

Mrs. Elizabeth Nyantakyi, Director, Diaspora Affairs Unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, Ghana Focal Point for West Africa.

Let me add my voice to the many voices in congratulating the organizers of this very important symposium. This symposium is significant for two reasons. First, Ghana is yet to launch its diaspora policy, so there will be many takeaways for us. Second, our president, Nana Akufo-Addo, launched the Year of Return, which I will discuss during my presentation.

In 2012, the World Diaspora Summit declaration recognized the need to build sustainable partnerships between Africa and its diaspora through sustained dialogue and effective engagement. Many governments are building the capacity of relevant diaspora-related institutions for the effective implementation of diaspora programs. In Ghana, we established the Diaspora Unit in 2012, which was later upgraded to a fully-fledged bureau in 2014. However, when the current government came to power, it was downgraded to a unit again to facilitate direct engagement with our diaspora. Another office was established at the Office of the President.

Seven years after the 2012 Summit Declaration, in September 2018, in Washington, DC, the President of Ghana declared 2019 as the Year of Return to commemorate the 400th anniversary since the arrival of the first 20 African slaves in the Commonwealth state of Jamestown. Ghana's unique position as a location for 75% of the slave dungeons

built in West Africa played a significant role in this declaration. The President invited people of African descent whose ancestors were enslaved in the diaspora to come home to Ghana, stating, "We open our arms even wider to welcome home our brothers and sisters in what will become a birthright journey home for the global African family." This was an addition following the Declaration in 2020.

Following the successful launch of the Year of Return, we also initiated the "2019 Year Beyond the Return" campaign, which is a ten-year plan to engage Africans in the diaspora more positively, transform the African narrative to one of progress and prosperity, and harness the global talent and resources of all Africans to build a united and confident community.

We have witnessed a significant increase in the diaspora population, from 1.5 billion in 2005 to 4.9 billion in 2020. This highlights the importance of the diaspora as a vital source for development that requires serious attention. To recognize the role of the diaspora in national development, the Ghanaian government has developed several programs and legal instruments. The recently developed National Migration Policy emphasizes the need to integrate the Ghanaian diaspora into the national development process. Ghana is also a champion country within the framework of the Global Compact for Migration, and we have implemented various policies to fulfill the compact.

Despite the structures in place to engage the Ghanaian diaspora, there is currently no formal policy or program that outlines how the diaspora can be effectively engaged for the mutual benefit of both countries. In light of this, Ghana's Diaspora Engagement Policy, which is yet to be launched, has been developed to provide a necessary framework for constructive engagement in political, social, economic, and cultural contexts. The development of this policy involved a systematic, collaborative, and consultative process with stakeholder meetings and workshops held in each of the three ecological zones in Ghana. Additionally, consultations and engagements were conducted with Ghanaian diaspora communities in Nigeria, the United Kingdom, Germany, and other countries.

The policy has four main objectives: to promote capacity building and enhance the Ghanaian diaspora homeland relationship for mutual benefit, to provide legal instruments and programs that extend rights and privileges enjoyed by Ghanaians to their diaspora counterparts, to strengthen systems for involving the Ghanaian diaspora in mobilizing resources for sustainable national development.