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Speakers

- H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang, Vice President of the Republic of Ghana
- Hon. Akinwumi Adesina, President, African Development Bank (2015-2025); 2017 World Food Prize Laureate; Member, World Food Prize Foundation Council of Advisors
- Amb. Kenneth M. Quinn, President Emeritus, World Food Prize Foundation

Transcript
Amb. Kenneth M. Quinn:

I was so pleased that Donald G was going in front of me. Last time we spoke I opened for him but now what a tough act to follow on this but we'll do our very best. Here's what's gonna happen in this program. I'm gonna be out here and have a conversation with my dear friend, doctor, president Adesina for about 25 minutes. Then, I'm gonna get up and limp off the stage with my cane and he's gonna introduce her excellency, the vice president of Ghana. Then they will have another conversation between them about Africa on there.

So, I want to be sure I do this right for those of you who are not here, youth institute participants. Dr. Akinwumi A. Adesina was the eighth elected president of the African Development Bank. He was first elected in May 2015 and his second term just ended on September 1st, 2025. Some masters and PhD in agricultural economics from Purdue University.

And to give you some idea about what happened during his term as president of the African Development Bank, the only triple A rated financial institution in Africa. He is, of course you heard the World Food Prize recipient in 2017. The SUNHAC Peace Prize recipient in 2019. And I wanna emphasize this point that the $750,000 prize he received from those two awards, he and his wonderful wife Grace have donated to a foundation to uplift African youth and that deserves a round of applause.

I don't know if you talked to Grace before you did that, I assume so.

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

Yes.

Amb. Kenneth M. Quinn:

Yes. I wouldn't have had the nerve to come and tell my wife Leson that I had done that. But. So in addition to those two global awards, he was the African of the decade in 2024, the US Corporate Council of Africa in 2025 Distinguished Economic Leadership Award recipient. He received the very prestigious Awoluu Leadership Prize in his native country of Nigeria, and was Forbes Africa person of the year twice. He was minister of agriculture before leading the bank and vice president of AGRA, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa from 2008 to 2010 where we first met in Accra at the first Agriform.

And before that, he represented the Rockefeller Foundation in Africa. And he met Norman Borlaug there at the Rockefeller Foundation who said, I know you like soccer, football, go and score some goals for Africa. So doctor, President Adesina, you just completed your term. What would you consider to be some of the bank's major achievements during your presidency and how did you blend agriculture into that agenda?

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

Well, you very much Ambassador Quinn. It's such a delight to be here always in Des Moines, Iowa and thank you for making sure the weather is more cooperative this time around than we normally have around here. It's great to see you, Mashal. Thank you for everything, Secretary Vilsack, and thank you for the Ruan family for continuing to support and all the board of advisers. You know, the thing is, thanks for that warm introduction that you gave me.

You know, I'm no more than an instrument in God's hand to do what he wants me to do in life, and there's nothing that makes me happier than just to make sure that my life is used to uplift the life of the poor. Because, you know, I'm a Christian, and I know that God answers the prayer of the poor, and there's nothing more important to me in any religion that you have to make sure that you do that. And so when I actually was elected president of the African Development Bank, I told myself, I couldn't think

of anything more important than to be given the platform, the responsibility. Of course, that comes with the accountability and the resources to go change and transform the continent of my own birth. And so the way to do that I thought was, okay, look, African Development Bank, we know how to do banking.

But how about development? So we will focus on development. And that's what we did. You talk about the high fives of the bank to light up and power Africa, to feed Africa, to industrialize Africa, to integrate Africa, and to improve the quality of life of the people of Africa. Well, you know, it's in those ten years that we've done that, it's actually transformed the lives of 535 million Africans, from energy, 28 million people with access to electricity, agriculture, 102 million people that are food secure because of the work that we did.

You know, you and I talk a lot about infrastructure. You know, you actually told me what happened in Vietnam, that where the roads ended was where everything was good, where there were roads, you know. And we've spent $55 billion on our own infrastructure, including rural infrastructure. We did health because of COVID. We did about 124 million people with access to better health services because of that, and the whole thing goes on.

But the thing that I, we were able to do because of our shareholders, which, of course, includes The United States. You know, we were able to raise the capital of the bank from $93 billion when I started to $318 billion, the highest in the history of the bank. And we also, because we have something called a concessional arm of the bank that's called the African Development Fund, we were able to work with all of our donors to do $8.9 billion which was the highest in the history of the bank. But the thing to focus about is what do you do with the money? I always believed that you can't do Mickey Mouse stuff.

People didn't put you in a public office to do small, small stuff. You gotta do big things, and do them well. And so we deploy capital at scale. Look, ambassador, in 1964, the bank was created. Between that time and 2014, so within that time, which is before I became president in that fifty year period, the bank's total financing was $118 billion.

Well, in the ten years that I was there, because I believe in accelerating stuff, we did $102 billion, which is 86% of all that was done in fifty years before. Wow. Woah. And if

you take a look at what we did also in terms of the bank itself because you can only do so much if your institution is strong. So as you said, we're a triple rated financial institution, the only one in Africa.

And we also, three things I'm very proud of. First and foremost, the bank was rated as the best multilateral development bank in the world. And we were also ranked as the most transparent financial institution in the world. So I'm very proud of that. And coming back to the issue of agriculture, of course, I remember that conversation with Dr. Borlaug as we walked across the street in New York to Rockefeller Foundation. He kind of just hit me on the shoulder and said, Akane, look, do you play football? Of course, I was craggy looking. I don't play football. American football, beat me up and cut me to pieces.

I said, no, I don't. He said, but I'm in soccer. And I said, soccer, I play. He said, well, I want you to go to Africa and score goals for agriculture. And I never forgot that.

That's my inspiration every single day. So when I go to the bank, you know, we put $7 billion into agriculture. We from agricultural technologies, to farmers, to special agro industrial processing zones, young people in agriculture to finance in agriculture, all kinds of things that we did including climate resilience for agriculture. We did that. And some of my guys that did all this great work are here.

Martin Fred Gennay, he's the director of agriculture, he's here, don't know where he's here, and Bert Dunford, he's a great person that did all of this work. So I'm proud of the fact that the work of agriculture, the bank, helped to provide food security within that period for 104 million people. And one of the things I just want to say about that is you and I also talked about the Africa Summit, the Dakar Summit, where we brought together African leaders to actually say, well, look, abnormal things cannot be made normal. It's not normal not to have food. Okay?

And so and the political currency of dealing with food security is political will. You gotta have the political will. We brought them together. We mobilized $72 billion in that. We had more than 34 heads of state and government, 75 ministers.

We have a lot of ministers here today and and and all that just to push agriculture. So I think having someone, I'm the first agricultural person from an agricultural

background to run a multilateral financial institution. I think it puts agriculture on the global stage and I'm very proud of what we've done.

Amb. Kenneth M. Quinn:

Wow. I don't, I don't know if it's possible in the rules to be nominated for a second World Food Prize, what you've done at the bank is worthy of that. But I remember you came and launched the technologies for agricultural transformation of Africa at the World Food Prize in 2017. And what has that meant for providing more innovations?

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

Oh, thank you, ambassador. You were there to launch that. I'm very grateful for that. And also, you know, what we did was technologies to feed the world. They are there.

There's no problem about that. Dr. Borlaug showed us that a long time ago. But what we need is to be able to do things at scale. And I felt that we needed to take all the technology we had at scale. We had a CGI out and so many director generals of the CGC centers are all here.

And I said, look, we have a saying in my language that the mother who has the baby is the one that carries the baby on her back. So if you have great technologies you know, we don't eat research papers. We all like research. I'm a scholar myself. But take those technologies as Norman Borlaug does.

Take them to the farmers and do it at scale. We're gonna hold you, give you the money, we'll hold you accountable for that. And that's what TAT was about. Bringing the best of science and technology innovation together into a global platform that holds the entire CGIAR accountable for taking their technologies to millions and tens of millions of farmers. And, you know, we've put in money into that, about $84 million now, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation gave us about $18 million But here's what has happened with it.

Within that period, nine crops, right, you have 25 million farmers that have access to climate resilient technologies all across those nine crops. Average yields went up about 90% for many of these crops on average. You have produced more than 64

million metric tons of food valued at more than $4.1 billion . So I'm so proud of that. And Martin Fragena and Beth Dunford, if they're here, please give it up to them.

You know, I'm president, but they did his work. They're just incredible people for that. I'm also so proud of the collaborative work with the CGIAR because from ICADA to Summit to IITA, to all of them, they were doing incredible work. Ethiopia, for example, Ambassador. Yeah.

Look, we work with Ikada, with drought tolerant, heat tolerant wheat varieties. And they planted these heat tolerant wheat varieties on roughly about 5,000 hectares in 2008, provided them support by 2022 to '23, they had increased that in low lying areas of Ethiopia to 650,000 hectares cultivated on that. In less than four years, Ethiopia became completely self-sufficient in wheat so we can do it. So you can imagine what really happened. So that's the kind of thing that has happened ever since we actually longed for that.

So it's been a very impactful ride.

Amb. Kenneth M. Quinn:

Wow. Well, you mentioned COVID. And one stumbling block in the middle of your ten year term. In addition, the war in Ukraine, the Russian-Ukraine war, people may not realize had a very significant impact in Africa because of wheat exports that weren't getting there.

How did the bank and how did you deal with that additional stumbling block, roadblock as it were?

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

Yeah. You know, one of you don't control what happens, but you always have to have your response. Right? And so when that situation happened, it was going to create a big global crisis in food, of course, for wheat and for maize. And in the case of Africa, Africa was importing a lot of its wheat, as you said, and maize from Ukraine. And so the prices had gone up by 10 to 45%, and I knew there was gonna be a crisis. So we launched something called the Africa Emergency Food Production Facility to quickly

support African countries to make up for the loss of the wheat and maize they were going to get.

We were losing 30 million metric tons of food just because of that war to Africa. Just imagine what that would be. But we were able again to use the TAT platform, the technology platform. We supported seeds and fertilizers for more than 16 million farmers. We were able to get them across 29 countries to produce a lot of food.

And guess what they did? They produced 46 million metric tons of food. We are losing 30 million. They produced 46 million metric tons of food. That is 16 million more than we lost.

And secondly, the value of that was $19 billion. So it tells me one simple thing, that we can't just be doing an emergency every single day. We have to make this structural in a way that we continue to do. There's no doubt in my mind that Africa's lowest thing for Africa is to feed itself. That's the lowest bar.

The biggest bar for Africa is to feed the world because we have what it takes to be able to do that.

Amb. Kenneth M. Quinn:

Yeah. Wow. So you heard me mention before about the support president Adesina and his wonderful wife, Grace, have done with donating the money he's received to youth. But what else needs to be done to uplift youth and women in Africa?

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

You know, one of the things I want to thank you for and the whole World Food Prize Foundation is what you do for the youth across because young people are not the future. We keep saying they're the future. They are the present. Just look at the demographic all around. So whatever we have to do, we must prioritize them.

In the case of Africa, we have roughly 75% of the population of Africa below the age of 35. If that's not telling you that they are today, what else is it going to tell you that they are there today? But here's the problem. Most of those don't have jobs. You have 11 to 12 million of them entering labor markets every single year.

They don't get more than 3 to 4 million jobs. So that's a huge labor gap there. But personally, as president of the bank, I told myself this. Look. We cannot have a situation where the demographic advantage of Africa becomes a negative externality to the rest of the world.

I don't believe that the future of Africa is utilized in The United States Of America. I go to school here, it's great to be here, all of that. It doesn't lie in Europe or anywhere else. It must lie in Africa growing well, robustly, equitably, and able to create a huge amount of high quality jobs for young people. And so what I did when I got to the bank is that we launched what's called Jobs for Youth in Africa.

We set a big target for ourselves, that we will have 25 million young people that we're going to create jobs for, that we will also have 50 million young people that we are going to upgrade their skills. And so we went to work across different sectors. Well, we just did the bank just did an independent evaluation of all of those investments. You know, we put in $7 billion. We did more than a thousand and two operations just focusing on young people in terms of employment.

And guess what they found? They found that those operations will create 19 million jobs for the young people. 6 million will be for direct, and the rest of it will be for indirect jobs. We also know that we are in a digital world. And so we launched a digital program called Coding for Employment so that we can have more literate and more digitally literate young people in Africa.

In the case of agriculture, we launched a program called Enable Youth for Agriculture, which is to train young people with the right skills, access to technology, access to information, and agribusiness incubation facilities for them to turn their ideas into great businesses. And I'm very proud of the fact, you know, my Vice President then was here, you know, Bernd Dunford, who actually led this particular work. We were able to support these young people. We did about $640 million in operations in about 28 countries for 100,000 young people that are entrepreneurs today because of that work. And the last thing I want to say is that as a young person, when you walk into a bank in Africa, you see somebody like me with a bow tie or whatever.

They ask you, you're 24 years old, they ask you, have you paid your tax receipt for the last forty years? You can't, which means that what I'm saying is the financial ecosystems are not designed for young people. I've got to really realize young people are not risks. If we don't put our capital at risk behind them, the greatest risk we would have taken is that, because it will lead to social, economic, and political crisis for us. So we launched something called the Youth Entrepreneurship Investment Banks.

These are all banks just set up only for young people in Africa because I really believe that. I've never seen a young person that wants to be poor, that doesn't want to succeed, but we got to make sure they have wind behind their sails and put that money at risk and support them and that we are doing at the bank while I was there.

Amb. Kenneth M. Quinn:

Okay. So there were going to be 10 trillion people on our planet in about 25 years, probably a billion in Africa. What do you see for the World Food Prize, which has been such a marvelous platform for you for the last ten years. What role can the World Food Prize play in looking at how we're going to feed the world?

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

You know, right here at the World Food Prize, there's a spirit here. I was just giving a short interview that I feel I was asked, what do you feel when you come to the welfare prize? I said, I feel the spirit of Norman Borlaug here. Now, this is where we all get energized, focused on the big agenda that we still have to do, which is to make sure that we have a hunger free world. And so when the dialogues are happening on global agriculture, whether it's from technologies to innovations, whether it's on institutional frameworks or policy frameworks or infrastructure or financing, on how we are going to deal with this thing globally, It has to be happening here.

This, after all, is the World Food Price. And so I really believe that what we should try to be looking at is, you know, I want to make sure that the presidents of all multilateral development banks are here every single year. You know, last year, I brought in the president of the World Bank here. We were able to have him here. But I think it's not for them to be saying, oh, let me think about what I'm gonna go to war for price.

No. The biggest thing in the world is how we're gonna feed those 10 trillion people. And so I wanna make sure that we work together with ambassador, with Mashal, and all the advisory group to see how we can make sure that this becomes the pivotal center of how we think about how do we finance global agriculture, what kind of policies do we have to do, And I'll also bring in political leaders, and we're delighted that the vice president of Ghana is here. We've had a number of heads of state. We want more of them so we can have a political compact on commitment to actually ending global hunger.

And so one of the things that I have in mind is how we finance global agriculture. As president of the bank, I work very hard to make sure that the special drawing rights of the IMF were going to be rechanneled to multilateral development banks. I won't get into the details, but what it really means is that every single dollar that you actually rechannel to the multilateral developing banks, because we are triple A rated financial institutions, we can leverage that up to eight times. And so in speaking with President Lula, and also my friend, president of Inter American Development Bank, we work on it together. We said, why don't we look at the global alliance against hunger, right, and use the special growing rights leverage?

A $20 billion gave us $160 billion and we focused that on agriculture all around the world. So I really want to say thank you for all the great work that you do, Mashal, Ambassador, Vilsack, and everybody else. But I think we want this place to be the place in which commitments are made about ending that global hunger and that our accountability systems are developed to make sure that gets done.

Amb. Kenneth M. Quinn:

I think we all can get behind that. Yeah. 2017 for your symposium, the theme was the road out of poverty. 2019, my last symposium when you were here, and spoke was peace through agriculture, Norman Borlaug. All the things you've heard people talk about, but we have to have peace in the world.

And that any thoughts you have on that theme to close out our brief interview here?

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

Well, you know, I mean, the thing is, you know, we need to have peace in the world. You know, one of the things that Norman Borlaug did was he worked with everybody. Doesn't matter what you believed. He didn't care about whether you are democrat or republican, whatever country you are, whatever. That just God didn't make stomachs to be empty and he wanted to be fed.

So we have to actually build that alliance, bridges around the world to make sure we can use agriculture to bring peace to our world regardless of the positions that we have.

Amb. Kenneth M. Quinn:

Let's have one round of applause for the most dynamic, energized, visionary leader I know in the world today, president Akinwumi Adesina.

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you, ambassador.

Amb. Kenneth M. Quinn:

As promised, I'm gonna exit stage left, and you'll take over and introduce

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

And I'll link to the other side. Alright. I'll join. Thank you, ambassador. Thank you.

Thank you very much, ambassador. Please help me thank the ambassador. He's a great mentor of mine and a great supporter of mine. I'm grateful to him. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I'm delighted and honored to introduce our special guest of honor today, the Vice President of The Republic Of Ghana, our excellency, Professor Nana Jane Opoku Agyemang.

She is a distinguished scholar, an academic, and a university administrator. Professor Opoku Agyemang holds a BA Honorary Degree in French and English, a diploma in education from the University of Cape Coast, a diploma in advanced studies in French from University of Dakar I don't know whether we are going to do the

interview today in French, now I have to get ready. A master's and PhD in literature from York University in Toronto, Canada. She was twice a Fullbright scholar. She was the first woman to hold the position of vice chancellor in Ghana, leading the University of Cape Town from 2008 to 2012. She was the Chancellor of the Women's University in Africa in Harare, Zimbabwe from 2018 to 2024.

She is the immediate past president of the Forum for African Women Educationalists and the chairperson of its board. She served as Minister of Education in Ghana from 2013 to 2017, And she's a recipient of several national and international awards, including the Order of the Order of Volta, the Doctor of Letters from University of Cape Coast, Doctor of Humane Letters from Grand Valley University, Michigan, and Doctor of Humane Letters from Westin Salem State University, and doctor of laws from University of Westin, these are several other words. Her excellency, vice president, professor Nana Jane Opoku Agyeman is a life fellow of the Commonwealth of Learning and a fellow of the Ghana Academy of Sciences. Her excellency will start off by delivering a 10 Aikido speech, and after that, we will have a fireside chat. And I don't know, Mashal, whether we have French translation just in case you decide to do this with me in French.

I don't know. But anyway, ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming her excellency, professor Nana Jane Opoku Agiamang, vice president of The Republic Of Ghana.

Narrator:

Please welcome the vice president of The Republic Of Ghana, her excellency Jane Nana Opoku Agiamang.

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

Thank you very much, Dr. Adesina, who settled those many wests and now has disappeared. Your excellencies, esteemed leaders, distinguished laureates, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honor for me to join you at the Norman Borlaug International Dialogue in the home state of a man whose life ignited transformation across continents and whose quiet resolve led to hope, justice, and sustenance for generations. I know his family is here, and I want to acknowledge them too. We recall

his legacy not only as the father of the green revolution, but as a friend and partner who believed in scientists, students, farmers.

His conviction that no child should go to bed hungry and that science, innovation and solidarity could be woven into an unbreakable safety net for humanity remains valid. We must recall that legacy and look ahead to the promises yet to be fulfilled and the opportunities we must seize together. Agriculture remains central to Ghana's identity and economy. It employs nearly two in five Ghanaians and contributes over a fifth of our national output. As a country, we need to ensure a high level of quality for everyone, especially for our farmers.

But beneath these numbers lie challenges. These include low productivity of staple crops, high post harvest losses, inadequate processing and storage, irrigation and rural infrastructure, limited access to credit and markets, and an overreliance on food imports. Ghana believes that she should be able to grow nearly all the food she consumes, and that Ghana has little excuse for spending over 2 trillion US dollars annually on food imports alone. Life in the tropics implies a boom for agriculture. Our value chains hold tremendous potential, requiring deeper integration, modernization, partnerships, and collaborations.

Ghana's strategic reforms in agriculture hinge on greater resilience, innovation, equity, governance across production systems, nutrition and trade. The aim is to move from a narrow focus to a broader transformation that unites farmers, entrepreneurs, governments, institutions to forge sustainable, inclusive agri food systems. What are the major objectives we are using now? The FEED Ghana programme is its excellency president John Mahama's flagship initiative to accelerate transformation in a coordinated market driven manner. It spans multiple commodity chains, value chains that are vital for food security, industrialization and job creation.

And the major three no, about five areas include grains and legumes, vegetables, starchy staples, tree crops, livestock. Although 22 value chains receive attention under the feed Ghana program, the five are among the top strategic drivers. The programme is designed to overcome systemic barriers to infrastructure, weak linkages, limited finance, climate vulnerability by investing in irrigation, seeds, digital tools, cooperatives, agro industrial zones and market access. This is both a plan and a promise to our farmers, consumers and investors. Complementing Feed Ghana is our

Grow24 program, which is part of Ghana's broader twenty four hour economy strategy.

Grow24 is intended to modernize agriculture, mechanise value chains, increase productivity, and link agri-businesses to export and domestic markets. We aim for food self sufficiency, rural job creation, climate resilience, and stronger agro manufacturing. Agricultural uncertainties driven by climate shocks, market disruptions, and supply chain fragility demand robust risk management. To this end, Ghana in collaboration with a platform for agricultural risk management is structuring the Ghana Agricultural Risk Management Strategy. This is a five year initiative which focuses on poultry, tomato and maize value chains in selected regions, seeking to build inclusive, climate adaptive and financially sustainable value chains, which we see as the foundation for long term resilience.

Some of our greatest untapped assets lie in roots and tubers: cassava, yam, sweet potato, taro and potato. These crops are climate resilient, staple in diets and suited to varying conditions. They represent an extraordinary opportunity for raising yields through better varieties, mechanization, agronomic innovation and post harvest systems, transforming roots and tubers from subsistence staples into engines of economic growth. Now, ladies and gentlemen, this shift is vital, especially as many African nations import large quantities of cereals even when opportunities to invest in resilient local crops remain. This imbalance must change.

Your excellencies, no transformation is complete without equity. Women make up over half of Ghana's agricultural workforce. Yet too many lack access to credits, to land, to technology, even to training. And this is why our forthcoming Women's Development Bank and inclusive policies are targeting these inequities. We all know that when women prosper, families and nations flourish.

Likewise, our determined, hardworking and forward looking youth are ready to lead the next innovations. We are actively investing in youth led agri tech start ups, mechanization centers and digital platforms that connect farmers to markets. We are curbing inefficiencies by reducing post harvest losses, improving storage and logistics, and fostering agro-processing. Through our growing network of processing hubs, we are converting cocoa to chocolate, cassava to starch and maize to fortified goods and other derivatives. This vertical integration captures value, supports nutrition, and creates sustained jobs.

The African Continental Free Trade Area headquartered in Accra offers a transformative opportunity to link our farmers and agribusinesses across borders. By building regional value chains, Africa can feed herself, reduce dependency on imports, and empower millions of youth and women across the continent. Ladies and gentlemen, Doctor. Borlaug reminded us that the fight against hunger is not a sprint, It is a relay. Each generation must take the bottom, run its part, and hand it with conviction.

Ghana is deeply committed to running her leg of this race, but she cannot run it alone. I join the minister for AGRIC to invite all our partners, investors, governments, foundations, universities, development banks to join us. Partner with us for truly beneficial relationships. There are over 50 countries and institutions with similar aims in this room alone. So we know this is encouraging and that we can do it.

Your excellencies, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, let this generation be defined not by our deficits, but by our resolve. Let history record that under our stewardship, Africa did not merely survive hunger. It became a net exporter of food, innovation, hope, and peace. And we all know that we can. Thank you very much for your time.

Narrator:

Please welcome back Doctor. Akunwumi Adashina.

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

Thank you. You very much, your excellency, for those great remarks. I I just heard that you said Africa has to be net exporter to the world, and I think with 65% of the remaining uncultivated are able land left to feed 10 billion people in the world being in Africa, clearly, what Africa does with agriculture will determine the future of food security in the world. But let's talk about Ghana. I was there for your inauguration, president Mahava.

He was resplendent in his yellow and all his k-j where you were there as well. And he made this statement, which actually caught my attention. He said, Today we celebrate a new administration and herald an unprecedented era of opportunity and

transformation with Nana Jane Opoku Aguemeng by my side. And he gesticulated to make sure that there was a big partnership. We are poised to embark on a journey of progress and inclusivity and united in our vision for a more prosperous Ghana.

Madam vice president, that prosperous Ghana is happening right in front of us. Since you took over the economic resurgence of the country has been very, very strong, the Cedi actually, ladies and gentlemen, was actually ranked as the best performing currency in the world this year. So please give it up to them for that. And so I just wanted to ask if you could share with us what are some of those key areas of your government policies to drive this inclusivity and progress and the remarkable great work that you and president Muhammad are doing.

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

Alright. Thank you very much for this moment and again to greet everybody who is here. I want to recognize that you came to an inauguration. I want to thank you for that too. And again, I also want to thank you for the role you played in bringing about the women's university in Africa.

We are very grateful about that. Now coming to your question, our larger aim is to ensure that we are building a fair, strong, inclusive economy that works for everyone. So that's a broader game. Now coming down to the objectives, we are looking at creating jobs. You know, we have a high birth rate, we have a youthful bulge.

That's the reality and we are dealing with it. So creating jobs is very important for us. Apart from that, we are also ensuring that we are supporting our small, medium, large scale businesses. That is also very, very critical for us, ensuring that we are stabilizing our economy. All of these form part of the building blocks of how we are running our economy now.

We can go into each of them. In terms of creating jobs, we are looking at our twenty four hour economy.

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

You know? How does that work? The twenty four hour economy.

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

This is how it works.

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

People have got to sleep. Right? But you don't want them sleeping, but how does it work?

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

You see, we are not saying that the same set of people should be working twenty four hours. No. We are not machines. Excuse me. So what we are saying is that at the end of the day, why do you keep one set of ships instead of three, instead of two?

When you have so many young people who can work. So a very strong pillar for us is modernizing agriculture. Okay? If you go into manufacturing, for example, you don't have to close everything because it's 5PM. Another set can work in the evening, as is done elsewhere.

That way you don't export jobs away from your continent, so you don't frustrate the youth who are finding their way in all kinds of ways instead of giving them something meaningful that you know they are capable of doing. So the twenty four hour economy, that is one way in which it works. And you also create other ways in which you modernize agriculture, adding value, you know, can go into the details later. And all of these will also raise your income level. If for example, you decide and you should decide to become fully self-sufficient.

As I said, we live in the tropics and we see relative reasons why we cannot grow most of our food and process and store and all of that. And given the import, the support that makes this possible, then you are also turning things around and you are becoming less and less dependent. There are other things you depend on others, we know that. But you need to pay attention to what you can do. And you know it takes me back to my life on the campus as vice chancellor.

When I used to pose those questions to my students, you know, why are we here? What are our strengths? What can we do? Why are we always running to the government for support? What can we create on our own?

And we're able to make a little bit of progress. So these are some of the larger areas. And then talking about stabilizing our currency and all of that, you know, you have to be very, very intentional on what you're spending your resources on. What are your needs? Where should your money go?

What are your priorities? The priorities will be a million but you can prioritize out of the priorities and ensure that what you are picking now can resonate to the others. So then with a little bit of money, you can achieve more. You have to ask yourself, what have you been spending money on, and what has been the outcome?

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

If I might just come in, you know, one of the things you said about industrialization, that twenty four hour economy is great. But to do that, you need two critical things. You need power, energy, which I know you're working on, but also infrastructure. Can you share some of your thoughts on board energy? And then I say this because I know your government has this big push on infrastructure, a $10 billion push, big push on infrastructure.

Can you share some of those with us?

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

Yes. Let's just even limit ourselves to agriculture. In terms of infrastructure, you need to think about good roads. If there's only good roads for transportation, that's going to be very important. Infrastructure, you're also going to think of irrigation.

That's going to be very, very important for you. You're going to think of services for the farmers. They all form part of the larger definition of the infrastructure. So you're going to have to think of all of them to ensure that, as you know, Ghana is not a huge country. Okay?

We are not so big and yet we have to be. We can become more efficient than we have been so far. And I'm not saying that others didn't do well. That's not what it is. What it is now is where you are at and how you can push things forward. So constructing the roads is very important for us.

And when you do the roads, it's not just the transportation, you are also taking care of even health. And many people have to move from one space to the other, and the roads are not good. You can see that the roads can improve the quality of health. Part of the infrastructure and then limiting ourselves to agriculture is also about giving good health facilities to the farmers, good schools, and ensuring that they have good returns for their efforts. You know, some of us don't think, I mean consider how much energy, how many man hours goes into the production of one sack of cocoa?

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

Yeah. I'll come back to cocoa.

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

Okay. We can go into that later. But I'm just talking about the larger picture of all these components that must go into the infrastructure.

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

But I want to ask a little bit more on the energy question because I know president Muhammad is very big on this issue. Yes. And so what are you doing there? Because we help this thing, myself, president of the World Bank, when I was president of the African Development Bank. We launched this thing called Mission 300, which is to connect 300 million Africans to electricity and Ghana signed on for the Ghana compact.

So just share with us a little bit about your work on energy because that's

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

Alright.

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

Fundamental to Yes. Civilization.

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

By all means, we used to have hydro. Mhmm. We served as well for a while. In terms of climate shocks, we are still investing in solar which is a huge source of energy for us. As I said, we live in the tropics.

So there's a lot of investment in energy. But we're also looking at other sources of energy and an ex energy mix. Okay, we have the Atwaubo gas plant, for example, and we are having plans to expand those to ensure that there are other sources of energy that we can use. And you are so right, even when you're talking about, let's say, factories, you need the energy. So if, for example, you can have a system where people who don't use so much energy, let's say in the domestic area, can be offloaded onto solar.

Then perhaps the ACG and so on can go into the industrial areas so that people don't lack the resource they need for processing or for manufacturing

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

Thank you. That's great. Now, let's get back to agriculture. So I heard you talking about your FEED Ghana program and also the Agriculture for Economic Transformation. I listened to the budget.

They gave a billion dollars. I wish it was a billion dollars. A billion Cedi for that particular program. Yes. And you mentioned in your talk about infrastructure with Delfitte, but you talk about irrigation and mechanization as a key part of that. Can you share with us what you're trying to do? Because these are areas that are important to getting young people into agriculture.

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

Yes, you're right. Irrigation is very important. Yes, we have rainfalls, we have good rainfall, but we also know that we are challenged with the changes in the

atmosphere called What was the actual name for it? The shortfall in rainfall, the unpredictability of the rainfall patterns and so on. So, you need to find other ways in which you can generate the much needed resource.

We are looking, for example, along the banks of the Volta And designing the irrigations along that line to feed agricultural produce, and that is very, very important for us. So that is one we know. I was looking at climate change.

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

Yeah.

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

And that is one way in which we are ensuring that we'll have enough food. Now, the feed Ghana is about ensuring that we can feed ourselves. And we think that we ought to be able to do that as much as we can. And as I said, there are so many other areas you need to partner with others or even import. But we are looking at what we can do.

Mhmm. You know, which are the food items that we can grow without necessarily importing them. Yeah. That is also how it fits into job creation, and it also fits into other areas in which we can preserve food.

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

You know, I love chocolates, and I'm sure so many people here love chocolates as well. But chocolates come from cocoa. And when you take a look at it, Africa produces 75% of the cocoa in the world, but only accounts for 2-5% of the market share of cocoa of processed cocoa into chocolates. So I went one time, your excellency, to a country that I will not name, and I bought this pack of chocolates. The store is saying, we've been making this since 1863.

And the shop owner asked me, what do you think of our chocolate? I said Africa has been doing a dumb thing since 1863. How can it be that you because between you and Cote D'Ivoire, you account for more than 60 something percent of the cocoa production. What are you doing to make sure your farmers actually get more value

by developing the cocoa industry there so that you can actually get it? Because today, that market is anything between $130 billion to $170 billion a year.

Africa gets no more than $1.9 billion of that market. What can you do, or what are you planning to do in modernizing and also industrializing your cocoa sector for chocolates and other other derivatives as well?

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

Actually, by the way you've posed the question, you've already answered it for us. So we recognize that we've been doing something that's not working. We recognize that growing the cocoa, harvesting it, drying it, putting it in jute sacks and shipping them abroad is not helping us. And the other thing also is that when you look at the export of raw beans, the tariffs are very very low. Sometimes they are non-existent when you process

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

Tariff escalation problem.

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

Thank you very much. So why keep on doing the same thing when you know that you are not going to get different results? So now, in creating our apps for processing, we are looking at processing more of our cocoa than we've been doing. And it's not just-

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

How much are you reading now?

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

Now we do I think we do less than, is it 500 tons or so? I don't have the actual figure, but I know that we are doing well. We want to go even higher and get and do about 50% of all our exports. Yeah.

That that I have right. And so it's not just grinding, it's also processing into other items. For example, into pharmaceuticals, into other cocoa derivatives, into cosmetics, into food items. What he said is that we ought to do more than create the joy we all enjoy. We all, you know, take that we all expect out of cocoa.

And consider those who are producing all of this. How about the quality of life they have been leading all these centuries? '18 and whatever, you know, the dates that you just mentioned. And how can they continue living in this environment all this time? So if you want to answer the question, then you have to do things differently.

You ought to add value. And we also know that that is where the revenue lies. It doesn't lie so much at the raw materials. It lies where you add value through processing, through marketing, through sharing, through research, through all these other variables that will allow you to get more value for your produce. You know, thinking of the cosmetics, all kinds of things, from soap to body, all kinds of things

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

So how are you transforming the cocoa board of Ghana to being able to do that?

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

Yes. So the cocoa board now has different KPIs than it used to have once upon a time. In where the investment should be, and where we expect different results from what you've been having. And the support that they need to make that happen.

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

Yeah, sorry, your excellency. I was going to say that we supported the cocoa board with ourselves and Credit Suisse with about $600 million in the past. One of the big problems was just lack of the warehouses because everybody in Ghana and Kodava are selling the beans at the same time. Being able to store that. So what can we do, or what needs to be done to build that infrastructure to allow you to store more of your beans?

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

Yes, you're right. So building silos will be very important. Supporting in proper drying of the beans to ensure that they have long shelf lives. All of these are going to be very important so that you can process as and when you need to feed the market that's going to buy your produce. So storage is very important for us.

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

Thank you, excellency. Just on finance in Asia, I asked you if I saw you were talking about the issue of finance. Former credit for agriculture is very low in Ghana, less than 15% of former credit. What's being done to improve access to affordable financing for farmers and agroprocessors and everybody along the value chain, if you can just briefly share that before we move towards the closure.

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

Okay. Generally, I don't know why, but the feeling is that lending to Africa generally is high risk. And because of that, we tend to pay such high interest, keeping us forever poor. Now when they are lending to farmers, it becomes even more risky. So the government must step in.

The government must find ways in which it can lend to farmers at affordable rates and support them to increase their yields through all these other mechanisms, some of which we've talked about, so that they are able to pay back. Okay. So it becomes part of the collaboration that we are talking about, and part of the financial arrangements that we think must happen to support our farmers, and small scale businesses and so on.

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

One of the things that we have supported is something called GISAL, which is Ghana Incentive Based Risk Challenging for Agricultural Lending. I just want to say that it's actually led by a citizen of your country, Ofuri Mante, he's somewhere in this hall. But it works so well, it derisks lending by the banks to agriculture. And in fact, the loss rate is less than 1%. So I think agriculture is not as risky as many people make it, if you know exactly what to do.

As we try to wind down your excellency, I want to touch back on the nation's first female vice president. And you were talking about the issue of women and agriculture in your keynote speech. Women make 52% of the labor force, but they produce 70% of the food in Ghana. And so when we're talking about the issue of feed Ghana, it's actually women feeding Ghana.

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

Thank you very much.

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

Yeah. So what are you going to do or planning to do as the first female vice president to make sure that women get access to all that they need to be able to feed Ghana.

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

Okay, yes, you are right. We are at the heart of the food chain in Ghana. In terms of the whole line from planting, harvesting, processing, we are there. But we have all kinds of obstacles. One of them is even access to land is a problem.

Access to finance is a problem. Access to training even, is a problem. So when we look at our farmer services, where we are supporting the farmers generally with the imports that they need. We are trying to prioritize the needs of women through that mechanism. For example, if I'm a woman farmer and I grow rice, and I'm not going to know which bank really is going to give me the money to go and buy tractors or combine harvesters.

So the government will have to buy those equipment, leave them at the center, I can just go and rent them and use them and send them back.

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

Tractor hiring services.

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

Yeah. Because, you know, even if I have the money to buy it, it means I'm investing so much money into this machine that I'll use only at a certain time in the year. You see? And I'm not the mechanic. I may not even know how to drive it. I wouldn't even know whether it's breaking down or not.

It shouldn't be my job. I will play to my strength. And the farming center will have the mechanics and, you know, whatever that I need to help me to harvest my-

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

And the service all that by themselves.

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

Yeah. Yes. So that is one of the ways in which you can support the farmers, and the women farmers. And we know you see, I said that when the the the women thrive-

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

nations flourish.

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

It's very important. And we ought to take it very, very seriously. So coming to farmers, even if she has a small piece of land, for me, it doesn't matter how big. Whether it's a, you know, it's a plantation, it's fine. If it's not a plantation, it's even this space that we are sitting on. I think that person still deserves the support she needs. If all she can do is to feed her family, that is something.

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

You know, we have a program which we also have in Ghana, somebody by the bank, that's called for Affirmative Action for Financing Women in Africa. And it has supported more than 25,000 women to have access to finance. Ofurimante is also here. It supported 195 financial institutions in 45 countries, but are providing lending to women. But I want to just say that women pay back on their loans about 99%.

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

See? So why don't we give them any?

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

The remaining 1% may be when they're going to pay their husband, but you don't have to pay everything. The women are actually bankable is what I'm saying. They are bankable in Africa. Just to close, Your Excellency. You are the nation's first said vice president.

As you look to the future of Ghana, you've got lots of investors here in other places that you go and you speak. What will you say that will attract people, investors, to come to Ghana to invest in agriculture and agribusiness?

H.E. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang:

Alright. I just want to say that Ghana is open for business. My president has said so, especially during his participation in the recent United Nations General Assembly. We are open to business. We are open to collaborations.

We are open to partnerships that are long lasting, partnerships that are truly, mutually beneficial. And we think this is very, very important. We are open to the partnership that leaves that creates a win-win situation. We want us to move away from the other partnerships in the past that didn't serve us as well as they should. We are also open to putting our mechanisms at the disposal of our partners in all kinds of ways to ensure that when everything is said and done, so much more has been done than said.

So you are open. Ghana has a good workforce. We have a determined youth. We have women who are forward looking and who are hard working, and we also have hospitable people. Ghana is a fine place to be, and I know that you'll be happy just to come and work with us.

Hon. Akinwumi Adesina:

And there's KK and all of that, so it's fantastic. Ladies and gentlemen, please thank our excellency, Vice President of Ghana, Professor Nana Jane Popoko Agime. Thank you very much for joining us.