

**STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE AMBASSADOR OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, MR. IRCHAD RAZAALY, ON THE OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION OF HIS LETTERS OF CREDENCE TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA NANA ADDO DANKWA AKUFO-ADDO**

It is an honour for me to present to Your Excellency the letters by which the President of the European Council, Mr. Charles MICHEL and the President of the European Commission, Mrs. Ursula VON DER LEYEN have accredited me as Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Ghana.

Your Excellency, you have recently met them both in Brussels and in Berlin. As Head of West Africa in Brussels, I had the opportunity to oversee the preparation of your visit in May, and I know for a fact that your visit was a great success.

Those meetings were proof, once more, that our relations have evolved from good to excellent. Not surprising, for we have shared values, shared interests, and one could even say a shared destiny. This also means our partnership, strong over the years, has moved to the next level and keeps evolving based on what we have in common.

This is clear from several aspects [And what we have in common is plentiful].

Firstly, the COVID-19 pandemic has spared no country and serves as a stark reminder of the shared situation we are all in. Indeed it is true that nobody is safe until everybody safe. The EU, the UN and other partners set up the unprecedented **COVAX** for an unprecedented disease. And we were happy the very first vaccines of the COVAX facility arrived here in Ghana (February 2021) – a world premiere. We thus follow with great interest Ghana’s ambition for setting up a hub for the production of vaccines and medicines.

Furthermore, our shared interests are clear from developments in **regional security** and **maritime security**. Recent trends in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad are worrisome. The European Union is very closely involved, and I know the same to be true for Ghana and yourself. You remain a trusted interlocutor for the international community when it comes to tackle the challenges of the region. And I wish to commend Your Excellency for your leadership role in this, your many interventions in the region at the behest of ECOWAS.

Next, the daunting duty to leave our planet cleaner and greener to the next generation is a clear shared interest. Indeed, for the European Union the Paris Climate Agreement is of paramount importance, and COP26 offers an excellent opportunity to champion sustainable development initiatives. The **Green Deal** will be very central in our partnership program with Ghana for the coming years. We will work closely together with the Member States in a Team Europe Initiative on smart, green and digital recovery in Ghana. They will contribute to the government's transformation and recovery agenda with a focus on the transition towards a circular economy model. The initiative will support the Paris Agreement's objectives while creating sustainable jobs, promoting human capital development and the digital transformation. The Team Europe Initiative will allow us to address together with Member states sustainability issues around cocoa and fisheries.

Prosperity, free trade and jobs are of interest to both of us. It is thus very positive the **EPA** is now in force. It allows Ghanaian companies to export to the EU free from duties and quotas. This will be a further incentive for investors, from the EU and beyond, to choose Ghana as a hub for their manufacturing activities in the region. I am confident Ghana will be able to profit from it. And I also wish to commend Accra for hosting the **AfCFTA Secretariat**: as we know from our own experience, well managed free trade between nations in a region profits all. Obviously, we stand ready to help with expertise and technical assistance.

Finally, recent events in Guinea Conakry remind us of the vulnerability of peace, security and democracy. Together we should continue to strive to make the world fit for democracy and human rights. At its core, human rights are about unalienable freedoms of the individual: freedom of expression, of association, of religion and belief. Sadly, these rights and freedoms are under stress the world over. But we know Ghana to be a strong ally to protect these values.

Your Excellency, The European Union and Ghana have been privileged to enjoy excellent relations, and I daresay they have only improved over the years. We share a history, a present and most importantly a future. Post-Cotonou, our relationships have evolved. More than ever, Africa is our sister continent, bound by history, proximity and geography: a common destiny.

Your Excellency, As I present to you my letters of credence, may I express my hope and confidence on furthering and deepening the strong relations between the European Union and the Republic of Ghana.