock in cedis will be GH¢100. If by next year the exchange rate depreciates to GH¢6:\$1, then this same \$100 we borrowed will now reflect on the debt stock in cedis as GH¢600 (a six-fold increase in debt), even though we have not borrowed any additional amount. This is why it is very important to examine the real value of the debt stock in U.S. dollar terms.

In U.S. dollar terms, at the end of 2000, Ghana's total debt stock stood at \$7.15 billion. Between 2001 and 2008, the debt stock increased to \$8.1 billion (an increase of 12.7%, following Heavily Indebted Poor Countries relief from the International Monetary Fund).

Between 2009 and 2016, the debt stock further increased to \$29.2 billion, by 261%. Between 2017 and 2023, it increased to \$51.2 billion, up 75%. So between 2009 and 2016, the total debt stock increased by \$22 billion, whereas between 2017 and 2023, it increased by 22.2 billion.

The period between 2009 and 2016 saw the fastest rate of debt accumulation in the Fourth Republic. We should note that during the period 2017-2023, the government had to borrow to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic (GH¢8.1 billion), to save the banking system from collapse (GH¢25 billion), and to pay excess energy-capacity charges of \$1 billion a year.

Notwithstanding these three major events, the total borrowing as at 2023 by our government was virtually the same as in the period 2009-2016. Without them, the borrowing under our government would have been much lower.

Q: So what would a Bawumia government do about the unsustainable debt stock?

A: The Akufo-Addo government has already started dealing with the problem through fiscal discipline and the implementation of a domestic debt-restructuring



program. Negotiations with external creditors are also ongoing. The good news is that the economy is recovering now, with lower fiscal deficits and a decline in the debt-to-GDP ratio.

A Bawumia government would prioritize fiscal discipline, implementing measures to broaden and enhance revenue generation, rationalize public expenditure, and leverage private-sector involvement in the provision of government infrastructure and services.

A Bawumia government would also work to diversify the economy, reduce reliance on volatile sectors, maximize the benefits from our mineral resources, reform the energy sector, and move the energy-generation mix towards renewables.

Q: How would you diversify Ghana's economy beyond cocoa and gold?

A: I think that diversifying Ghana's economy beyond its traditional reliance on

cocoa and gold is essential for promoting sustainable economic growth, reducing vulnerability to external shocks, and unlocking new opportunities for development. We're currently developing our manifesto, and very soon we will outline our core policies.

So expect to see a Bawumia government investing in modern agricultural practices, technology adoption, and value-chain development, to enhance productivity and profitability in sectors such as oil palm, rubber, cassava, and fruits.

Supporting smallholder farmers with access to credit, extension services, and market linkages can help unlock the full potential of Ghana's agricultural sector. We will support the establishment of special economic zones, industrial parks, and agro-processing facilities to attract investment, promote innovation, and diversify Ghana's export base beyond raw materials. When we launch our comprehensive manifesto, most of these policies will be outlined.



Customers at a mobile money operator in Accra. Last year, according to the Bank of Ghana, the volume of mobile money transactions in the country rose to GH¢1.912 trillion. Bawumia, a strong advocate of digital financial technology, says he would abolish the e-levy, the tax on electronic financial transactions, if elected. He says he would replace the lost revenue by reducing other government spending and outsourcing some services to the private sector.

Q: It is general knowledge that Ghana's economy is too dependent on the export of raw commodities, with little or no value added. How do you plan to change that to generate more revenue?

A: My administration will implement a multifaceted strategy focused on industrialization, innovation, and diversification. We will prioritize industrialization efforts aimed at adding value to Ghana's raw commodities through processing and manufacturing activities.

By establishing value-added processing plants and industrial clusters, we can transform raw materials such as cocoa, gold, and oil into finished goods with higher market value. This approach will not only create jobs, but also increase export earnings and reduce dependency on primary commodity exports.

Also, harnessing technology and innovation is key to unlocking value-addition

opportunities across various sectors of the economy. We will promote research and development initiatives, encourage technology transfer and adoption, and support the growth of innovative startups and enterprises. By leveraging technology, we can enhance productivity, improve product quality, and stimulate innovation in value-added processing activities.

Q: You are a strong proponent of a cashless economy, where people use electronic channels for payment. In August 2020, you said in an interview: "I don't think mobile money should be taxed, because most of the people who use the service are poor people." But two years later, in 2022, the government, which you are part of, enacted the e-levy, a tax on mobile money. In your February 7 speech, you stated that if elected in December, you would abolish the e-levy. However, in 2023, that tax generated GH¢1.2 billion. If you scrap it, how would you replace that revenue?

A: Quite simple. The revenue from the e-levy is less than 0.2% of GDP. In my very first budget, I will move government expenditure of 3% of GDP to the private sector, to reduce the burden on the budget. We will also, through a flat-tax system, broaden the tax base and increase tax revenue.

Furthermore, reductions in government expenditure will also create additional fiscal space. These measures are more than sufficient to replace the revenue lost from abolishing the e-levy.

Q: Revenue collection in Ghana is generally poor. You advocate a flat income tax. Is it fair to have working-class people with low incomes pay the same tax rate as the wealthy?

A: This will actually not be the case, because we are going to set an income-tax threshold, and if you earn below this threshold (as many of the poor will do), you will not pay an income tax. The flat tax is transparent and simple to calculate. It will enhance tax compliance by many in the informal sector.

Q: One cannot talk to you about the Ghanaian economy under your gov-

ernment's management without asking about the banking-sector cleanup. Beginning in 2017, the government and the Bank of Ghana shut down nine Ghanaian-owned banks and several microcredit finance institutions, at a cost of GH¢17.7 billion, according to the World Bank. You said the closures "saved the deposits of 4.6 million bank depositors by saving the banking system from collapse." However, some people say the cleanup was too harsh, and that, rather than closing all the indigenous banks, the government could have bailed some of them out and had them restructure under the supervision of the Bank of Ghana, at a far lower cost. What do you say to such people?

A: The decision to undertake the banking-sector cleanup was a difficult but necessary one, taken with the long-term stability and integrity of Ghana's financial system in mind. Its primary objective was to safeguard the stability and soundness of Ghana's financial system. The presence of insolvent and poorly managed banks posted significant risks to depositors' funds, financial stability, and the broader economy.

Taking decisive action to address these risks was essential to prevent a systemic collapse and protect the interests of depositors and investors. While some may argue for a bailout and restructuring approach, it's important to consider the effectiveness and efficiency of such measures.

Bailouts can be costly to taxpayers and may not address underlying governance and management issues within banks. By swiftly resolving insolvent banks through closures and consolidations, the cleanup process aimed to minimize long-term costs and restore confidence in the banking system more expeditiously.

Bear in mind that the cleanup process was conducted with a commitment to accountability, transparency, and due process. Banks were subjected to thorough assessments and audits to determine their financial health and compliance with regulatory requirements.

The decision to revoke licenses and initiate closures was based on objective criteria and in accordance with relevant laws and

regulations. It also served as a learning experience for regulators, policymakers, and stakeholders in Ghana.

Q: Finally on the economy, as we speak, interest rates in Ghana are very high, about 30%. What would a Bawumia government do to bring interest rates down?

A: I agree that the interest rates are high. So, bringing down the high interest rates is crucial for stimulating investment, promoting economic growth, and improving access to credit for businesses and individuals.

My government would work closely with the Bank of Ghana to implement prudent monetary-policy measures aimed at maintaining price stability while supporting economic growth. This may involve adjusting key policy rates, such as the monetary-policy rate and reserve requirements, to influence interest rates in the economy.

We will also prioritize prudent fiscal management, including controlling government spending, rationalizing subsidies, and enhancing revenue-mobilization efforts, to reduce the government's borrowing needs and ease upward pressure on interest rates.

We would also improve financial inclusion by expanding access to banking services and alternative forms of financing, which can help reduce reliance on informal and high-cost lending sources, thereby exerting downward pressure on interest rates.

This may involve initiatives to upscale our digitalization agenda, improvement in financial services, microfinance, and community banking in underserved areas. The digitalization agenda will make it easier for the tracking of the traceability and identity of borrowers, thereby reducing the risk premium on debt-seekers.

Q: Let's turn to digitalization. You advocate using digital technology to modernize the government and develop the nation. As vice president, your office "initiated and spear-headed" landmark digital initiatives and policies in the country. Would it be accurate to describe you as a "digital man"?

A: It is clear that for Ghana and Africa to leapfrog the development process, overcome legacy problems, and improve both economic and public-sector governance, there is a need to leverage technological innovations.

I had long held the view that many of the problems facing Ghana's economy could be resolved through digitalization. In fact, in my 2010 book, *Monetary Policy and*



Bawumia has been nicknamed "Mr. Digital." "I take it as a compliment and a recognition of how digitalization is impacting on the economy and ordinary people's lives," he says. He supervised most of the Akufo-Addo government's digitalization initiatives.

Financial Sector Reform in Africa, I proposed digitalization as part of the way forward for African countries.

So, when we assumed office in 2017, as vice-president, I took the decision, with the blessing and support of the president, to focus on the complementary data and systems improvement that would enhance the lives of Ghanaians, ensure the ease of doing business and change the fundamentals of the economy, making it more dynamic and responsive to modern trends, and the management of it more scientific and efficient.

From implementing the digital address system to digitizing critical government services such as ports, passport offices, and driver-licensing authorities, our goal has always been to harness technology to make services more accessible, and more responsive to the needs of citizens.

I am proud of what Ghana has achieved

in the digitalization space. It has been massive. We are ahead of most African countries in this regard.

While digital innovation has been a key focus of my leadership, I believe that true progress requires a holistic approach that combines technological advancements with effective policymaking, strategic partnerships, and a deep commitment to inclusive development.

Some people actually call me Mr. Digital. I take it as a compliment and a recognition of how digitalization is impacting on the economy and ordinary people's lives.

Q: It's very good to hear that. But how would universal digitalization, having people do everything from paying taxes to getting prescriptions on their phones, work in a society where many people, particularly those in the rural areas, don't have access to



Some youthful supporters of Bawumia tout his achievements, with signs praising the No Guarantor student loans; the Ghanacard national identification card; providing free Wi-Fi to senior high schools, public universities, and district education offices; the digital property address system; the Zongo Development Fund; and others.

the Internet, or where mobile-phone reception is poor, and there is no Wi-Fi? Currently, Internet penetration in the country is about 70%, and that's still far from universal.

A: You are right that the digital divide still exists. But we have made a lot of progress in increasing Internet penetration, from about 35% when we came into office to about 72% now. The goal is to get close to 100% penetration in our next term, when I become president. It is possible.

But the fact that we do not have 100% Internet penetration does not mean we should not digitalize the economy.

Already the benefits of digitalization are obvious for all to see. We are helping the poor and the excluded who can now be uniquely identified, have an address, a bank account, be able to enroll or renew their national health insurance on a mobile phone, receive medicines in remote areas

through drones, and so on.

Digitalization is also reducing corruption and eliminating bureaucratic inefficiency. So we will continue to implement digitalization initiatives to help the people

Q: Under your office's oversight, the National Identification Authority has issued Ghanacards, the biometric national ID card, to about half the population. You have said the Ghanacard would prevent fraud, because it will be linked to people's bank accounts, SIM cards, and the like. Wouldn't there also be privacy concerns, if the government has access to records of everyone's transactions?

A: Yes, addressing privacy concerns is paramount when implementing national identification systems, particularly when they involve linking personal data to various services such as bank accounts and

SIM cards. While the Ghanacard has the potential to enhance security and prevent fraud, it's essential to implement robust safeguards to protect individuals' privacy rights and ensure the responsible use of personal data.

First and foremost, we have a comprehensive data-protection law and regulations that govern the collection, storage, and use of personal information. Furthermore, we have very robust cybersecurity measures to safeguard against unauthorized access, data breaches, and cyber threats. This includes encryption protocols; secure data-storage systems, and regular audits to ensure compliance with security standards.

Additionally, transparency and accountability mechanisms are essential to build trust and confidence among the public. This involves providing clear information to individuals about how their data will be



Drones, managed by Zipline, have been delivering medicines, blood, and vaccines to health centers across the country, particularly in remote areas, thanks to Bawumia's efforts to use technology to improve health care. He says with the blessing of President Akufo-Addo, he has planned and overseen many policy initiatives. Here, Bawumia superintends the launch of the Zipline drone-delivery system.

used, establishing oversight bodies to monitor compliance with data-protection laws, and enabling individuals to access and correct their personal information as needed.

Ultimately, while the Ghanacard has the potential to provide numerous benefits, including enhanced security and convenience, it is essential to strike a balance between these benefits and protecting individuals' privacy rights. We can ensure that the Ghanacard serves as a tool for empowerment while respecting individuals' privacy and dignity.

Q: In your two terms of office, the president had you plan or oversee some policy initiatives. Can you talk about some of them?

A: Certainly! With the blessing of my boss, the president, I planned and/or oversaw many policy initiatives. Let me first start from the health sector: The digitalization of National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) renewal, the One Constituency One Ambulance program, the Zipline drone-delivery system, Agenda 111

(building 111 hospitals), E-Pharmacy, and the digitalization of Births and Death Registry.

In the educational sector, the implementation of the No Guarantor student loans with Ghanacard, and free Wi-Fi to 710 senior high schools, 46 colleges of education, 260 district education offices, and 13 public universities. The digitalization of the Scholarship Secretariat, increased scholarship beneficiaries by 70%; and also in the energy sector, the digitalization of the Electricity Corporation of Ghana's revenue collections and operations.

On the infrastructure development front, through the Sinohydro barter agreement that I negotiated, we have constructed the Tamale Interchange, and built many inner-city roads in Central, Eastern, Ashanti, Bono, and other regions.

And through the UK-Ghana Business Council, I spearheaded the funding of projects such as the Kumasi International Airport and the Tamale Airport; Phase II of the Obetsebi Lamptey Interchange and the Kejetia Market; equipping the Bekwai

Hospital; and the Tema-Aflao highway.

Regarding the transport sector, I led the initiatives to abolish the filing of embarkation and disembarkation cards at the Kotoka International Airport; to digitize our ports, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority, and the Motor Insurance Database. We implemented the Go Ride taxi service for local taxi drivers, and the Tap and Go payment systems for Metro Mass Transit company buses.

Q: You also did some digitalization in the public services.

A: My office had oversight over the digitalization of the issuance of biometric national ID cards (Ghanacard), passport applications, and the tax-filing process. There is the Ghana.gov payment platform. We leveraged GPS technology to implement a digital address system for the nation, capturing every square inch of land. We also implemented mobile money interoperability, to promote financial inclusion.

On the fiscal and monetary policy side, there is the Bank of Ghana's gold-purchase



The Tamale International Airport (above) and the Kumasi International Airport (right), two of the many infrastructure projects Bawumia “spearheaded the funding of,” working through the UK-Ghana Business Council.

program, and the Gold for Oil deal.

I have done so much, that’s why so many people see me as the best and most impactful vice president in Ghana’s history. I must thank immensely my boss, President Akufo-Addo, for giving me such a wonderful opportunity.

Q: You have described the critics of the ambitious digital initiatives your government embarked upon as “people with shackled mindsets who always think in terms of things being impossible to do.” You said “when you try to move the country forward with new ideas, they mask their ignorance by mocking you, ridiculing you, and calling you a liar. But in the process, they only expose their lack of understanding of the issues.” Has this been a major issue since your government



came into office, and what impact has it had on the government's ability to deliver on its promises?

A: The fact is that many of the things I try to do are things that have not been done in Ghana before. So when I propose them, my political opponents immediately say it is not possible. This happened with the Ghanacard being used to travel from outside Ghana into Ghana. They said the same with the digital address system, E-Pharmacy, Zipline drones, and hostels for Kayayei. But after ridiculing me, they become quiet when I get it done. Proving them wrong gives me so much pleasure.

Q: All in all, what would you say are the key accomplishments of the Akufo-Addo-Bawumia team?

A: Ooooh, there are a lot! Here are just a few.

We have extended the rural telephony network more than any other government since 1992, from 78 sites to 1,008 sites. We have constructed more public libraries than any other government since 1992, increasing the total number from 61 in 2017 to 115 by 2023.

We have established 702 cyber labs in public schools and 81 communities since 2017. We have completed 18 district hospitals, two regional hospitals, 20 polyclinics, and 75 Community-Based Health Planning Services compounds. We are also in the process of building more district hospitals than any other government since independence, under our Agenda 111 program.

We have constructed more sanitation facilities than any other government since 1992. As a result, we have increased the proportion of the population with access to toilet facilities from 33% in 2016 to 59% in 2022. Also, 5,400 communities have been declared free of open defecation since 2017.

We have completed six new multipurpose sports stadiums, with four under construction, one in each of the 10 old regions. We have completed the University of Ghana Stadium in Legon, built multisports facilities at Borteyman for the African Games, and increased public Astroturf sports facilities from three in 2016 to over 150 now.

We have constructed more courts and accommodation for the judiciary than any other government since 1992. We are now constructing 120 courts (80 of them completed) and 150 bungalows for the judiciary.

We have completed 1,609 projects under the development authorities, and restored the teacher-training allowances that were cancelled by the NDC government.

We have also implemented Free SHS,



A new residential complex for Court of Appeal judges in the Ashanti Region (above). "We have constructed more courts and accommodation for the judiciary than any other government since 1992," Bawumia says. He claims other NPP government infrastructure projects include the first highway interchange built in Tamale in the North, far right, and the under-construction Tema motorway interchange, near right.

which has increased enrollment from 800,000 in 2016 to 1.4 million by 2022. Last year we recorded the highest ever level of students placed in SHS, around 500,000.

Q: What about infrastructure?

A: We have undertaken a major roads construction and rehabilitation program across the country, totaling over 11,674 km, per data available to me from the Ministry of Roads and Highways. I am not aware of any government that has done as much in the roads sector since independence.





Key amongst the road projects are the four-tier Pokuase interchange, the Tema motorway interchange, and for the first time in the history of the country, an interchange was constructed in Tamale. Another one is under construction in Takoradi in the Western Region. We are undertaking the dualization of many of our major roads to ease traffic and to reduce road carnage.

In the railway sector, which had virtually collapsed and had not seen any significant public-sector investment in the last 30-plus years, we have initiated or overseen the construction or rehabilitation of more railways than any other government since 1992. We have done the Achimota-Nsawam, Accra-Tema, Kojokrom-Tarkwa, Kojokrom-Manso, and Tema-Mpakadan lines.

Q: All said and done, there must be some things that the Akufo-Addo-Bawumia team set out to do, but have not been able to do. Do you plan to continue them if you are elected?

A: Certainly, there are goals and initiatives that may not have been fully realized. While the Akufo-Addo-Bawumia administration has made significant progress on many fronts, there are areas where challenges persist or where more work remains to be done.

We need to build more roads, complete the Agenda 111 hospitals, build the Pwalugu Dam, create more jobs to address youth unemployment, attain food security, implement policies to reduce the cost of living, increase Internet penetration to close to 100%, and build bauxite and lithium refineries.

If elected, I am committed to continue to work on these important projects, and also build upon the progress made by the Akufo-Addo-Bawumia administration.

By prioritizing job creation, investing in health care and education, combating corruption, and promoting inclusive economic growth, I can address the challenges facing Ghana and build a more prosperous and equitable future for all citizens.

Q: As you may be aware, the IMF has described the government's Free Senior High School (SHS) program as "poorly targeted." You have indicated that the program would continue under your government, and that you would improve it. What kind of improvements are you talking about?

A: The program is a cornerstone of our government's commitment to expanding access to quality education for all Ghanaian youth. It is probably one of the most successful social-intervention programs ever



A crowd of high-school students take selfies with Bawumia. The Akufo-Addo government's free senior-high-school policy "is probably one of the most successful social-intervention programs ever implemented in Ghana," he says. "It has dramatically boosted student enrollments across the country. I am committed to the Free SHS policy, and I believe it would be safe and sustainable in my hands."

implemented in Ghana. It has dramatically boosted student enrollment in senior high schools across the country.

What is more important, the highest enrollments are coming from the poorest regions of Ghana, like the five northern regions. Furthermore, Ghana has now attained gender parity in senior high-school education as more girls than boys have accessed the program.

Also, the increase in enrollment has not resulted in a reduction in quality. In fact, the performance of the students on the West African Senior School Certificate Examination last year shows that the free SHS beneficiaries attained the best results since 2014. The policy has therefore been a resounding success.

That does not mean it is without problems. There is more to be done to improve

it. My government will build more infrastructure like classroom blocks, dormitories, and dining facilities for the schools. My government will also invest in teacher training and professional development, enhancing curriculum relevance and alignment with workforce needs. I am committed to the Free SHS policy, and I believe it would be safe and sustainable in my hands.

Q: Another flagship program of the NPP is the National Health Insurance Scheme established by former President John Kufuor. Is it working to your satisfaction? How is your government improving health care in Ghana?

A: The NHIS is working better under our government than it used to be. Besides resourcing it financially, we have also digitized it and linked it to the Ghanacard.

So today, your NHIS number is your Ghanacard number.

We have also extended NHIS coverage to include childhood cancers and hydroxyurea for sickle-cell patients. We have also introduced an NHIS app, so today people can register and get enrolled using their Ghanacard. They can also renew their subscription and check the list of diseases that the NHIS covers, without travelling to any NHIS office.

Second, to make health care easily accessible across the country, we have overseen the connection of health facilities under the Ghana Health Service to one digital platform. So far, all teaching hospitals and all regional and district hospitals have been connected and can talk to each other. The goal is to network over 90% of all hospitals in Ghana by the end of next year.



Bawumia at the launch of the National Electronic Pharmacy Platform in Accra in July 2022. That “e-pharmacy” system, he says “offers the opportunity to everyone with a mobile phone to upload your prescriptions and find out which pharmacies near you have the medicines. You can compare the prices offered by different pharmacies, so that you can buy from the lowest-priced.”

So, if you are referred from a hospital like the Tamale Teaching Hospital in the north of Ghana to the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital in Accra, you do not need to carry a folder. All your records will be seen and monitored by the doctor in Korle-Bu when you arrive. Patients will have only one digital folder wherever they go. Your health records can be accessed 24 hours a day from any of the 302 hospitals networked so far.

Third, previously, hospitals and clinics in remote and largely rural communities had difficulty getting medical supplies, especially in times of emergencies involving, for example, snake bites, childbirth, blood loss, or floods. Many lives are needlessly lost because the hospitals are unable to access critically needed supplies on time. To address this problem, Ghana opted to partner with Zipline, the world’s largest

automated on-demand delivery service for medical supplies.

Finally, the National Electronic Pharmacy Platform offers the opportunity to everyone with a mobile phone to upload your prescriptions and find out which pharmacies near you have the medicines. You can compare the prices offered by different pharmacies, so that you can buy from the lowest-priced.

Q: What would be your plan for the health sector, if you are elected?

A: Even before I am elected, my office is going to leverage private-sector technology and our longstanding relationship with faith-based organizations to transform our health-care delivery system, through the provision of hospital infrastructure and efficient systems that will help reduce its

cost, making it accessible to all Ghanaians.

My government will invest in expanding health-care infrastructure, particularly in underserved rural areas, to ensure equitable access to quality services.

My government will also implement targeted initiatives to address health-care disparities among vulnerable populations, including women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.

In addition, we will increase recruitment, training, and retention of health-care professionals, including doctors, nurses, midwives, and community health workers, to address workforce shortages and improve service delivery.

As far as the NHIS is concerned, we will enhance the sustainability and efficiency of the scheme through comprehensive reforms aimed at expanding coverage, improving

revenue mobilization, and reducing administrative inefficiencies.

I aim to build a resilient and sustainable health-care system that delivers high-quality, affordable, and equitable services to all Ghanaians.

Q: Now let's come to the dinner table. Ghana still has a significant problem with food security. What would you do about it if you are elected, and how would you deal with the effects of climate change on agriculture?

A: My government will promote sustainable agricultural practices, including conservation agriculture, agroforestry, and integrated crop-livestock systems, to improve soil fertility, water management, and resilient climate variability.

We will also invest in agricultural research and development to develop high-yielding and climate-resilient crop varieties and livestock breeds that are adapted to local agro-ecological conditions. Farmers will also have access to improved seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and agricultural machinery to increase productivity and reduce post-harvest losses. More will be outlined in our manifesto soon.

Q: One thorny issue is *galamsey*, illegal small-scale mining. You have plans to bring more small-scale mining companies into the legitimate and regulated mining sector. Can you tell us more about your plans? And how would you deal with the devastating environmental degradation going on?

A: Bringing small-scale mining companies into the legitimate, regulated mainstream is crucial for promoting sustainable mining practices, fostering economic development, and mitigating the environmental and social impacts associated with artisanal and small-scale mining.

My government will implement policies and regulatory frameworks that facilitate the formalization of small-scale mining operations, including registration, licensing, and compliance with environmental and social standards.

We will strengthen enforcement mechanisms and monitoring systems, to ensure adherence to mining laws, regulations, and best practices, including environmental impact assessments and mine-closure plans.

We will promote the adoption of sustainable mining technologies and practices, such as mercury-free gold-processing methods, mine-site rehabilitation, and land reclamation, to minimize environmental degradation and pollution. This will be a priority for my government.

My government would also develop alternative livelihood options and income-generating activities for small-scale miners and affected communities, including agricultural diversification, vocational training, and entrepreneurship development.

Q: You said the government has created 2.1 million jobs, but unemployment continues to be high in the country, especially among the youth. What would a Bawumia government do about it?

A: While the government has made significant strides in job creation, we recognize that more needs to be done to ensure inclusive economic growth and provide opportunities for all Ghanaians. My plan is to encourage diversification of the economy by supporting the growth of nontraditional sectors such as technology, agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, and creative industries.

A Bawumia government will provide targeted support and incentives to entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized enterprises to stimulate job creation, innovation, and economic dynamism.

My government will also strengthen vocational training programs, technical education, and skills-development initiatives to equip the youth with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the job market.

In addition, it will invest more in promoting STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education and digital literacy, to prepare the youth for emerging job opportunities in the digital economy.

Q: Corruption has long been a big problem in Ghana. What is going on with the government's fight against it?

A: The government led by President Akufo-Addo has pursued a number of policies, especially through digitalization, to check corruption. For instance, through the integration of the National Identification Authority (NIA) database with the National Service Secretariat system, a biometric audit of the National Service Scheme payroll alone found 44,707 ghost workers and potential ghost workers between 2022 and 2024. This has saved Ghana a total of GH¢356 million. Also, the Social Security and National Insurance Trust has suspended payments of GH¢480 million to 29,000 ghost pensioners, using the Ghanacard.

We have also integrated the Controller and Accountant-General's Department payroll database with the NIA database, to eliminate ghost workers on the government

payroll. Through digitalization we have finally been able to solve this longstanding problem.

In 2018, a total of 346,911 passports were issued with a revenue of GH¢11.8 million. By 2023, the digitalization of the passport application process had led to the issuance of 751,761 passports, with a revenue of GH¢94 million.

The Attorney General has also saved Ghana some 10 trillion cedis by preventing judgment debt claims against Ghana! We also passed the Right to Information Act, to increase transparency.

I believe our government has done more to fight corruption and has more tangible results to show than the previous government. I am sure if you ask former President John Mahama what tangible policies he implemented to fight corruption, he will not be able to point to any.

Q: Now let's go to the international scene, where Ghana once upon a time stood tall, when it led Africa in pan-Africanism. What do you envision for Ghana's role in Africa and the world?

A: You are right. Ghana has a very rich history of leadership and activism in Africa and the global community, and I envision a future where the country continues to play a prominent and influential role in shaping regional and international politics. I have had the privilege of meeting with several leaders from across the world. If I am elected, we will continue to serve as a beacon of democracy and good governance in Africa, promoting democratic principles, human rights, and the rule of law both domestically and regionally.

We will actively support democratic transitions, peaceful elections, and conflict resolution efforts across the continent, working closely with organizations such as the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States. Ghana will pursue policies and initiatives that promote economic development, trade, and investment in Africa, fostering regional integration, infrastructure development, and cross-border cooperation.

We will advocate for inclusive growth strategies, sustainable development practices, and poverty alleviation efforts that benefit all African nations and contribute to the achievement of the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Ghana will continue to play an active role in promoting peace, stability, and security in Africa and beyond, contributing troops to UN peacekeeping missions, supporting conflict prevention and resolution efforts, and facilitating dialogue and reconciliation



Bawumia meets with Kenya President William Ruto at the State House in Nairobi, the day after Ruto's inauguration in 2022. He said afterwards that "we had fruitful discussions on deepening the economic cooperation between Ghana and Kenya." The Kenyan leader visited Accra in early April this year for further talks on trade and diplomacy.

processes.

My government will prioritize efforts to address transnational threats, including terrorism, organized crime, and illicit trafficking, through enhanced regional cooperation, intelligence-sharing, and capacity-building initiatives. We will be a strong voice on the world stage for global justice, equity, and solidarity, advocating for the interests and rights of developing countries, marginalized populations, and vulnerable communities.

Q: What do you think are some of the reasons why socio-economic development in most African nations still lags behind?

A: We can't ignore the fact that many African nations were subjected to centuries of colonial exploitation, which left a legacy of underdevelopment, economic

dependency, and social inequality.

Other factors are weak governance structures and corruption, limited access to education and health care, economic dependency, and structural inequality.

Most African economies remain dependent on the export of raw commodities, which are subject to price volatility and external shocks. This dependence perpetuates structural inequalities, limits economic diversification, and stifles industrialization and technological innovation, hindering sustainable development and poverty-reduction efforts.

Another issue is the infrastructure deficit and digital divide. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and holistic approach that prioritizes good governance, inclusive economic growth, human development, and sustainable development strategies.

By investing in education, healthcare, infrastructure, and technology, fostering entrepreneurship, strengthening institutions, and promoting social inclusion and equity, African nations can overcome the barriers to socio-economic development and unlock their full potential for prosperity and progress.

Q: What do you see as the way forward for Africa's economic emancipation, and where do you see the continent in the next decade?

A: For far too long, external forces and influences have defined Africa, while the continent has had little say in the direction of our own growth and development. We have been told what to do and how to do it, with little regard for our unique histories, cultures, and aspirations.

We must rethink and reimagine our



Bawumia and his wife, Samira, see off Britain's Prince Charles and his wife, Camilla, at the Kotoka International Airport after their five-day visit to Ghana in November 2018. Charles, who became King Charles III in 2022, delivered a landmark speech about the slave trade, which he called an "appalling atrocity."

growth on our own terms, with a clear vision of what we want to achieve and how we want to get there. We must embrace our diversity, creativity, and resilience and chart our own path toward a more prosperous and inclusive future.

At the heart of this vision is the transformative power of technology. We all know that technology is a powerful tool to drive innovation and competitiveness in all sectors of the economy, and we must determine to leverage this tool to its fullest potential.

Africa needs to position itself as ready and capable to be the champion of many changes in the world. Within the next two decades, a confluence of natural factors, especially birthrates, will ensure that one in five people (20% of humanity) will be African! As an African leader, that excites me, but it also poses a challenge, because I see great potential and I want us to make sure we don't miss it this time, like we missed others.

Imagine if all African people are healthy, educated, and productive. Imagine the

economic effect of their aggregate demand and their cultural and creative influence and power. Imagine the influence of African music and art and our general contribution to everything.

I am in leadership because I want to do everything I can to make sure we seize this opportunity to make it a great success. That is why "reimagining Africa's growth on our terms" excites me so much.

Q: How do we seize the space and voice we need, and convert our unique endowments and advantages into the right positioning as a serious global player?

A: I will tell you how. Even today, Africa is an important player, with over 1.4 billion youthful people, plus crucial natural resources, but without the voice to match. I think this is what we should do, and do it for ourselves, no one will do it for us.

First, we have to chart a course to fix our problems on the continent. That will translate into acquiring the voice and space we desire at the global table. So far, our failure

to fix problems at home has made it easy for others to deny us the right voice and place, and it even constitutes an unjustified excuse for others to look down on Africans everywhere. We absolutely and urgently need to fix our local issues.

To do this effectively, Africa must make sure we get it right. For many centuries, Africa has been at the receiving end of other people's ideas and dreams for us.

Yes, the issues are many, but we must not be daunted by how plentiful they are. I believe that pulling the right threads can unravel our problems, like a woven cloth, no matter how complex it is. Focusing on a few key issues at the start and solving them can unravel the whole problem, or at least set us on the path to ultimate solutions.

In all our pursuits, we should be mindful that socio-economic development requires economic growth, which fosters social mobility. Achieving these solves many problems, even if not all. However, economic growth today is greatly furthered by adopting modern technology, without which it is extremely difficult and almost impossible to achieve easily and speedily.

When it comes to reimagining Africa, my imagination simply settles on Africa as an equal with other continents in the management of the affairs of humanity. An Africa which oversees its own issues and destiny and is respected for what it brings to the table, which is a lot!

We should be able to banish the Africa which is called to the table and told what to do, when indeed it is a major provider for everyone else, even though it is not rewarded appropriately. We must strive to banish the Africa which is descended upon by others, dug up everywhere, and the treasures in its bowels ripped out and shipped out raw to power other people's development, who then turn around and treat us as a basket case, only fit for charity.

Q: Six countries in Africa have had military coups in the last two and a half years, with the most recent in Niger and Gabon last summer. What's your take on this trend and the pace of democracy in Africa?

A: The recent surge in military coups across Africa is deeply concerning and reflects underlying governance challenges and democratic vulnerabilities in the region. While Africa has made significant strides in democratization over the past few decades, including increased electoral participation and peaceful transitions of power, the persistence of political instability and authoritarian tendencies highlights the fragility of democratic institutions and



Bawumia with U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris in Accra in March 2023. “I’m very excited about the future of Africa,” she said on the trip. In a speech at the Black Star Square, she also urged “progress in the digital economy.”

norms.

The pace of democracy in Africa is uneven, with some countries making notable progress toward democratic consolidation, while others continue to grapple with governance deficits, electoral irregularities, and human-rights abuses.

To safeguard democracy and promote stability, African nations must prioritize good governance, respect for constitutionalism, rule of law, and civic freedoms, as well as foster inclusive political dialogue, social cohesion, and economic development. International support and solidarity are also crucial in strengthening democratic institutions and promoting democratic governance across the continent.

Q: The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), whose headquarters is located in Accra, marked its third anniversary in January. How well do you feel it is working, and what would you like to see it accomplish?

A: The AfCFTA is the continent’s most ambitious integration initiative. African governments have shown leadership by conceiving and initiating the process and



Bawumia meets French President Emmanuel Macron in Accra in December 2017. It was the first visit by a French president to Ghana since the country gained independence in 1957. “Not only must Africa unite, but Europe and Africa must unite,” Macron told the Ghanaian people. French companies as of 2023 had €1.3 billion (US\$1.41 billion) invested in Ghana.

bringing it to its current stage of signing and ratifying the agreement. This should be recognized and applauded.

But this is not enough. The greatest threat to the AfCFTA is incomplete or inadequate implementation. Like every initiative and intergovernmental agreement, it will make a difference in the lives of African citizens only to the extent its promises and commitments are implemented.

For Africans to derive maximum benefits from it without further delay, it is suggested that state parties of it should go beyond their ratifications and the limited trading under the Guided Trade Initiative, to fully implement the AfCFTA, by trading among themselves in all the goods in their tariff concessions where their rules of origin have been agreed.

Q: What do you think are the critical development issues and challenges for Africa in the areas of trade, investment, and economic policy?

A: Intra-African trade remains low compared to that in other regions, hindering economic growth and development. Barriers such as high tariffs, non-tariff barriers, and inadequate infrastructure (both soft and hard) impede the flow of goods and services within the continent.

Many African countries rely heavily on the export of commodities, making their economies vulnerable to price fluctuations in global markets. Diversifying exports and promoting value addition are crucial for sustainable economic growth.

Africa faces challenges in attracting foreign direct investment due to factors such as political instability, corruption, inadequate infrastructure, and regulatory hurdles. Improving the investment climate through policy reforms and institutional strengthening is essential for attracting and retaining investment.

SMEs in Africa often struggle to access financing, hindering their growth and productivity. Improving their access through innovative financial products and services can help unlock their potential.

Coordinating trade, investment, and economic policies at the national and regional levels is essential for creating the environment for sustainable development. Policy coherence, transparency, and good governance are critical for fostering economic growth and attracting investment.

The business community in Africa lacks adequate information on trade and opportunities in fellow African countries and markets. Both public institutions and private stakeholders should be trained on using the African Trade Observatory to

assess data and information on intra-African trade.

Businesses should promote their goods and services by participating in the intra-Africa trade fair that is being organized on a biannual basis.

Q: Are the multiple currencies in Africa a problem? Would Africa's economy be better off with a single regional currency, like the euro?

A: There are about 42 different local currencies on the continent. The small and fragmented markets in Africa normally use either the euro or the U.S. dollar for international trade.

That brings high transaction costs. The UN Economic Community for Africa has estimated that Africa loses up to \$5 billion every year on currency conversion alone. The ultimate solution can come only from a monetary union, which is further down the road on the African integration journey.

In the interim, Africa should be encouraged to use the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System, "a cross-border, financial market infrastructure enabling payment transactions across Africa," which would lower transaction costs.

Q: In recent years, there has been a growing movement for countries that engaged in the slave trade, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, to pay reparations to Africa and the descendants of slaves. What do you make of the case for reparations?

A: The case for reparations for the descendants of slaves and African nations affected by the transatlantic slave trade is rooted in historical injustices, economic exploitation, and systemic racism that continue to impact communities today.

Reparations represent a moral imperative to acknowledge and address the enduring legacies of slavery, including intergenerational trauma, socioeconomic disparities, and cultural erasure. While the specifics may vary, including financial compensation, educational initiatives, and community development programs, their implementation can serve as a step towards healing, reconciliation, and justice for affected individuals and communities.

Q: A visa-free Africa for Africans would not only energize the tourism sector in various countries but also boost prospects for intracontinental trade. Ghana offers visa-free access to about a third of African nations. Would a Bawumia government expand that to visitors from all African nations?

A: Yes, it is something my government

would do as part of efforts to promote tourism and intracontinental trade and to break down the colonial barriers. By facilitating easier travel within the continent, Ghana could harness the potential of Africa's burgeoning tourism sector and enhance economic cooperation and integration.

Such a move would not only stimulate economic growth, but also foster cultural exchange, regional solidarity, and people-to-people connections across Africa.

Q: Let me bring you back to Ghana. What's your assessment of the state of democracy in Ghana, and how can it be made stronger?

A: Ghana is one of Africa's most stable democracies and serves as a model to even countries outside the continent. The state of our democracy is generally robust, characterized by regular elections, a robust media scene, a vibrant civil society, and respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights.

However, challenges such as political polarization and corruption persist. Ghana must prioritize electoral reforms to enhance transparency and accountability. Promoting good governance, the rule of law, and civic education are essential. Strengthening institutions, including the judiciary and electoral commission, and fostering inclusive political dialogue and participation are also crucial steps towards building a more resilient and inclusive democratic system in Ghana.

Q: You have said in the past that "the challenges we must overcome as a country are too important to let our political differences derail us." But Ghanaian political culture is intensely partisan, from both the NPP and the NDC. What are the major areas of disagreement between the two main parties in the country, and where do you think you can find common ground?

A: You are correct in noting that Ghanaian political culture can be intensely partisan, with robust debates and disagreements between parties. However, it is essential to recognize that despite our political differences, we all share a common goal: the progress and prosperity of Ghana and its people.

While there may be areas of disagreement between the parties, such as on economic policies, governance approaches, or social issues, it is important to approach these differences with respect and a willingness to engage in constructive dialogue.

Finding common ground is crucial for



Bawumia greets supporters at a campaign rally. “We have been heartened by the warm reception and support from people of all walks of life,” he says.

effective governance and national development. There are many areas where parties can collaborate and work together for the greater good such as infrastructure, good governance, fighting corruption, education, and health.

By focusing on areas of common ground and fostering a spirit of cooperation, parties can overcome political differences and work together to address the challenges facing Ghana. Ultimately, our shared commitment to the well-being of the nation should transcend partisan divides.

Q: How is the NPP preparing for the general election in December?

A: We are preparing for the general election by focusing on grass-roots mobilization, policy articulation, and campaign strategy refinement.

Currently, the manifesto committees are busily at work putting together a compelling document to kick off the campaign. The campaign will entail active engagement with voters through rallies, town hall

meetings, and door-to-door campaigns to communicate our achievements and vision for the future.

Additionally, the NPP is strengthening its organizational structure, recruiting volunteers, and training party agents to ensure effective voter turnout and monitoring on Election Day. The party is also fine-tuning its messaging and leveraging digital tools and social-media platforms, to reach a wider audience and mobilize support.

Q: How are people responding to your campaign as you go around the country?

A: The response has been overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic. We have been heartened by the warm reception and support from people from all walks of life

who are eager to help us win the election. From bustling cities to remote villages, we have encountered a sense of optimism and hope for the future, as people recognize our commitment to addressing their needs and aspirations.

They appreciate our track record of delivering tangible results and our vision for a continuously improving Ghana.

We have engaged with citizens from diverse backgrounds, listened to their concerns, and shared our plans for inclusive growth, job creation, and social development in diverse ways, as the actual campaign is yet to hit the ground running. The massive energy and momentum behind our campaign are inspiring, and we are confident that together, we can build a brighter future for all Ghanaians.



Q: What do you think are the most important issues for voters in the December general election, and how does the NPP score on those issues?

A: The most important issues for voters revolve around jobs, roads, the cost of living, health care, and education. Under the NPP government, Ghana has experienced significant economic growth, with initiatives such as the Planting for Food and Jobs program; the One District, One Factory initiative; and the Free Senior High School policy. Additionally, investments in health-care infrastructure and the expansion of the NHIS have enhanced access to services.

The NPP's focus on education, including the provision of free education up to the secondary level and investments in vocational and technical training, has also resonated with voters. Furthermore, the government's commitment to infrastructure development, including road construction and rural electrification projects, has addressed longstanding deficits, improving the quality of life for many Ghanaians.

Q: Your campaign slogan is "it's possible," implying that the NPP can "break the eight" in the December elections and hold the presidency for a third term, a feat no party has

achieved since Ghana returned to democratic rule in 1992. What makes you so confident of succeeding?

A: While I acknowledge the uncertainties of elections, I remain optimistic about our chances of victory in the December polls. The policies and initiatives we have implemented have positively impacted lives, resonating with voters nationwide.

I'm committed to engaging with the electorate, addressing their concerns, and presenting a compelling vision for Ghana's future. I trust in the democratic process, and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve our nation. With hard work and dedication, I believe we can achieve success



and “break the eight.” It’s possible!

Q: What are your final remarks?

A: I want to express my gratitude to the NPP for granting me this valuable opportunity to represent the party in the December polls, and also to thank the Ghanaian people for their unwavering support and engagement.

It has been an incredible journey, filled with meaningful conversations, shared aspirations, and a shared commitment to building a prosperous Ghana. I am humbled by the opportunity to serve our nation and work towards its progress and prosperity. I encourage all citizens to

Bawumia amidst wildly cheering supporters. “While I acknowledge the uncertainties of elections, I remain optimistic about our chances of victory in the December polls. The policies and initiatives we have implemented have positively impacted lives, resonating with voters nationwide,” he says.

exercise their democratic right to vote and to participate actively in shaping the future of our country.

We must all strive towards a peaceful election. Together, let us build a progressive society of possibilities, enterprise, compassion, open opportunities and shared prosperity for every Ghanaian, knowing

that our collective efforts will pave the way for a brighter tomorrow.

I want to assure the Ghanaian electorate that I have prepared myself well for the job. As I have reiterated, I have never been President of Ghana before. I am ready to serve. And to serve well. As the main driver. I am ready to lead. ■