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PROMISES MADE, PROMISES BROKEN, PROMISES REPEATED – NPP ON NDC’S 2016 MANIFESTO

A press conference addressed by Boakye K. Agyarko, NPP Policy Advisor/ Chairman of the NPP Manifesto Committee at the NPP Headquarters on September 19, 2016.

Good evening ladies and gentlemen of the press. There is no greater fraud than a promise not kept. If you succeed in deceiving the electorate, do not take them for fools. Realize that the people of Ghana trusted you more than you deserved.

Exactly 78 days from today, the people of Ghana will embark on the extremely important exercise of electing a new president of the Republic and 275 Members of Parliament

In the past four years, Ghanaians have found out the hard way that elections have consequences, which may not always be pleasant.

The choices we make on Election Day will not only determine the direction Ghana will be led on for the next four years, but also the impact of this stewardship on our country long after the four-year term has ended.

The decision in December will revolve essentially around whether Ghanaians should give President Mahama and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) another four years – making a total of twelve straight years in office; or whether Ghanaians will vote for change and bring back, after eight years out of office, the New Patriotic Party, under the new leadership of Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo.

In spite of all the efforts by our main opponents, the NDC, to dumb down the debate and get the electorate to focus less on bread and butter issues, we, of the NPP, understand politics to be nothing but a competition of innovative ideas to propel a country forward. And these ideas can only be successfully executed with the right mix of competence, conviction, discipline and integrity.

So we invited you here today to share a few initial comments and observations we have on the 2016 NDC Manifesto that was effectively re-launched on Saturday, after the President spent two hours to take us through it last Tuesday.

The NDC is coming to the end of its second term in office. As an incumbent government, one expects them to make this bid for re-election based on their performance of the past years.

Instead, we see the NDC making very grandiose promises to Ghanaians of what they would do if re-elected whilst staying silent on how their performance in the past is an indicator of how well they will do, if re-elected.

At the weekend, yet another avalanche of promises were made in Sunyani. Never mind that a litany of broken NDC promises littered their path to Sunyani. One can only predict the future under another Mahama government by judging from what featured in his recent past performance - a future of promises, lies, excuses and more broken promises.

At the end of this news conference, we will share with you a tall list of their failed promises for your perusal.

Voters can be forgiving, if a performing government fails to fulfil some line items in its manifesto. The purpose of government is to improve the lives of its people.

Are people better off as you promised? Are businesses doing well? Have you improved the quality of delivery of public services? Have you strengthened the institutions of state and deepened democratic governance? Have you improved the management of the economy and public finances? Have you tackled corruption and waste in public expenditure?

These are the benchmarks by which Ghanaians should measure President Mahama's performance not the phantom achievements outlined in the Green and promises in the manifesto which they intend to break. In their rule book, promises are made to win an election and not to govern a nation.

However, President Mahama explains his Manifesto's rationale by saying if re-elected he would continue with the work he is doing, saying: "We still have more roads to construct, more houses to build, more food to produce, additional educational and health facilities to provide and , most importantly, more jobs to create." It appears he is proud of his achievements of the past four years.

What we have in John Mahama is a president who is so out-of-touch with the problems of the average Ghanaian that he sees his non-performance in these sectors as a success.

And, yet, when you speak to random people around Ghana, it appears their concerns, problems and anxieties are the same. Unemployment, bad roads, the lack of decent and affordable accommodation and the high costs as well as the falling standards in education and health.

President Mahama wants Ghanaians to believe that if re-elected, he would “ensure equitable development for all our citizens.” The reality, however, is starkly different. Even members of his own party recognise that the President’s ‘Better Ghana Agenda’ has been for the benefit of only his family and friends.

Today, we want to focus our attention on assessing the credibility of the President’s intentions, as captured in the four thematic areas, around which the NDC manifesto was prepared.

1. PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

Putting people first suggests that whatever government policies are in place should benefit the people positively. This leads to the question: “How many Ghanaians believe the President has put them first in the last four years?”

The NDC believes they can lie their way into another term. On Page 10, they claim: “One hundred million (100,000,000) free exercise books have been distributed.” They make the exact claim in their Green Book and add that a total of forty two million exercise books were distributed in 2013 and 2014. Does this mean they supplied 58 million exercise books in 2015 alone?

We urge the media to ask for directions to where the evidence might be based.

According to their manifesto: “Twelve million five hundred thousand (12.5million) English, Mathematics and Science textbooks were distributed to public basic schools between 2013 and 2015. This enabled Ghana to exceed the universal textbook-pupil ratio of three textbooks to one pupil.”

We note, however, that the Education Sector Performance of 2016, published by the Ministry of Education, clearly indicates that the ‘Core Textbook to pupil ratio’ in public basic schools both at the National and Deprived District levels have been in decline since 2013/14. At the national level, it fell from 2.2 in 2013/14 to 2.0 in 2014/15 and to 1.7 in 2015/16. At the Deprived District level, the figures for the corresponding years are 2.1, 1.8 and 1.6 respectively. (See page 21, Table 13)

Also, last week when the President presented highlights of the manifesto, he mentioned specifically that beginning this academic year, 120,000 SHS boarding

students will get free education. This promise is completely missing from the published Manifesto.

Perhaps, there is some explanation. Members of the media, please help us unravel this.

Schools are reopening this September and parents are struggling to pay fees for their children. Parents may recall Mahama and the NDC screaming in 2012 from the rooftops that Free SHS was impossible and soon after the NDC was elected saying it now was and they would introduce it progressively. And then they set out to implement a watered down version.

The 2016 Education Sector report captures exactly how badly they have done: "The first disbursement of funds for the first term of the 2015/16 academic year was completed in September 2015 with 320,488 day students across the country supported at a cost of GHC 12,178,544.00. Disbursement of funds were made to SHS2 and SHS3 students as SHS1 students had not been placed in schools at the time of payment."

So the NDC gives 320,488 day students a mere 38 cedis for the entire academic year to offset Government-approved fees of 420 cedis per year? This 38 cedis is not even 10% of the approved fees. Meanwhile, day students who entered Form 1 last year did not benefit from this policy. Who are the NDC trying to fool? Stealing ideas they cannot implement and by so doing impoverishing Ghanaians even more.

In today's Ghana, with so much suffering and hardship, nothing shows that John Mahama has put Ghanaians first. After all today, they pay more for their electricity than their rent. They bear testimony to how four years of Dumsor destroyed their small businesses.

And Ghana's young people have lived the nightmare of searching for non-existent jobs, a situation that has led to nearly half of that population being jobless.

A government that puts people first is a government with competence, compassion, foresight, discipline and integrity to implement policies that will help create jobs and not one that will kill jobs with poor policies.

It cannot be disputed that President Mahama has made Ghanaians poorer.

The prices of everyday items have skyrocketed under John Mahama. The price of a gallon of petrol has gone from GH¢3 to GH¢16. Bread has moved from from GH¢2 to GH¢7, milk from GH1¢1 to GH¢3, kenkey from 30 pesewas to GH¢2, fish from 50 pesewas to GH¢2, sachet water from 5 pesewas to 20 pesewas, and a bag of cement from GH¢12 to GH¢32.

It is evident that The John Mahama government is not one that can be trusted to put people first. A government that puts corruption first can only pay lip service to putting Ghanaians first.

2. 'BUILDING A STRONG ECONOMY FOR JOB CREATION'

Two weeks ago, Dr. Bawumia provided incontrovertible proof to show that the Ghanaian economy is in crisis by stating: "The years under President Mahama's leadership have been characterized by a steady decline in GDP growth."

The data would seem to suggest that the period from 2011 represents the period of the most consistent decline in GDP growth since independence.

This crippling economic environment cannot lead to job creation. This is why graduate unemployment has reached crisis heights, with some 60% of graduates unable to find jobs. This is an extremely dire situation which threatens Ghana's peace and security.

Today, Ghana is currently ranked 114th on the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business index. The multiplicity of counterproductive taxes, levies and duties, high cost of utilities, erratic supply of electricity etc led to this ranking. Meanwhile, the NDC manifesto is silent on how these real issues will be tackled. The biggest source of employment for Ghanaians is the agriculture sector. Under Mahama, this sector has declined considerably. Cocoa production more than doubled from 341,000 metric tonnes to over 737,000 metric tonnes under President Kufuor. In 2015, it declined to 750,000 metric tonnes having hit one million metric tonnes in 2011.

The NDC Manifesto claims that "the Youth Employment Agency is offering employment to over 100,000 youth." This is a clever way to hide the fact that the Mahama government has not been able to hit even its modest target of creating 100,000 jobs by the end of this year.

Now, let us compare this to what the YEA replaced. It replaced GYEEDA, which came became a vehicle to steal and loot over GH¢1 billion of taxpayers' money.

The NPP's National Youth Employment Programme, which became GYEEDA under President Mills, was launched on October 3rd 2006. The pilot project which ushered it in had by this time employed nearly 33,000 youth in community education and agriculture. By the time the NPP left office on January 7, 2009, 110,000 young people were employed under the scheme. In under 2 years with the right policies in place, a positive change was made.

Now compare that to what the NDC has done in Youth Employment.

Immediately the NDC, took office, they created a horde of unemployed youth by laying off all these 110,000 young people previously employed.

In these 8 years, the NDC has been unable to recruit even 100,000 youth, with their performance hovering around 70,000. What the NPP achieved in under two years, the NDC has been unable to achieve in 8 years.

It is not surprising that their greatest achievement in this sector has been the creation of ingenious schemes to facilitate the stealing of over one billion Ghana Cedis from the sector and the sharing of this loot amongst themselves and their cronies.

With John Mahama's track record, The NPP cannot fathom how the unemployment situation will improve under a future Mahama-led government.

It is this outright theft from the public purse, fiscal indiscipline, reckless expenditure, mismanagement of our finances that has presented President Mahama with the unenviable record of being the only leader in Ghana's history to superintend over three back-to-back double digit fiscal deficits.

Today, the relative-but-shaky stability that the President claims we are seeing has been made possible because of the IMF bailout.

This simply confirms President Mahama's incompetence and lack of vision. Ghanaians elected him to do a job. He has failed miserably. He then called the IMF who made him agree to all kinds of conditions before they offered their help. Now, Ghanaians have to endure hardship and suffering brought about by the austerity measures of the IMF.

After all, President Mahama agreed with the IMF as one of the conditions for the bailout to lay off public sector workers starting from 2017. The agreement 2015 IMF report spells this out clearly:

"The Government will undertake, with the assistance of development partners, a comprehensive plan to rationalize the size and increase the efficiency of the civil service and allied services on the payroll. The related strategic plan will be ready in December 2015, the results of which will inform the actual rationalization of staff, which is expected to begin in 2017."

Source: 2015 IMF Country Report No.15/103, page 17, Sub-heading: CIVIL SERVICE REFORM. Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policy 65 (MEFP65).

'Rationalization' is another way of saying retrenchment, lay-off or downsizing.

What this simply means is that the current freeze on employment in the public sector would not be lifted to give jobs to Ghanaians. Instead, the grand plan is to rob public sector workers of their jobs in 2017.

Public sectors vote for Mahama at their own peril.

His track record in job creation has been totally abysmal. A future with him at the helm would be extremely bleak.

3. EXPANDING INFRASTRUCTURE FOR ACCELERATED DEVELOPMENT

Building infrastructure is expected of every government. Nana Akufo-Addo, our Presidential Candidate once said: "The people of Ghana have a right to expect a government to improve, at the very least, upon what it inherits from an outgoing one... But, that must be done on a value for money basis."

On August 31st, 2011, Akufo-Addo warned against what he called the "loan rush" of the NDC government. "We may have to revisit our HIPC experience if we don't borrow responsibly,"

When Nana Akufo-Addo said this in 2011, the loan bill was around \$10 billion. Today, it has shot up in real terms to over \$39 billion worth of loans (or some \$27 billion in nominal terms).

Much of this borrowing was supposed to help accelerate Ghana's development. But, our roads remain so poor that only those with access to helicopters, like President Mahama and his officials, can safely travel across the country without any stress.

Our communities lack proper sanitation because we prefer to pay more than the going rate to companies that have special relations with The Flagstaff House.

To borrow a famous phrase: *Na Sika No Wo He?* What has been the impact of these massive resources on the lives of the people? Where are the projects?"

Mahama and his government should let Ghanaians know what the NDC has got to show for the billions of dollars it has borrowed in our name.

In actual fact, the NPP strongly believes Ghana can and will develop three times as fast, if we got rid of President Mahama and this NDC this December.

This anecdote illustrates why we feel strongly that Mahama at the helm slows our development.

On Nov 8, 2015, the GNA reported that the Greater Accra Regional Minister, Nii Laryea Afotey Agbo, together with the Kpone Katamanso District Assembly had inaugurated a 6-unit classroom block, with dual desks, at Katamanso Presbyterian School at the cost of GH¢510,000.

Twenty days later, on Nov 28, the GNA reported that the MTN Ghana Foundation had inaugurated a fully-furnished six-unit classroom block, an office and a store at a total cost GH¢ 170,000 for the Asikasu Methodist Basic School in the Upper West Akyem District of the Eastern Region.

What this tells us is that the private sector can build schools at three times less than the Mahama government. This means that for every school built by the Mahama government, three schools could have been built for the same amount.

If the choice then is between President Mahama and MTN or an incorruptible leader like Nana Akufo-Addo, who will provide Ghanaians value for their money, who should Ghanaians choose?

It is clear that Mahama and his government have eaten greatly into the education sector budget through corrupt schemes that have neither protected the public purse nor given Ghanaians value for money.

How many more teachers could have been employed if three schools had been built instead of one? How many children would have had a shorter walk to school because a school had been built closer to their homes? How many more communities would have benefitted from three schools instead of one?

Such examples of such blatant corruption exist in virtually every sector.

Today, under Mahama, Ghana is spending \$1.4 million per km to asphalt roads, against the African average of \$600,000. **(Source; Study on Road Infrastructure Costs: Analysis of unit costs and cost overruns of road infrastructure projects in Africa -- AfDB Chief Economist's Report, 2014).**

Here is another example why the NDC has achieved so very little with so much. The NDC has presented loans to Parliament to build 12 district hospitals at the cost of \$40 million each. President Kufuor built district hospitals at \$13 million. The NDC's pricing of infrastructure defies any costing principles and will soon make its way into the Guinness Book of Records.

While, all this incompetence and corruption is going on, our neighbor Burkina Faso, which is drier than Ghana, through various irrigation schemes is growing big, juicy, delicious strawberries for export and processing strawberries into jam.

Meanwhile, here in Ghana we are subjected to leaders who know how to fly 'akomfem' to Burkina Faso, but do not believe the NPP can provide irrigation to help our poor farmers in the North through its One Village: One Dam solution. For lack of vision, Ghanaians suffer!

4. ADVANCING TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE

The main obstacle to achieving transparent and accountable governance is corruption and the lack of political will to fight it.

We will continue to remind Ghanaians that there is a huge gap, running into billions of dollars, between the funds that have come into the hands of the NDC and what they have delivered for country and people. Reports on the Audit Service's website (www.ghaudit.org) show that by 2014, under President Mahama, over GH¢5 billion of taxpayers' money spent could not be accounted for and nothing has been done by the Mahama Government to trace and retrieve these funds.

This does not include the hundreds of millions of dollars believed to have been lost through inflated contracts as the President has presided over the effective shredding of the Public Procurement Act, giving him and his people the free range to award contracts without the very transparency and accountability he is now promising to deliver if re-elected. Our elders say "*Agoro b3 so a efiri anopa.*"

Ghana, as Nana Akufo-Addo, famously remarked, is not poor, but it is bad leadership that makes us poor. President John Mahama can never fight corruption even if he is forced to.

How can Ghanaians expect a Vice President, John Mahama, who was investigated by his boss, President John Atta Mills, over allegations of corruption, be expected to have the moral authority and desire to fight corruption when he is now the boss?

How can we expect a president who admits to accepting a \$100,000 gift from a foreign contractor, who was awarded a government contract through the efforts of the President, to have the courage and desire to stop his Ministers and other officials from dipping their hands into the state coffers?

How can we expect a president who has spent four years to protect his friends who were found to have allegedly stolen public funds through instruments such as GYEEDA and SADA to allow any case of corruption to be prosecuted?

Let it be stressed, when it comes to corruption, President John Mahama sees no wrong, hears no wrong and speaks against any wrong. To him that is just the way it is.

The Presidency is a vehicle for amassing wealth for family and friends rather than for looking after the welfare of the masses.

We want Ghanaians to think about this: if this has been his attitude in his first full term as President, what then would his actions be if re-elected for his last and final term?

What then would restrain President John Mahama and his family of corrupt cronies in his last term from pillaging the national coffers?

We want to highlight this because it is extremely scary. Let us not make any mistake about it. John Mahama for another four years, unchecked by the threat of losing another presidential election, is an exceptionally frightening prospect.

WHY MAHAMA CANNOT BE TRUSTED TO DELIVER.

Having poorly managed the economy and blatantly misused public funds, there is evidence that the NDC government would have no money to fund their new catalogue of promises.

Ghana is broke.

There is also evidence that John Mahama if re-elected will not have the credibility, competence and the integrity and the innovative ideas to fix it.

On 28th June, 2016, the Mahama Government published for the attention of all Ministries, Departments and Agencies, 'Guidelines for the Preparation of the 2017-2019 Budgets.'

It provides a caution that finances are extremely tight and states that "Due to the continuous increase in the wage bill, as well as interest payments, and amortization among others, MDAs are entreated to budget within the given ceiling."

What an interesting state of affairs. You campaign with a set of promises. You are voted into office. You borrow billions of dollars. You spend these billions recklessly. You cannot fulfil your promises. Money becomes tight. In spite of this, you go on to make even more grandiose promises to Ghanaians. And then behind their backs you tell those who execute these promises to try and work within a

small budget. Only John Mahama, for whom making and breaking promises is a way of life, can govern Ghana this way.

So, as Ghanaians listen to the flowery promises, please bear in mind that the Mahama government already knows how much it has programmed to spend and how very little that can do. Also from 2017, Ghana will pay more in servicing our debts than on paying wages and salaries.

Now, before you clever journalists start saying how will an Akufo-Addo government manage to execute the solutions in our Manifesto when, God willing, elected to take charge from January 7, 2017, let me serve notice that in the next few weeks we will outline how we intend to deal with the debt situation.

We found a solution in 2001 after the then NDC regime left Ghana in debt after eight years in office and we want you to trust that we shall find another solution to deal with the current debt crisis created over the last eight years by this NDC government.

Now, I would like us to embark on a little mathematical exercise regarding the budgeting as prepared by the NDC for 2017-2019.

60 billion Ghana Cedis (GH¢60,293,080,078) out of the resource allocated for 2017, 2018 and 2019 will be used to service the nation's debt.

For 2017, the NDC has already provisioned a total of GH¢34 billion for MDAs. The total resource envelope for 2017 is ¢56,689,811,909.

Now, let us look at how much trouble we find ourselves in.

Please pay rapt attention.

Out of this GH ¢56,689,811,909, salaries and wages, will be allocated GH¢15.6 billion. (15,604,905,129).

Payment of debts will be GH¢17.55 billion Some GH¢11,178,409,057 for interest payments and GH¢6,371,656,454 for loan repayments and GH¢1.9 billion to settle non-road arrears alone.

If you add up these items, the Mahama government will have less than GH¢3 billion in precise figures, GH¢2,903,499,974 to spend.

The GH¢3 billion left will be expected to take care of the following:

GH¢11.77 billion on grants to other government units;
GH¢6.6 billion must be spent on capital expenditure;

GH¢2 billion on goods and services for MDAs;
GH¢1 billion on tax refund;
GH¢83.5 million on social benefits
GH¢50 million on subsidies, which the election-time ONLY 'Social Democratic' government says it intends to use to cushion the hardships it has imposed;

These items come up to a total of GH¢23.7 billion.

Out of the GH¢2.9 billion left over, the Government will have to spend GH¢23.7 billion on all the other things in the Budget.

In the past, faced with scenarios like this John Mahama puts his borrowing cap on or increases taxes.

The Mahama Government has found borrowing a solution to all ails. It used to borrow to pay wages and salaries, now it is borrowing to pay debt and in the process piling up higher the debt mountain.

Unfortunately, the IMF agreement which it sets out in the budgetary guidelines doesn't make room for any more reckless borrowing:

"MDAs are to note that, there is a new debt ceiling of the Government of Ghana for the annual budget. This forms part of the Extended Credit Facility with the International Monetary Fund. The performance criteria relates to a ceiling on the contracting or guaranteeing of new external non-concessional debt" and it is not even "automatic that all concessional loans [if any] can be accommodated within [sic] the ceiling."

Ghana is broke. This is the fact. The NDC manifesto promises pitched against the high level of incompetence that the Mahama government has abundantly displayed when it comes to running the economy is a recipe for failure.

If Ghana is in crisis today, then we hate to warn you that Ghana faces a catastrophe under a future Mahama government. If he could not care, when he knew he still had to go back to the electorate for another re-election mandate, then imagine, just imagine, how very insensitive and even more uncaring he would be if given another four years, after which he doesn't need to go and beg the electorate. There will be plenty trouble.

Dear Ghanaians - it doesn't matter which political party you support - The NPP urges you to fully consider the danger to your own livelihood and the threat to your future. Imagine the further hardship and suffering Ghanaians will be compelled to endure with another four years of a Mahama Presidency.

Dear, President John Dramani Mahama, if you succeeded in deceiving the voters of Ghana in 2012, do not take them for fools. You must realise that they trusted you more than you deserved.

After all, Ghanaians know the manufacturing sector was doing far better under Mills than now under Mahama.

They know the number of manufacturing companies, big and small, that have collapsed over the last four years and the number of people who have lost their livelihoods thereby.

And, yet they hear this economic mismanagement expert, President Mahama promise to revive the factories created by Kwame Nkrumah. A little reminder, John. Many of these factories were completely buried, broken up and sold off by your previous NDC government in which you served as Minister.

The Ghanaian electorate is aware that growth in the industrial sector has declined sharply under Mahama, from 17% in 2011 to 2.0% in 2015. And, yet, he claims to be transforming Ghana.

President Mahama has been the worst manager of the cedi in the last 15 years. The worst performance between 2001 and 2016 has been between 2012 and 2016 (during the tenure of John Mahama as President).

Nobody in the NDC has been able to come out to deny these facts.

Instead, what we have seen are panic reactions all over. The Vice President threatened to respond and then recoiled. And the President to hastily addressed the nation in a two-hour broadcast to effectively launch the NDC manifesto four days before the scheduled launch.

The fact that remains to be disputed by the NDC and cannot be disputed is that President Mahama has destroyed whatever little performance credibility that he inherited from his predecessor.

And, the Mills performance itself was a retrogression on the Kufuor years.

It is with one eye on this abysmal performance of the President that the voters of Ghana must view the credibility of the long list of promises delivered at the weekend from a Government that has no policy credibility and had to run to the IMF in 2014 for some limited injection of credibility from that external body.

Just last week, Government was compelled to come out to effectively admit to newspaper publications that in order to pay salaries for September it had to take back almost half a billion Ghana Cedis allocated to various MDAs for their work.

Among this amount was GH¢200 million the Treasury took back from the Ministry of Roads & Highways meant to construct roads and pay contractors for work already done.

The future under another Mahama term would indeed be bleak. From their own resource allocation for the next four years, the likely scenario is that we are very likely not to have any money to pay salaries next year.

We can do what others are doing and many others take for granted: schools that work, decent homes, good jobs with good income for those willing to work, roads that are motorable and a public service system that works for the people.

Yes, we can and so we must!

In my capacity as policy advisor to the NPP Presidential Candidate, I wish to assure Ghanaians that in Nana Akufo-Addo you will have a competent, incorruptible, selfless, honest, and compassionate leader with a competent and disciplined team to deliver on the solutions to our nation's problems.

Change is coming. Yes we can. Yes we must.

But it is up to you and I to make that change happen. God bless Ghana.