

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY HIS EXCELLENCY MR. PAA KWESI AMISSAH-ARTHUR, THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA DURING THE LAUNCH OF GHANA URBANISATION REVIEW REPORT HELD AT LA PALM ROYAL BEACH HOTEL ON THURSDAY, 14TH MAY, 2015**

**MR. CHAIRMAN, PROF. KWAMENA AHWOI**

**HON. MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

**HON. DEPUTY MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, HON. NII LANTEY VANDERPUYE**

**THE AG. COUNTRY DIRECTOR, WORLD BANK - BEATRIX ALLAH-MENSAH**

**THE RESIDENT MANAGER, AFD - JULY AMELIE**

**THE HEAD OF COOPERATION, SECO - MAD. BRIGITTE CUENDET**

**REPRESENTATIVES OF DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS**

**NII MEI NAA MEI**

**REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS**

**FRIENDS OF THE MEDIA**

**DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**

I deem it a great honour to be part of this important event which has been specially organized by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in collaboration with the World Bank and the Swiss Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) to launch this novel Report, namely the Ghana Urbanization Review Report which takes stock of urbanization in Ghana over the last two decades. I wish

therefore to commend the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, World Bank and SECO for this laudable initiative which has given us the opportunity to reflect on our successes, learn useful lessons and confront the challenges in our development drive over the two decades. Quite obviously, this Report, is timely as it complements several other policies which have been formulated and are being implemented in Ghana such as the National Decentralization Policy, the National Urban Policy, National Sanitation Policy and the Local Economic Development Policy, among others.

**Mr. Chairman, Hon. Minister, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

Urbanization is one of the most significant processes affecting human settlements, especially in this 21st century. Consistent with observed trends in Africa, Ghana's population is becoming increasingly urbanized. Today, more than five out of every ten Ghanaians live in a city or town. If this trend continues by 2030, a far greater proportion of Ghanaians will be urban dwellers. For instance, according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census, more than half of Ghana's population live in urban areas. It is projected that by 2030, a total of 22.6 million Ghanaians, representing about 65% of the national population would live in urban areas. Currently, major cities in the country are growing at about 4.5% per annum.

It is against this backdrop that during the 7th Session of the World Urban Forum held in Medellin, Colombia on April 7, 2014, His Excellency President John

*Dramani Mahama, pointed out that “Africa is the continent that has the fastest rates of an urbanizing population and is in need of speedy interventions to promote sustained urban development. Meanwhile urbanization has progressed without any effective framework to strategically guide the development and management of our cities. Thus, African urban evolution has been without the impetus of industrialization, which fired cities of Europe, the Americas and Asia into technological advancement and rapid economic growth”.*

**Mr. Chairman,**

This observation has re-affirmed Ghana’s appreciation of urban challenges and opportunities and the need to prioritize urbanization as a key development tool. The Report has therefore come at a time when the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have given way to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For example, Goal 11 of the SDGs stresses on the need to build resilient, inclusive, productive and sustainable cities with emphasis on rural- urban linkages. Urbanization is thus an inter-sectoral phenomenon involving all aspects of human society and the economy. No country in the industrial age has ever achieved significant economic growth without urbanization. Hence, as Ghana is urbanizing rapidly, it is critical to find ways to surmount the challenges associated with urbanization and devise strategies with the accompanying investments that could leverage the benefits of urbanization.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Ghana, recognizing this demographic change and its implication for development, initiated the process to formulate the National Urban Policy and Action Plan which were launched in 2012 to highlight critical issues that would facilitate effective urban development. The Policy was meant to improve the overall framework and action areas for effective urban development. Following the launch of the Policy, the Ghana Urban Management Pilot Project (GUMPP) was designed and is currently being implemented in four cities namely Ho, Tamale, Sekondi-Takoradi and Kumasi. The aim of this project is to increase investments in urban infrastructure, improve spatial planning and ensure financial autonomy of the cities for effective service delivery. Development partners have complemented Government efforts by providing technical assistance and infrastructure for key projects including Local Government Capacity Support Project, the District Development Facility (DDF), and the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area Sanitation Project among others. Indeed, I am aware of several other urban development interventions which have been implemented with support from the World Bank, AFD and other Development Partners to ensure transformative changes in our towns and cities. We are very much grateful to our esteemed Development Partners for these significant investments over the years and it is our hope that this will be continued in order to increase investments in our cities and towns to make them livable, safe, inclusive and resilient in the face of current challenges in our increasingly urbanized world.

**Mr. Chairman**

To this end, the Government of Ghana will carefully study the recommendations in the Ghana Urbanisation Review Report and take steps to implement them to ensure that the country attains a successful urban development and growth.

Quite obviously, the challenges confronting the urban landscape are enormous and it is only an informed work force who can appropriately deal with the challenges to enable them deliver quality services to the people at the local level. Fortunately, this Report proffers several options/strategies to surmount our urban challenges. Some of the recommendations that I am personally excited about are the need to invest into flagship urban infrastructural projects in order to foster inter-jurisdictional and joint development coordination among MMDAs. Secondly, is the need to promote municipal financing as a means of providing urban infrastructure. Thirdly, is the need to deepen decentralisation and empower the MMDAs to enable them deliver on their mandate.

**Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At this juncture, let me acknowledge, with immense gratitude, the support of our Development Partners particularly the World Bank, for the diverse ways it has supported this country in its development drive in several spheres of development including capacity building. It is our hope that this collaboration would be strengthened and additional support would be offered in urban infrastructure development in order to sustain the social and economic gains the country has

made over the years. Indeed, Ghana is keenly interested in the ongoing discussions on the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs. Ghana, as a country, has fostered, through the decentralization process, effective rural-urban linkages to ensure the achievement of the SDGs. Government will therefore strive to deepen the rural-urban linkages using the decentralized system of governance.

**Mr. Chairman**

The country has institutionalized good governance and the rule of law to ensure a stable democracy for the past 24 years which has impacted positively on socio-economic development and economic growth with our GDP hovering around an average of 5.7%.

Concluding, I wish to state that Ghana has achieved a lot over the past years and we need to count our blessings. Indeed, the long term prospects of Ghana are quite enormous and very bright.

At this point, it gives me great pleasure to officially declare the Ghana Urbanization Review Report: - Rising through Cities in Ghana *duly launched*.

Thank you and May God richly bless all of us!