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At the African Diaspora Network — Washington, D.C.

Thursday, September 17, 2026.

Theme: Beyond Remittances: Harnessing Diaspora Capital, Expertise and Networks for Africa's Future

Distinguished guests, Fellow Ambassadors and members of the Diplomatic Corps, Policymakers and development partners, Philanthropists, investors and entrepreneurs, Leaders of the African Diaspora, Ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening.

It is a great honour to join you this evening as we celebrate an important milestone in the life of the African Diaspora Network—the establishment of its first permanent office here in Washington, D.C.

Let me congratulate the African Diaspora Network on this achievement. I believe the opening of this office is more than an institutional expansion. It is a statement. It is a statement that the African Diaspora must no longer be regarded merely as a source of remittances, but as a strategic constituency in Africa's development and transformation. And that is a conversation in which Ghana has a particular interest.

Ladies & Gentlemen:

Africa's Diaspora Is More Than Money

For many years, our discussion of the African Diaspora has understandably focused on remittances. And of course, remittances matter. They support families. They pay school fees. They finance healthcare. They sustain households and communities.

But we must ask ourselves a larger question:

What if we were to move from simply transferring money to transferring opportunity? What if we moved from remittances to investment? From investment to enterprise? From enterprise to job creation? From individual expertise to institutional knowledge? From individual networks to strategic global partnerships? And from diaspora participation to genuine diaspora leadership in Africa's transformation?

That, in my view, is where the conversation must now go. The African Diaspora possesses something much larger than financial capital. It possesses human capital, intellectual capital, entrepreneurial capital, technological capital, social capital and global networks.

There are African doctors, engineers, scientists, academics, financiers, lawyers, entrepreneurs, technology specialists, investors, creatives and public policy experts making extraordinary contributions around the world.

The question before Africa is not whether this capacity exists. It does. The question is whether we have created the structures, incentives and confidence necessary to connect that capacity systematically to Africa's development.

Ladies & Gentlemen:

Ghana's Approach

Ghana has long recognised the importance of engaging its citizens abroad. Our Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintains a dedicated Diaspora Affairs function whose responsibilities include encouraging the participation of Ghanaians abroad in socio-economic development, identifying professionals whose expertise can contribute to national development, and strengthening relationships with diaspora networks.

But I believe we must go further.

Our objective should be to transform diaspora engagement from occasional interaction into a development architecture. And this is the thinking behind an important initiative that Ghana has recently advanced:

Region-17.

We speak of Ghana's sixteen administrative regions. But there is another Ghana—Ghanaians living, working and succeeding beyond our territorial borders.

Region-17 seeks to recognise this reality and to mobilise the capital, expertise, ideas, relationships and networks of Ghanaians abroad as a strategic resource for national transformation. It is not about creating another geographical region. It is about creating a developmental platform. A platform through which the Ghanaian abroad can move from being an observer of Ghana's development to becoming an active participant in it.

From Diaspora Engagement to Diaspora Partnership

For me, this distinction is important. Diaspora engagement should not mean that government calls upon our citizens abroad only when it needs money.

It should mean that we ask:

What can we build together?

What companies can we establish?

What technologies can we transfer?

What businesses can we scale?

What hospitals can we strengthen?

What universities can we connect?

What young entrepreneurs can we mentor?

What African companies can gain access to global markets through diaspora networks?

What investments can be structured to generate sustainable returns while creating jobs at home?

And perhaps most importantly:

How do we create an Africa in which the African Diaspora sees not only a responsibility to contribute, but an opportunity to participate, invest and prosper?

That is the conversation we need to have.

The Diaspora as a Development Partner

I therefore believe that the African Diaspora should be treated as a development partner—not simply a development beneficiary or financier.

We need to move from a transactional relationship to a strategic partnership.

Governments must provide an enabling environment.

The private sector must identify investable opportunities.

Financial institutions must develop appropriate diaspora investment products.

Universities and research institutions must build knowledge partnerships.

Technology companies must facilitate innovation and digital connectivity.

And diaspora organisations must help aggregate fragmented individual capacity into collective action.

This is where organisations such as the African Diaspora Network become particularly important. Because no single government, institution or individual can do this alone.

The American Context

Here in the United States, we see every day what is possible when talent, capital, institutions and networks come together. The African Diaspora in America occupies an extraordinary position. It is connected simultaneously to Africa and to one of the world's most dynamic centres of capital, innovation, research and entrepreneurship. That creates a unique bridge. And that bridge can be used to facilitate not merely the movement of money, but the movement of ideas, technology, skills, markets and opportunity.

This is why I believe Washington, D.C. is an appropriate place for ADN to establish its permanent presence. Washington is not only a centre of government and diplomacy. It is also a centre of ideas, international development, philanthropy, policy, finance and global influence. ADN can therefore help build a platform where these different communities meet around a common proposition:

Africa's development must increasingly be shaped by Africans—on the continent and across the world.

From Individual Success to Collective Transformation

But there is another issue we must confront. The success of individual Africans abroad is important, but individual success alone will not transform Africa. We must find ways of converting individual achievement into collective impact.

Imagine, for example, if African professionals across the United States could collectively mentor thousands of young Africans.

Imagine if African-American and African diaspora investors could systematically identify viable businesses in Africa and provide patient capital.

Imagine if African scientists abroad were connected to laboratories and universities on the continent.

Imagine if technology professionals could help African governments and businesses leapfrog outdated systems.

Imagine if diaspora networks could open African businesses to global markets.

Imagine if every successful African abroad saw themselves not simply as someone who had left Africa, but as part of a global African ecosystem.

That is the transformation we should seek.

The Role of Governments

Governments, however, must also earn the confidence of the Diaspora. We cannot ask our citizens abroad to invest if they do not have confidence in the investment environment. We must strengthen transparency. We must improve the ease of doing business. We must protect investments. We must reduce unnecessary bureaucracy. We must provide reliable information. We must make it easier for diaspora investors to understand where opportunities exist and how to access them. And we must recognise that diaspora investors are investors. They should not be expected to invest simply because they are patriotic. Patriotism may open the door; confidence and sound economics must keep it open.

That is an important principle.

A New Social Contract

Ultimately, I believe Africa needs a new social contract with its Diaspora.

That contract should say:

You have not been forgotten. Your knowledge matters. Your experience matters. Your networks matter. Your capital matters. Your ideas matter. Your identity matters. But beyond all of these, your partnership matters.

And the responsibility does not belong only to governments. The Diaspora itself must also organise.

We must move beyond fragmented initiatives and build stronger platforms for collective action.

We must identify measurable projects. We must build credible investment vehicles. We must establish knowledge networks. We must mentor the next generation. We must create partnerships that survive political cycles. And we must measure success not by the number of conferences we hold, but by the number of businesses created, jobs generated, technologies transferred, young people trained, investments mobilised and communities transformed.

A Ghanaian Proposition for an African Conversation

This is why I see Region-17 not merely as a Ghanaian initiative, but as part of a much larger African conversation. Every African country has a Region-17. Perhaps the names will be different. The institutional arrangements will be different. But the underlying reality is the same:

Africa has a global population of citizens, descendants and friends who can contribute enormously to the continent's future.

Our challenge is to connect them. To organise them. To inspire them. To give them credible opportunities. And to build the trust necessary for partnership.

Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen, Africa's future will not be built by governments alone. It will not be built by foreign investors alone. It will not be built by philanthropy alone. And it certainly will not be built by remittances alone.

Africa's future will be built when capital meets ideas; when ideas meet institutions; when expertise meets opportunity; when entrepreneurship meets investment; and when the African Diaspora meets Africa not merely as a source of assistance, but as a partner in transformation.

That is the spirit behind Ghana's Region-17 initiative.

And that is why I believe the African Diaspora Network's vision of moving "Beyond Remittances" is so important.

Let us therefore build a new paradigm of African development—one in which the African at home and the African abroad are not two separate worlds, but parts of one economic, intellectual and human ecosystem.

Let us turn the African Diaspora from a reservoir of resources into a network of transformation.

Let us turn connections into partnerships. Let us turn partnerships into investments. Let us turn investments into enterprises. Let us turn enterprises into jobs. And let us turn those jobs, those ideas, those innovations and those partnerships into sustainable prosperity for Africa.

I congratulate the African Diaspora Network on the opening of this permanent Washington office. May it become a meeting point for ideas. A marketplace for opportunity. A bridge between Africa and the world. And, above all, an engine for diaspora-led African transformation.

Thank you very much.

Long live the African Diaspora.

Long live Africa.

And may the partnership between Africa and its global Diaspora grow ever stronger..