**REMARKS BY HON. ALEXANDER AFENYO-MARKIN AT A UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD EVENT IN GHANA**

* **Honoured Guests,**
* **Respected (Colleague) Members of Parliament,**
* **Esteemed Attendees,**
* **Ladies and Gentlemen of the Media**

1. I am deeply humbled, honoured and grateful for such a heartfelt reception.
2. Today, I find myself privileged to address you all, not merely in my capacity as a devoted advocate for the cherished people of Ghana but as an alumnus of the University of Bradford and a companion on our collective voyage towards global advancement and perseverance.
3. With many nations worldwide still grappling with the myriad challenges resulting from major crises such the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the clarion call for responsible leadership echoes louder than ever.
4. The decades that lie ahead of us will undoubtedly be the most important in human history, and as we navigate through these turbulent global crises, sustainable initiatives are required, however, these can only be achieved through responsible, decisive, thoughtful and innovative leadership and I am happy that institutions like the University of Bradford are committed to nurturing such leaders among the youth today.
5. \*Insert interesting Bradford story and how it has helped you become a responsible today.

**Ghana: The State of the Economy**

1. Our country, akin to a vessel braving turbulent waters, has encountered numerous trials. We have been tested by economic storms—waves of inflation, winds of currency depreciation, and the unpredictable currents of investor confidence.
2. These challenges, compounded by a significant debt burden and fiscal vulnerabilities, have been amplified by global conditions, including the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, testing our stride toward a post-pandemic economic revival.
3. Yet, in the face of these challenges, guided by the unwavering spirit of our people, our government secured a lifeline—a three-year IMF Extended Credit Facility worth about $3 billion. This move, along with a comprehensive strategy to restructure our debt, reflects our commitment to steering our nation back toward economic stability and growth. This, indeed, is an impeachable proof of the resilience that defines us as Ghanaians.
4. Ladies and Gentlemen, it is important to stress that in the aftermath of the global pandemic, many nations across the world have grappled with the devastating effects of economic collapse. This dire situation has precipitated a wave of instability, insecurity, protests, and an array of troubles fueled by unemployment and the harsh economic consequences that have taken a toll on the populace. Yet, amidst this global turmoil, Ghana stands as a beacon of resilience and stability, spared from the chaos that has engulfed many. This remarkable feat can be attributed to the visionary leadership of President Nana Akufo-Addo and his government and the support of our resilient citizens.

**Leadership and Vision**

1. In these times, the beacon of responsible leadership has never shone brighter. Under President Nana Akufo-Addo’s stewardship, we've shown the world what it means to navigate through economic storms with sacrifice, courage and unwavering determination. Leadership is the compass that guides us toward sustainable development, ensuring stability and uplifting the lives of our citizens.
2. Despite navigating through the devastating economic storm that crippled the national economy, affecting countless businesses, families, and individuals, Ghana's ship of state has not only weathered the storm but has also emerged stronger. Under President Akufo-Addo's stewardship, Ghana has implemented strategic policies and measures that cushioned the blow of the pandemic's impact, fostering economic recovery, and maintaining social cohesion. The government's proactive and innovative approaches, including the swift implementation of social interventions and economic relief programs, have been instrumental in stabilizing the economy and safeguarding the livelihoods of Ghanaians.
3. This exceptional leadership during such an unprecedented crisis underscores the importance of vision, resolve, and decisive action in steering a nation through turbulent times. Ghana's ability to withstand the post-Covid economic collapse and avoid the instability seen in many countries is a testament to the strength of its governance and the resilience of its people. The Akufo-Addo government's adept handling of this crisis not only preserved the nation's stability but also set a solid foundation for sustainable growth and development, demonstrating that even in the face of overwhelming challenges, visionary leadership can indeed make a profound difference.
4. I want to underline my submission with compelling proof, inspired by the strong and decisive leadership of President Akufo-Addo during challenging periods for our economy. A pioneering study conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service, with the collaboration of international powerhouses such as the World Bank, the European Union, and the United Nations Development Programme, has sparked a beacon of optimism. It reveals that approximately 90% of our companies affected by the COVID-19 crisis have successfully recovered and are flourishing once more.
5. The research, titled 'Ghana Business Tracker Wave 4,' explored the experiences of over 3,157 businesses, including significant input from 60 European companies, carried out between April and July 2023. The findings showcase a dynamic resurgence and resilience. It's a narrative not just about recovery but significant advancement. These businesses have not only endured but also emerged stronger, experiencing a boost in cash flow and an impressive 4.2% increase in nominal sales from 2021 to 2022.
6. Moreover, the engagement with European firms has led to a notable 11% rise in sales, illustrating the power of international cooperation. The report delves deeper, examining the uptake of digital and green technologies, revealing a decisive move towards digital solutions to combat the pandemic's impact, with a significant push coming from the formal sectors in digital investment.
7. However, it also highlights that we need to make more progress in adopting energy-efficient practices, reminding us that our path to sustainability is still underway. This comprehensive study doesn't just provide statistics; it tells a story of Ghanaian resilience and innovation. It demonstrates the private sector's capacity to adapt and prosper in the face of global challenges, emphasizing the importance of well-informed policy-making and the unbending spirit of Ghanaian businesses in dealing with the complexities of today's world.
8. As we continue on this journey, let's remember: the path to prosperity is a journey we embark on together. It demands the collective will of not just our leaders but every Ghanaian. United by strong leadership and a clear vision, we are poised to overcome our challenges, paving the way for a resilient and prosperous Ghana for all.
9. Echoing the President's words to Parliament three weeks ago,

**"We may have stumbled, but we rise again. We were bruised, but now we heal. Having regained our footing, we dust ourselves off and face tomorrow with renewed confidence. Let us believe in Ghana."**

**Higher Education**

1. My journey through higher education began at the University of Buckingham, where I pursued an LLB in Law. This foundational chapter of my academic career was more than just a pursuit of legal knowledge; it was a period of profound personal and intellectual growth. The rigorous curriculum and the university's emphasis on critical thinking skills honed my ability to analyze complex legal issues, fostering a deep understanding of the law's role in society. This experience laid the groundwork for my commitment to justice and equity, principles that have guided my career and leadership.
2. The quest for deeper understanding led me to the University of Bradford, where I pursued a Master of Arts in International Politics and Security Studies. Bradford's diverse and vibrant academic community, coupled with its renowned expertise in peace studies and international relations, provided an enriching environment for exploring the complexities of global security issues. The interdisciplinary approach of my program allowed me to delve into the intricacies of international politics, equipping me with the insights and analytical skills necessary to navigate and address the multifaceted challenges facing today's world. My time at Bradford was not just an academic endeavor but a transformative experience that shaped my worldview and approach to leadership.
3. Currently, I am furthering my education at the University of Oxford, studying Organizational Leadership. This prestigious institution offers an unparalleled opportunity to engage with cutting-edge research and thought leadership in the field. The program is enhancing my ability to lead and inspire teams, drive organizational change, and make strategic decisions in complex environments. My academic journey, from Buckingham to Bradford, and now Oxford, has been instrumental in shaping me into the leader I am today in Ghana.
4. These experiences underscore the essential role that UK higher education institutions play in nurturing leaders capable of addressing the challenges of our increasingly complex world. As Ghana strives to deepen the quality of its higher education, partnerships with UK institutions offer invaluable opportunities for knowledge exchange, capacity building, and the development of a new generation of leaders equipped with the skills, values, and vision to drive sustainable development and positive change in Ghana and beyond.
5. Our goal is to nurture a generation equipped for Ghana's economic and social advancement. Recognizing challenges in access, equity, and quality, we've embarked on initiatives to elevate our tertiary education system. This includes upgrading teacher education, embracing international partnerships, and preparing our graduates for the global job market.
6. Our government is working hard to expand access to higher education through the establishment of new universities and the improvement of funding arrangements for students. Specifically, new universities are being established in Mampong, Akrodie, Bunso, and Kintampo. These institutions are part of a broader strategy to enhance the quality of teacher education and overall tertiary education in Ghana.
7. Additionally, the government is making significant strides in supporting students financially through the "No Guarantor" policy under the Student Loan Trust Fund. This initiative is aimed at breaking down financial barriers for students seeking higher education by eliminating the requirement for a guarantor. This policy allows students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds to pursue their educational aspirations without undue financial burdens, signifying a substantial increase in the numbers of students seeking tertiary education.
8. These efforts are aligned with the government's goals to achieve a 40% Gross Tertiary Enrollment Ratio by 2030 and to adjust the science to humanities ratio to 60:40, as outlined in the Education Strategic Plan 2018-2030. The establishment of the new universities and the implementation of supportive financial mechanisms for students underscore the government's commitment to enhancing the quality, accessibility, and relevance of tertiary education in Ghana.
9. In this quest, the role of UK higher education institutions is invaluable. Their tradition of excellence makes them ideal partners in capacity building, curriculum development, and research collaborations. This partnership enriches our educational landscape and strengthens the bonds between our nations, fostering a legacy of mutual growth and understanding.

**Sustainable Development Goals**

1. Aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs), our dedication as a country to sustainable growth and progress is steadfast.
2. The government's approach to the SDGs is notably inclusive and participatory, involving a broad spectrum of stakeholders from both state and non-state sectors. This approach has enabled a thorough assessment of the institutional and policy environment necessary for implementing the SDGs, tracking progress across all 17 goals, and examining cross-cutting themes such as children and youth engagement, the principle of "Leave no one behind," and the synergies among goals.
3. Despite significant strides in social goals, including reductions in overall poverty, malnutrition, maternal mortality, and under-5 mortality, as well as increased access to health services and education with gender parity at the basic level, challenges persist. These challenges include rising unemployment, particularly among youth and urban populations, and environmental concerns such as air pollution and open defecation.
4. The Government of Ghana's response to these challenges is deeply aligned with the integrated and indivisible nature of the SDGs. By embedding the principles of the 2030 Agenda into national policies, Ghana aims to ensure non-discrimination, respect for human rights, and sustainable use of natural resources. Flagship initiatives like Planting for Food and Jobs and One District, One Factory demonstrate the government's commitment to achieving the SDGs by fostering poverty reduction, job creation, and climate change adaptation.
5. Furthermore, the establishment of an effective SDG implementation coordination structure, integrating the SDGs into the national development agenda and budget, and enhancing multi-stakeholder partnerships have been pivotal in Ghana's progress. However, there is an acknowledged need for reliable and timely data, enhanced research capacity, and stronger local government capabilities in implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the SDGs.
6. Overall, the SDGs are instrumental in guiding Ghana's policies and initiatives towards achieving sustainable development and addressing socio-economic and environmental challenges. Through collaboration and inclusion, we're committed to tackling challenges head-on, ensuring no one is left behind, and charting a course for a prosperous future for all Ghanaians.

**Conclusion**

1. Ladies and Gentlemen, as we stand united, let us draw from our collective strength, our shared history, and the indomitable spirit of Ghana. With our gaze fixed on the horizon, we welcome the challenges ahead, confident in our collective ability to overcome them.
2. Together, under the banner of unity, resilience, and hope, we will continue to forge Ghana's legacy—a legacy of commitment to progress, prosperity, and the unyielding spirit of our great nation.
3. Thank you, God bless you, and God bless the Republic of Ghana.