
INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

HIGH-LEVEL REGIONAL CONVENING ON Financialization of Politics in Africa

Advancing Reform, Accountability and Democratic Integrity

14 to 16 July 2026 | Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast City, Accra, Republic of Ghana

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. MOHAMED IBN CHAMBAS

African Union High Representative for Silencing the Guns in Africa

Thursday, 16 July 2026

Protocol Salutations

Honourable Kwami Edem Senanu, Chairperson of the African Union Advisory Board Against Corruption, and distinguished Members of the Board;

Professor Francis Doodo, Presidential Advisor on the National Anti-Corruption Programme

Professor Audrey Gadzekpo, Chair of the Board, and Professor Henry Kwasi Prempeh, Executive Director, of the Ghana Center for Democratic Development;

The leadership of Transparency International, the Open Society Foundations, and the Community of Practice on Money in Politics in Africa;

Distinguished Chairpersons and Commissioners of electoral management bodies and anti-corruption agencies from across our continent;

Leaders of political parties, civil society organisations, academia, faith communities, the private sector and the media;

Development partners and friends of Africa;

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen:

The opening of a convening belongs to hope; the closing belongs to responsibility. So I stand before you conscious that my task this midday is not to open a conversation, but to help send one home: into parliaments and party headquarters, into commissions and courtrooms, into boardrooms, newsrooms and lecture halls, where it must now do its work.

Moments ago, in this very hall, you adopted the Accra Declaration on the Financialization of Politics in Africa by acclamation. I congratulate you most warmly. But permit me, gently, a caution at the outset: on our continent, adopting declarations is the easy part. Africa's archives are heavy with eloquent commitments. What will distinguish Accra is not what we proclaimed at midday on the sixteenth of July, but what we can prove by the eleventh of July next year, when the first continental scorecard falls due.

The View from the Peace and Security Vantage Point

Permit me to speak from the vantage point of my own journey. I have spent the better part of four decades in the service of peace on this continent: at ECOWAS, in Darfur, at the United Nations in West Africa and the Sahel, and now at the African Union, where I carry the mandate of Silencing the Guns. I have sat in rooms where ceasefires were negotiated sentence by sentence. I have accompanied elections in moments of great promise and in moments of great peril. And that journey has taught me a lesson which this Convening has now placed at the centre of the continental agenda: the guns of Africa are loaded, far more often than we admit, by failures of governance.

Consider the pattern we have all observed. When entry into public office is auctioned to the highest bidder, those who lose elections struggle to accept results they believe were bought. When winners must govern first to recoup their investment and to reward their financiers, public disillusion deepens with every budget cycle. When women, young people and citizens of modest means conclude that the political arena is closed to them, they withdraw their consent, quietly at first, and then not quietly at all. And when, in that climate of exhausted faith, constitutional order is overthrown, crowds have sometimes cheered in the streets, not out of love for the gun, but out of despair in the ballot.

That is why I say to you with the full weight of my mandate: we cannot silence the guns in Africa while money is doing all the talking in our politics. Political finance reform is not a technical footnote to the peace and security agenda. It is the peace and security agenda, pursued upstream, before the crisis, at a fraction of the cost of any peacekeeping deployment and with none of its graves. The most effective instrument of conflict prevention this continent can build is a democracy its citizens still believe in.

What These Three Days Have Established

Over three days, this Convening has done its work in the right order, and it has done it honestly.

On the first day, you diagnosed the condition and named it with precision. You showed how politics across much of our continent has been transformed into a marketplace of investment and return, in which electoral competition rewards financial capital over ideas, competence and public trust, and in which financiers, rather than voters, risk becoming the constituency to whom leaders answer. You demonstrated that the problem is structural and frequently lawful, not merely criminal: it lives in costly primaries and nomination fees, in the social expectations placed upon officeholders, in procurement systems that function as repayment schedules, and in the conflict of interest inherent in lawmakers regulating their own financing.

You also confronted the sharpest truth of all. Our continent does not, in the main, lack laws. Twenty-three years have passed since our Heads of State adopted the Maputo Convention, whose Article 10 obliges us to bring transparency into the funding of political parties. Yet a recent Transparency International review found that of fifty-one African countries assessed, only one published campaign donation information online through an oversight institution. One. That single figure indicts not our drafting, but our will. And you traced how the darkness is deepening: through digital payments and anonymous online donations, through professional enablers and offshore vehicles, through candidate finances that escape party audits, and now through artificial intelligence, which can flood our information space at a speed and scale no oversight body has yet matched.

On the second day, you turned from diagnosis to remedy, drawing lessons from across this continent and beyond: independent oversight with real investigative powers and real sanctions; disclosure that citizens can actually find and read; public funding designed to open the door to women, to young people and to persons with disabilities, rather than to entrench incumbents; clear rules for private, corporate and foreign money; and obligations for the technology platforms that now sit astride our public square.

And this morning, you moved from remedy to commitment: an unflinching case for why the reform moment is now, a reform panel in which institutions spoke for themselves about what they will do, and, finally, the Declaration itself.

Why Accra Can Be Different

I said that declarations are the most abundant and the most perishable of political commodities. Let me now say why I believe this one has been built to last, if, and only if, we hold ourselves to it.

First, it stands on a global mandate that did not exist a year ago. In December 2025, in Doha, the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption adopted Resolution 11/7, the first dedicated multilateral instrument in the history of that Convention to treat the financing of politics as a distinct arena of anti-corruption action. It was co-tabled by the Republic of Ghana together with Norway, Mongolia and Albania, and supported by some sixty States, among them nine of our own. Africa did not follow that moment. Africa helped to lead it.

Second, the Declaration is anchored in a continental instrument now within reach: the Model Law on political financing to be developed under the leadership of the African Union Advisory Board Against Corruption, working with partners represented in this hall. When adopted through the policy organs of our Union, that Model Law will finally give Article 10 of Maputo the operational wheel it has waited a generation to receive.

Third, and most importantly, this Declaration does not end at its own adoption. It establishes a follow up mechanism: a secretariat, housed in the Community of Practice, charged with keeping a public register of every undertaking made in this hall.

The measure of Accra, in other words, will not be the applause in this hall. It will be the audits in our capitals. It will be bills tabled and passed, disclosure portals that citizens actually consult, sanctions actually applied and upheld, stolen assets actually returned, and, above all, the entry into public life of those whom the present system excludes. The Declaration you have adopted says it best: we seek parties that derive their authority from ideas and constituencies rather than from financial networks, campaigns that persuade citizens rather

than purchase them, and public office held as a trust financed by society and answerable to it.

The Charge as You Depart

So permit me, in the tradition of a closing keynote, to send each delegation home with its charge.

To governments and to parliaments, I appeal above all for courage. Nothing tests statesmanship more severely than legislating transparency into the very system that brought you to power. Do it anyway. History is seldom kind to those who mistook self-preservation for stability, and it has been generous to those who reformed while reform was still a choice.

To electoral management bodies, anti-corruption agencies and oversight institutions: you are the thin line between the law on paper and the law in life. Demand the independence, the budgets, the data and the digital tools this Declaration promises you, and then use them without fear or favour. Every credible act of enforcement restores a measure of the public faith on which peace itself depends.

To political parties: reform begins in your own nomination processes. Let capability, not capital, determine who carries your banner, and open your books, including for your primaries, before the law compels you to.

To the private sector: you told this Convening, with admirable candour, that money flows into politics because the returns are high and the risks are low. Help us reverse that equation. Disclose your political contributions, refuse the procurement of influence, and make clean money the competitive norm of African business.

To civil society, researchers, investigative journalists and the media: you gave this Convening its evidence and much of its conscience. Keep following the money, keep the scorecard honest, and keep translating disclosure into knowledge that ordinary citizens can use. And to governments I say again: protect the civic space and the media freedom on which that vigilance depends.

To the technology companies and platforms: Africa's elections deserve the same advertising transparency, the same labelling of synthetic content, and the same investment in our languages that you provide in markets where regulators already compel you.

To our development partners: match our resolve on the demand side of this problem with action on the supply side, against the anonymous corporate vehicles, the offshore secrecy and the global financial centres through which political money is laundered, and speed the return of stolen assets to the citizens from whom they were taken.

And to the women and the young people in this hall and far beyond it: do not surrender the arena. This Declaration was written, above all, for you. Its success will be measured by your presence on the ballot, and Africa cannot afford your absence.

A Word from Accra's Own History

It is fitting, finally, that this commitment was made in Accra. In December 1958, in this very city, the All-African People's Conference gathered the movements that would go on to liberate a continent, and Kwame Nkrumah reminded the world that Ghana's own independence would be meaningless unless it was linked to the total liberation of Africa. Permit me to borrow that cadence for our generation's task: the adoption of the Accra Declaration will be meaningless unless it is linked to the liberation of African politics from the tyranny of money.

The first liberation returned our flags. The second must return our institutions: to the voter, whose choice must count for more than any banknote; to the young woman, whose ideas must weigh more than any godfather's purse; and to the citizen, whose right to know who funds the decisions that govern her life this Declaration now proclaims.

Closing

Let me close with gratitude: to the Government and the people of the Republic of Ghana, for their leadership and hospitality; to the Ghana Center for Democratic Development, the African Union Advisory Board Against Corruption, Transparency International, the Open Society Foundations and the Community of Practice on Money in Politics in Africa, the co-conveners whose vision built these three days; to the researchers whose papers gave our deliberations their intellectual spine; to the rapporteurs, interpreters, masters of ceremonies, media and hotel staff whose unseen labour carried us; and to every delegate who travelled far and near, and spoke honestly.

We came to Accra to talk about financialization of politics. We leave with something money cannot buy: a common agenda, a common instrument, and an engagement with a follow up mechanism that will ask what each of us has done.

The surest way to silence the guns is to give our people a democracy worth believing in. You have written the promise here in Accra. Now let us go home and keep it.

Safe travels, and may God bless our efforts, our peoples, and our beloved continent, Africa.

I thank you.