

OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR



**CHAIRPERSON'S OPENING REMARKS ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF
THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CENTRE FOR MIGRATION STUDIES AND
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

ADDRESS BY:

**PROFESSOR NANA ABA APPIAH AMFO
VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2026
ISSER CONFERENCE FACILITY
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON**

Honourable Minister for the Interior & our Special Guest of Honour, Hon. Muntaka Mohammed-Mubarak o Hon. Dr. Agnes Naa Momo Lartey, Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection o Hon. Dr. Abdul Rashid Hassan Pelpuo, Minister for Labour, Jobs and Employment o Hon. James Agalga, Chairman, Parliamentary Select Committee on Defence and Interior o Pro Vice-Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, Prof. Gordon Awandare o Representative of The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), Professor David Dodoo-Arhin o Director of the Centre for Migration Studies and IDRC Research Chair, Prof. Mary Boatemaa Setrana o Former and Founding Director of the Centre for Migration Studies, Prof. Mariama Awumbila 2 o Founder and Director, Center of Excellence for Global Mobility Law (MOBILE), Prof. Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen, o Provost, Deans, Directors and Heads of Department o Distinguished Speakers of this High-Level Policy Dialogue o Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Your Excellencies o Cherished Partners and Invited Guests o Faculty, Staff, Alumni and Students of the Centre for Migration Studies o Ladies and Gentlemen It is my pleasure to welcome you to the University of Ghana and to the launch of the 20th anniversary of the Centre for Migration Studies. If the Centre for Migration Studies

(CMS) were a person, turning 20 would signify maturity and grant the rights to vote, drive, find employment, sign legal contracts and even to marry. Celebrating twenty years of existence is an indication of resilience, dedication, strength and growth. I am therefore delighted to chair the launch of the anniversary and the opening of the International Conference on Movement in Africa. The launch of this anniversary is 3 momentous because CMS is the only academic centre of its kind in the West African subregion and has consistently demonstrated academic excellence, thereby significantly enhancing the University of Ghana's research profile, international visibility and graduate training. Additionally, it marks the celebration of the accomplishments in interdisciplinary and rigorous research in migration studies that informs policy, academic debates and public discourse, which are integral to the University of Ghana's mission. In fact, the Centre's activities and achievements align with the University's Strategic Plan, which places emphasis on impactful research, transformative student experience and meaningful engagement and partnerships. These achievements highlight the appropriateness of the anniversary theme, "Celebrating Migration Scholarship, Partnership and the Future of Mobility," as well as the conference theme, "The Realities

of Free Movement in West Africa: Governance, Norms and Social Transformation.” 4 The themes reflect the Centre's two decades of impactful scholarship and the urgent need for evidence-based dialogue on governance, norms, and socio-economic transformation in migration systems. Migration remains one of the oldest forms of human activity. It has long shaped civilizations, driven innovation, facilitated cultural exchange and contributed substantially to economic and social development throughout history. Migration research is critical because migration is deeply linked to economic resilience, human security, skills development and regional integration. Across Africa and globally, millions of people move for work, education, safety and to seek better opportunities. Labour mobility, in particular, plays a key role in addressing unemployment, skills mismatches and livelihoods across the sub-region. In West Africa, governments, institutions and the regional body, ECOWAS, continue to work to strengthen labour mobility and advance rights-based frameworks for free movement. Hence, migration studies are crucial and CMS's role as a research-focused, training-oriented, policy relevant, and responsive institution to societal challenges is vital. 5 Since its establishment in 2006, The Centre for Migration Studies has contributed

enormously to migration scholarship, helping bridge the gap between research, policy and practice. Through faculty publications and major international research projects, the Centre has delivered context-specific knowledge to address migration dynamics that pose complex evolving challenges such as irregular labour mobility, migrant exploitation, human trafficking, climate change, forced displacement, gender and unsafe working conditions. These highlight the urgent need for legal, safe and well-governed migration pathways that protect migrants' rights and dignity. The findings from these research works inform governance decisions on migration and provide evidence-based solutions to strengthen institutions. Additionally, the Centre has contributed to a transformative student experience through its programme offerings, student training, and capacity building. CMS offers graduate programmes in migration studies, including regular and sandwich MA; MPhil, and PhD programmes, which, I am informed, have produced over 250 graduates. CMS has trained graduate students from Ghana and 6 beyond in research, critical thinking and applied policy analysis, equipping them with skills to thrive and hold key positions in academia, government, public service, international organizations and civil societies. The Centre has

shaped graduates who are globally competitive and uphold the University of Ghana's values and in various professional fields. These alumni enhance the University of Ghana's reputation as a leading institution in rigorous, policy relevant research and capacity building. Some of these alumni are here with us today. Furthermore, CMS continues to translate scholarship into evidence that informs decision-making at national, regional and continental levels. CMS stands as a strong example of our commitment to engagement and partnerships. Its sustained collaborations with international institutions, development partners, regional organizations and government agencies reflect the University's aspiration to be a globally connected institution whose work responds meaningfully to both local and international challenges. These collaborations have produced policy documents, established advisory roles and occasioned sustained engagement with 7 governments and regional bodies. I am particularly encouraged by how the Centre's work demonstrates the influence of scholarship in engaging society, shaping policy and contributing solutions to complex global challenges such as migration and mobility. The Centre for Migration Studies' journey over the past twenty years affirms the University of Ghana's belief that research excellence,

student development and partnerships must go hand in hand to achieve lasting impact. Besides the launching of CMS@20, today also marks the opening of the International Conference on Movement in Africa. This conference organized in collaboration with the Danish National Research Foundation's Centre of Excellence for Global Mobility Law, University of Copenhagen, Denmark and the IDRC Research Chair West Africa, offers a platform to enhance our understanding of the governance of movement, the formulation of policies to safeguard rights and dignity and the ways in which societies can derive benefits from human mobility while effectively addressing its associated challenges. I hope that the debates, deliberations and presentations will advance & collaboration and strengthen our resolve to use research to improve lives and movement on the continent. I wish to congratulate the entire CMS community, including past directors, founding members, the current Director, Prof. Setrana, faculty, inter-faculty, junior and senior staff, collaborators, alumni and students, for advancing the Centre's mission to serve as a leading hub for the study of contemporary and future migration dynamics within and beyond Ghana through a strategic and integrated approach. I also extend my appreciation

to our local and international partners, whose sustained collaboration has enabled CMS to contribute meaningfully to the University of Ghana, national and regional policy processes and global migration scholarship. Your excellencies, Honourable ministers, ladies and gentlemen, with these words, I am pleased to chair this occasion and to declare the CMS 20th Anniversary Launch and International Conference officially open.

Happy 20th anniversary, Centre for Migration Studies!

Prof. Nana Aba Appiah Amfo

Vice-Chancellor

University of Ghana

January 27, 2026