

TRIBUTE TO H.E. MR KOFI ANNAN
BY IVAN ADDAE-MENSAH, FORMER VICE CHANCELLOR,
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA (1996-2002)

We are gathered here this evening to pay tribute to one of Ghana's foremost distinguished and world-renowned sons, Mr Kofi Annan, our former Chancellor.

On the 2nd of August 2000 the University of Ghana conferred an honorary Doctor of Laws Degree on the then Secretary General of the United Nations who was later to become our Chancellor. The citation outlining Mr. Annan's achievements featured mainly his serious professional and diplomatic attainments. Now that he is no more with us on earth, I believe tributes that will be paid to him from all over the world will follow a similar trend. But usually, when people reach such august and elevated positions, we lesser mortals are sometimes tempted to think that it is all serious work for them, and no lighter side to their lives and achievements. Sometimes we forget that they are just as human as we are, and surely, being humans, there ought to be a lighter side. Those who knew Mr. Annan intimately, can testify to this. I would like to adopt the same approach I adopted in my address to Congregation during the conferment of the honorary degree, in this my short tribute, by dwelling on a few of the lighter side of his achievements and life before he rose to the dizzy heights that everybody is eulogising these days.

I did not attend the same school as Mr. Annan. I attended the other school which used to beat Mr. Annan's school at cricket and hockey with such regular boredom, that whenever the unusual happened and they beat us, celebrations could go on for days. I am reliably informed that Mr. Annan, with his classmates, including our own late Professors Dan Akyeampong and Reggie Assoku, were regular active participants in these celebrations, details of which I cannot go into here. These celebrations included the school being served with jollof rice for super, a treat which was then extremely rare for that school. I am also informed that he was a sportsman in his own right, and while in College in the United States, set a 100 yards record which stood for eleven years. At Mfantsipim his rival in the sprints was one O.T. Asafu-Adjaye, his senior by a year, popularly known in his school days as **OTAA the comforter!!**.

But Mr. Annan's fame in school in Cape Coast reached its peak for two things - his ability to choose the most appropriate nickname for every teacher, as well as for the ladies who came to do their sixth form courses at Mfantsipim. (I wonder whether he gave our current Chancellor too a nickname) His other claim to fame was his love for "tatar na eduwa" (fried ripe plantain paste and beans). This was sold to the students at a canteen at Freeman House, and Kofi Annan was one of the most regular patrons. I understand his later elevated position did not blunt his capabilities in all these areas of human endeavour mentioned above.

When Mr Annan retired as the Secretary General, and also completed his

term as Chancellor of this University, we all wished he could have stayed with us a little longer to continue to assist and advise the University, especially our Legon Centre for International Affairs and Diplomacy (LECIAD). But alas this has not been and will no longer be possible.

Your Excellency, thank you for everything you did for this university when you were Chancellor.

May the Good Lord bless and keep your soul in Perfect Peace.