

**OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR**



**VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REMARKS DELIVERED AT THE INAUGURAL LECTURE OF  
PROFESSOR ERNEST KENU**

**ADDRESS BY:**

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

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25, 2026**

**GREAT HALL**

**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON**

- *Pro Vice-Chancellors,*
- *Registrar,*
- *Provosts,*
- *Deans, Directors, Heads of Department,*
- *Our Distinguished Lecturer, Professor Ernest Kenu*
- *Faculty, Staff and Members of Convocation,*
- *Past and Present Senior Officers of the University,*
- *Alumni and Students,*
- *Family, Friends, and Associates of the Lecturer,*
- *Specially Invited Guests from the Health Sector,*
- *Esteemed Traditional Rulers,*
- *Eminent Clergy,*
- *The Media,*
- *Invited Guests,*
- *Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen*

Good evening and a warm welcome once again to this evening's inaugural lecture.

This evening, we celebrate the academic journey of a distinguished scholar, as well as the power of research to expose hidden threats and protect society. It is therefore fitting that we gather at a time when the University of Ghana continues to

distinguish itself globally, having recently been ranked first in Ghana and first in West Africa in the QS World University Rankings 2027. This recognition reflects the work of our researchers and scholars, including the inaugural lecturer before us today, whose scholarship addresses urgent local and continental challenges while contributing to global knowledge and health security.

Inaugural lectures hold a special place in the life of the University. They are ceremonies marking the attainment of full professorial rank; but more than that, they are platforms for reflection, engagement and knowledge sharing. They align strongly with the University's second strategic priority, *Impactful Research*, by giving our scholars the opportunity to share evidence that can shape policy, strengthen institutions, and contribute to national development. In a world facing complex public health threats, such platforms remind us that universities must remain at the forefront of generating knowledge that informs policy, shapes practice, and improves lives.

Today's lecture, ***“Disease Smuggling”: The Unseen Cargo in Global Health Security – Lessons From Cholera and COVID-19 in Ghana,***” invites us to think deeply about how diseases

move silently through our systems, our behaviours and our environments. The abstract shows clearly that disease transmission is not only a border issue, but also a system failure - one linked to unsafe water, poor sanitation, weak surveillance, delayed diagnosis, and overwhelmed treatment centres. It asks an important question: how do we stop the unseen cargo before it becomes an outbreak?

A central message of the abstract is the importance of handwashing and hygiene. It reminds us that handwashing with soap and running water, one of the most cost-effective public health interventions available, breaks the chain of transmission for many diseases.

The relevance of this scholarship extends far beyond Ghana. Across Africa and beyond, countries continue to grapple with infectious disease outbreaks, including the resurgence of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The ideas shared in this lecture therefore contribute not only to disease control, but also to health system strengthening, policy reform and regional resilience.

The University of Ghana remains committed to scholarship that addresses societal challenges and informs public policy. The work

we celebrate today demonstrates how rigorous research can shape practice, influence decision-making and contribute to healthier, safer and more resilient societies.

Before I take my seat for the lecturer to mount the podium, permit me to attempt an abridged version of his profile. Please make time to read the full profile in the brochure.

### **PROFILE OF PROFESSOR ERNEST KENU**

Professor Ernest Kenu is a Professor of Medical Epidemiology and Head of the Department of Epidemiology and Disease Control at the University of Ghana School of Public Health. He also serves as Programme Director of the Ghana Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training Programme (GFELTP), leading national and regional efforts in field epidemiology, workforce development, and global health security. A distinguished Public Health Physician, educator, researcher, and mentor, he has made significant contributions to public health practice, training, and policy development.

### **EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

Professor Kenu attended **La-Bawaleshie Presbyterian School and Presbyterian Boys' Senior Secondary School, Legon**. He earned a BSc (Medical Science) and MBChB from the University of Ghana

Medical School, followed by an MPH and PhD in Public Health (Epidemiology) from the University of Ghana School of Public Health. He is a Member of the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons and a Fellow of the African Public Health Association. His professional development includes training in management, cancer epidemiology, and spatial epidemiology from institutions including GIMPA, University of California, Los-Angeles, the US National Cancer Institute, and the University of Florida.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

Following his medical training, Professor Kenu served as House Officer and Medical Officer at Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital before becoming a Public Health Specialist in the Fevers Unit. He also served as HIV Deputy Focal Person and HIV Focal Person at the hospital. In 2014, he joined the University of Ghana as a Lecturer in the Departments of Epidemiology and Disease Control, and Medicine and Therapeutics.

## **RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS AND EXPERTISE**

Professor Kenu's research spans HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, maternal and child health, non-communicable diseases, outbreak investigations, and global health security. His work has addressed HIV/TB co-infection, antiretroviral therapy, adolescent

adherence, and chronic disease among persons living with HIV. He has led studies on cholera, meningitis, yellow fever, Lassa fever, rabies, polio, avian influenza, and COVID-19. During the pandemic, he contributed to surveillance innovations, GIS-based contact tracing, vaccine effectiveness studies, and the establishment of Public Health Emergency Operations Centres. His research has informed policy and practice across Ghana and West Africa. He has authored or co-authored over 240 peer-reviewed publications.

## **RESEARCH GRANTS AND FUNDING**

Professor Kenu has mobilised over US\$22 million in research and health systems funding from organisations including CDC, NIH, WHO, USAID, KOICA, Global Fund, Gates Foundation, European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP), and Africa CDC. His grants have supported workforce development, laboratory strengthening, disease surveillance, emergency preparedness, outbreak response, and public health training across Ghana and the sub-region.

## **LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE AND COMMITTEE**

## **ENGAGEMENTS**

Professor Kenu serves as Head of the Department of Epidemiology and Disease Control and is a member of several University governance bodies, including the Academic Board and the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research Management Committee. Nationally and internationally, he serves on key public health and HIV/AIDS committees, chairs the African Field Epidemiology Network (AFENET) Board, co-chairs the African Union Health Workforce Task Team, and directs the Ghana Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training Programme. He is also actively involved in leadership within the Presbyterian Church of Ghana.

## **CONSULTANCIES AND TECHNICAL ENGAGEMENTS**

With over a decade of consultancy experience, Professor Kenu has provided technical leadership to organisations including the Global Fund, WHO, UNICEF, ECOWAS, AFENET, and AMREF. His work has supported HIV/AIDS programming, malaria control, epidemic preparedness, monitoring and evaluation, strategic planning, and health systems strengthening across several African countries.

## **TEACHING, TRAINING AND MENTORSHIP**

Professor Kenu has taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses in epidemiology, surveillance, clinical trials, monitoring and evaluation, leadership, and scientific communication for more than a decade. Through GFELTP and related programmes, he has mentored over 500 Frontline and 120 Advanced field epidemiology trainees across West Africa and supervised numerous MPH, MSc, MPhil, and PhD students.

### **EXTERNAL EXAMINER AND ASSESSOR ROLES**

He serves as External Examiner for the University of Botswana, KNUST, and the University of Pretoria, and has previously served as visiting lecturer, moderator, and examiner for regional field epidemiology training programmes and professional regulatory bodies.

### **CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP ENGAGEMENTS**

Professor Kenu has participated extensively in international and regional conferences as a presenter, moderator, keynote speaker, scientific assessor, and organiser. He has delivered presentations at major global health conferences and has served as Scientific Chair of GFELTP conferences since 2017.

### **HONOURS AND AWARDS**

His recognitions include the Edwin Afari Meritorious Leadership

Award, the African Institute of Public Health Professionals Meritorious Award, and a Presidential Citation from the Republic of Korea for international development cooperation, among several academic, professional, and church leadership awards.

### **PROFESSIONAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIPS**

Professor Kenu is a member of several professional bodies, including the Ghana Medical Association, Ghana Epidemiological Society, Ghana Public Health Association, International AIDS Society, American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, and the American Public Health Association.

### **FAMILY AND CHRISTIAN LIFE**

Professor Kenu is a committed Christian, Sunday School teacher, Presbyter, and lay preacher in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. He was raised by his parents, Mr. Kenu Amable and Madam Agbeshie Mensah, together with his stepmother, Madam Cecilia Kutsoatsi, and fourteen siblings, including his twin sister. He is married to Mrs. Angela Kooko Kenu and they are blessed with two daughters, Selikem and Sesime, and several adopted children.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I therefore invite us all to listen attentively as Professor Ernest Kenu shares the insights of years

of research, teaching and service in public health, as he speaks to the topic ***“Disease Smuggling”: The Unseen Cargo in Global Health Security – Lessons From Cholera and COVID-19 in Ghana,***”. I am confident that this lecture will deepen our understanding, sharpen our response to future threats, and inspire renewed commitment to building a healthier Ghana, a stronger sub-region and a more secure world. Thank you.

**Prof. Nana Aba Appiah Amfo**

**Vice-Chancellor**

**June 25, 2026**