OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

INSTALLATION OF PROFESSOR LAUD ATO QUAYSON AS THE FIFTH OCCUPANT OF THE KWAME NKRUMAH CHAIR IN AFRICAN STUDIES

ADDRESS BY:

PROFESSOR NANA ABA APPIAH AMFO

VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2026
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
LEGON

Protocol

The Chairperson of the University Council, Madam Marietta Agyeiwaa Brew;

Members of the University Council;

Pro-Vice-Chancellors;

The Registrar;

Provosts, Deans and Directors;

The Director of the Institute of African Studies, Professor Samuel Ntewusu;

Past Occupants of the Kwame Nkrumah Chair in African Studies;

The Managing Director and Management of AngloGold Ashanti (Ghana) Limited;

Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Niimei, Naamei, Nananom;

Colleagues, Students, Alumni and Friends of the University;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good afternoon.

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the Great Hall of the University of Ghana for the installation of the fifth occupant of the Kwame Nkrumah Chair in African Studies.

Today is a particularly happy occasion for us. We are welcoming home one of our distinguished alumni, a scholar whose intellectual journey began here at Legon and has taken him to some of the world's leading universities. And he returns to occupy a Chair that carries the name of one of Africa's most influential thinkers and leaders, Osagyefo Dr Kwame Nkrumah. There is something quite fitting about that.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, The Kwame Nkrumah Chair in

African Studies was established in 2009 through a partnership between the University of Ghana and AngloGold Ashanti. It honours Nkrumah's intellectual and Pan-African vision, his commitment to African liberation and development, and his conviction that Africa must be an active producer of knowledge about itself and its place in the world.

That conviction remains as relevant today as it was when Nkrumah established the Institute of African Studies. Indeed, I would argue that it has become even more important. At a time when global conversations are taking place about the future of knowledge, artificial intelligence, geopolitical change, inequality and the place of Africa in the international order, we need strong African intellectual voices. We need scholarship that is grounded in our experiences, engages critically with our histories and institutions, and contributes to the wider world of ideas.

We must not simply be the subjects of other people's research or consumers of knowledge produced elsewhere. We must continue to develop the intellectual capacity and confidence to interpret our own realities, interrogate dominant assumptions and contribute meaningfully

to global scholarship.

This is very much in keeping with the University of Ghana's commitment to Impactful Research, the second strategic priority of our 2024–2029 Strategic Plan, and with our Research Strategy's emphasis on knowledge democratisation.

For me, the Kwame Nkrumah Chair is an important expression of that commitment. It creates space for distinguished scholars to engage with our students and faculty, strengthen research networks, stimulate public debate and deepen our understanding of Africa and its Diasporas.

But I would also like us to think of the Chair as more than a distinguished academic appointment. Its value must be reflected in the conversations it generates, the research it inspires, the students and younger scholars it mentors, and the intellectual connections it builds.

In other words, the significance of the Chair should extend well beyond the individual who occupies it.

The Chair has been fortunate to have had four distinguished occupants:

Emeritus Professor Kofi Anyidoho, Emeritus Professor Jacob U. Gordon, Professor Horace Campbell and Professor Amina Mama.

Each has brought a distinctive intellectual perspective and contributed to the visibility and influence of the Chair.

I would like to acknowledge, in particular, Professor Amina Mama, the fourth occupant and the first woman to hold this position. Professor Mama assumed the Chair in January 2021, during the difficult period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet she found creative ways to sustain intellectual engagement, including organising the first fully digital Kwame Nkrumah Intellectual and Cultural Festival.

Her inaugural lecture, *"Nkrumah's Legacy, Feminism and the Next Generation,"* challenged us to examine the place of women in Africa's liberation struggles and in the continuing pursuit of a more equitable society. I thank her sincerely for her contribution to the Institute and the University, and for the important intellectual legacy she leaves behind.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as we welcome the fifth occupant, I would like

to emphasise another aspect of the Chair's significance: the opportunities it presents for our students and emerging scholars.

We sometimes celebrate distinguished academics principally through their publications, awards and international recognition. These are important achievements. But one of the most enduring contributions a scholar can make is to inspire and develop the next generation.

I hope that the tenure we are inaugurating today will provide opportunities for our students and younger academics to engage with new ideas, participate in research conversations and build networks that extend beyond Legon.

This is directly connected to our first strategic priority, Transformative Student Experience. Our students should encounter scholarship not simply as something contained in books and journal articles, but as a living intellectual enterprise in which they, too, can participate.

And I hope that the Chair will continue to strengthen our Engagement and Partnerships, which is our fourth strategic priority, by building

productive relationships between the Institute of African Studies, other academic units, institutions across the continent and the wider African Diaspora.

Let me also use this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to AngloGold Ashanti for its longstanding support of the Kwame Nkrumah Chair. This partnership demonstrates what can be achieved when industry recognises the importance of investing in scholarship, culture and the intellectual development of society.

I would encourage other corporate organisations, alumni and friends of the University to support this initiative. The sustainability of the Chair requires a strong endowment, and we must continue to build the resources that will enable it to flourish for generations to come.

I commend Professor Samuel Ntewusu, Director of the Institute of African Studies, and his colleagues for their commitment to sustaining the vision of the Institute and for their work in preparing today's ceremony. I also congratulate the Institute and everyone who has

contributed to the continued success of the Kwame Nkrumah Chair.

As we celebrate this important milestone, my expectation is that the Chair will continue to be a vibrant centre of scholarship, critical inquiry and public engagement, worthy of the name it bears.

I thank all our distinguished guests for joining us this afternoon, and I wish us a memorable and intellectually rewarding occasion.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Let me now turn to the distinguished scholar whom we have gathered to install.

Professor Laud Ato Quayson is no stranger to the University of Ghana. Indeed, he is one of our own. He graduated from this University in 1989 with a First Class Honours degree in English and Arabic, before proceeding to the University of Cambridge for his doctoral studies.

He has since built an outstanding international academic career, holding appointments at Cambridge, Oxford, the University of Toronto and New York University. He is currently the Jean G. and Morris M. Doyle Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at Stanford University, where he

also serves as the inaugural Chair of the Department of African and African American Studies.

Professor Quayson is an elected Fellow of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Royal Society of Canada, the British Academy and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He has also served as President of the African Studies Association.

His scholarship spans African literature, postcolonial studies, urban studies and disability studies, among other areas. Many of us will be familiar with his fascinating book, *Oxford Street, Accra*, which examines the social, cultural and historical life of one of Accra's best-known urban spaces.

What I find particularly interesting about this work is how it demonstrates that the ordinary spaces of our everyday lives can become sites of serious intellectual inquiry. His scholarship reminds us that Africa is not merely a location in which research takes place. It is a source of ideas, theories and intellectual possibilities that can enrich

scholarship everywhere.

Professor Quayson, we are delighted to welcome you home. We are proud of what you have accomplished, and we look forward to the intellectual energy, fresh perspectives and networks you will bring to the Institute of African Studies and the wider University community.

We also look forward to the opportunities your tenure will create for our students and emerging scholars.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is now my honour, assisted by the Director of the Institute of African Studies, to install Professor Laud Ato Quayson as the Fifth Occupant of the Kwame Nkrumah Chair in African Studies.

Prof. Nana Aba Appiah Amfo

Vice-Chancellor

October 21, 2026