

REMARKS

BY

HON. MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC PLANNING, MR. KWADWO BAAH-WIREDU, ON THE OCCASION OF THE COURTESY CALL BY H.E. THE AMBASSADOR PLENIPOTENTIARY AND EXTRAORDINARY OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA TO GHANA

Your Excellency, Mr. Wenzhe Yu, Ambassador Plenipotentiary and Extraordinary of the People's Republic of China to Ghana,

Your Excellency, Mr. Hu Yujie, the Economic and Commercial Counsellor at the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Ghana,

Hon. Minister of State,

Hon. Deputy Minister,

Chief Director and Directors,

Members of the Media,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction

I would in the first place, on behalf of myself and on behalf of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, warmly welcome Your Excellency to Ghana and to this Ministry.

The Energy Crisis

2. Indeed, Your Excellency has begun his term of office in Ghana at a very difficult period for this country. Ghana is currently experiencing one of the most serious energy crises in recent times. The government has however taken the challenge through a number of pragmatic measures to get the energy crisis under firm control.

Long-Term Solution to Energy Crisis

3. It is gratifying to note that through the untiring efforts of your predecessor, His Excellency, Mr. Zhang Keyuan, the Government of the People's Republic of China, in the true spirit of bilateral co-operation, is helping us to seek a long-term solution to the energy crisis by agreeing to finance the construction of the Bui Hydro-Electric Power Dam.

Signing of Bui Loan Agreements

4. It is our fervent hope that the Concessional Loan Framework Agreement, together with the Concessional Loan Agreement itself and the Buyer's Credit Agreement will be signed as soon as possible. As Your Excellency is aware, the Sod Cutting Ceremony to mark the commencement of construction activities at the Dam site is scheduled to take place at Bui on Friday, 24th August, 2007.

On-Going and Completed Projects Supported by China

5. Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Government of Ghana is highly appreciative of the immense support the Chinese Government has in the past few years extended and continues to extend to our country. These include completed, on-going and pipeline projects, technical assistance and debt cancellations.

6. Permit me, Your Excellency, to mention just a few of these that were initiated during the term of office of your predecessor.

- a) The Reconstruction of the 16.9-kilometre Ofankor – Nsawam Road Project completed and commissioned in 2006;
- b) The Rehabilitation of the National Theatre completed last year;
- c) The cancellation of part of Ghana’s debts owed to China since 1985 totalling around US\$25 million;
- d) Implementation of the 1st Phase of the National Communication Backbone and E-Government Project for which a Chinese Government concessional loan of US\$30 million was approved in 2006;
- e) Implementation of the 1st Phase of the Dedicated Communications Project for Security Agencies with a Chinese Government concessional loan of US\$30 million;
- f) The commencement of the construction of an Office Complex for the Ministry of Defence at an estimated cost of US\$9 million with US\$7.5 million grant from the Chinese Government;
- g) Procurement of Building Materials for the Rehabilitation of the Peduase Presidential Lodge for which a grant of US\$1.34 million has been approved by the Chinese Government; and
- h) The Kumasi Youth Centre Project;

Pipeline Projects

7. Projects in the pipeline include the following:

- a) The Bui Hydro-Electric Power Dam Project;

- b) The Development of the Bamboo and Rattan Industry in Ghana;
- c) The Supply of Small Scale Mining Equipment to Ghana;
- d) The Construction of an Office Complex for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Co-operation and NEPAD;
- e) The Establishment of a Malaria Research Centre in Ghana;
- f) The Establishment of Chinese Language institutes in the country;
- g) The Dispatch of Chinese Volunteers to Ghana;
- h) The Donation of Anti-Malaria Drugs to the Government of Ghana; and
- i) The Construction of three (3) Basic-Level Schools in rural locations in Ghana.

New Priority Projects

8. Your Excellency, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is our fervent hope that Your Excellency's tenure of office in Ghana will be as progressive as that of his predecessor. It is, therefore, our passionate appeal to Your Excellency to assist us to vigorously pursue the issue of securing funding from the Chinese Government through the Export-Import Bank of China for the implementation of the rest of the priority projects agreed between the two Governments of Ghana and China in a Memorandum of Understanding signed on September 30, 2006. These are:

- a) The Kpong Water Supply Extension Project;
- b) The Dualization of the Accra to Kumasi Trunk Road;
- c) The Rural Telephony Project; and
- d) The Distance Learning Programme of the University of Cape Coast.

Trade

9. Your Excellency, one area of interest to the Government of Ghana is trade. Trade between our two countries has expanded very fast in recent years and is currently estimated around US\$900.0 million per annum by value. The balance of trade between the two countries is however seriously skewed in favour of China. It is our hope that during your term of duty in this country efforts will be made to urge China to import more goods from Ghana.

Chinese Direct Investment in Ghana

10. Your Excellency, I would like to take this opportunity, also, to appeal to you to use your good offices to urge Chinese companies to explore the possibility of partnering with Ghanaian firms in joint ventures to enable them take advantage of the **US\$ 5.0 billion China- Africa Development Fund** earmarked by your Government to support viable joint ventures between African and Chinese companies.

Petroleum Exploration

11. Your Excellency may be aware of the interesting developments in the petroleum sub-sector of our country as regards the discovery of oil. I will take this opportunity to urge Chinese oil companies such as SINOPEC to take advantage of these positive developments and join in the search for more oil in Ghana.

12. I, at this juncture, wish to once again welcome Your Excellency to Ghana and assure him of our fullest co-operation with him during his term of duty in this country.

13. Long live Ghana – China bilateral co-operation.