

Speech: Deputy High Commissioner Tom Hartley's Speech at the MOU Signing between British Council and the Otumfuo Osei Tutu II Foundation

Your Majesty / Lady Julia Osei Tutu / Honorable Ministers / Members of Parliament

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Guests

Niimeɪ, Naameɪ, Nananom, Torgbewo, Mamawo

All protocols observed.

“Maakye, 3tes3n?” [Good morning, how are you?]

I am ‘Kojo’ Hartley.

I am delighted to have been invited to speak here today on behalf of the British High Commissioner and the UK Government. I hope my participation at today's momentous MoU signing ceremony between the British Council and the Otumfuo Osei Tutu II Charity Foundation is testament to the British High Commission and the British Council's share in the development of Kumasi and the Ashanti Kingdom.

First, allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate His Majesty the Asantehene on the 20th Anniversary of his enstoolment and his 69th birthday. I wish him many more years of peace and prosperity upon The Golden Stool.

The ties between the UK and the Ashanti Kingdom have been strong for generations. I was delighted to have witnessed, a historic moment for the region when, last November, Their Royal Highnesses The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall met His Majesty Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, the Asantehene (the King of the Ashanti) and his wife, Lady Julia Osei Tutu and the Queen Mothers, at Manhyia Palace. They felt the warm welcome of the Ashanti people during the ‘Akwasidae’ Grand Durbar, and experienced the richness of Ashanti culture in the company of HM the Asantehene, Lady Julia, The Queen Mothers, local Chiefs, religious leaders and guests throughout the Ashanti kingdom.

And I am proud of the strong Anglo-Ashanti connection which is so much more than warm words.

Just last week, a British company, Contracta UK, cut the sod on the second Phase of the Kejetia Market Project in the presence of the British High Commissioner, His Majesty the Asantehene and His Excellency The President Nana Akufo-Addo. This development, backed by UK Export Finance, will modernise Kejetia Market and ensure that Kumasi remains a vital trading hub in West Africa, and that Ghana's famed second city continues to be recognised

across the region as the place to do business.

And we are also backing the completion of Bekwai Hospital, through UKEF's guarantee of a £17 million loan that will deliver 120 new beds, an Emergency Department, a Maternity Ward and an Operating Theatre.

These are tangible examples of our investment in the development of the Ashanti Kingdom and the strong bonds of friendship with Manhyia Palace.

I am delighted that British Council's work in Kumasi is another leading example of our commitment to the Ashanti Kingdom. In Ghana, Kumasi is the only other city, outside of Accra, where the British Council has an office (Nigeria is the only other West African country that has a regional British Council presence). A clear demonstration of our commitment to supporting the educational development of the Ashanti people.

The British Council offer is diverse and world-class.

Through its pioneering work, the British Council is delivering programmes that extend across a range of cultural, technical and educational sectors:

- In Education, we are enabling teachers to deliver core skills training; foster new education and research partnerships; and support scholarship programmes that enable opportunities to study at the UK's best tertiary institutions.
- In Exams, we are giving young people access to leading international qualifications needed to further their careers.
- In Skills and Entrepreneurship, they are supporting the Government of Ghana's efforts to meet the employment needs of a growing, young population.
- Our Social Enterprise programme provides an enabling environment for innovators to develop profitable business solutions to many of today's social and environmental challenges.
- Our Arts programme engages the influential UK-Ghana Diaspora and supports Ghanaian entrepreneurs working within the creative industries.

A great example of the British Council's work in Kumasi is the Jobs for Youth Project where BC is working with two tech and enterprise Hubs in Kumasi to train, incubate and accelerate Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in order to generate employment for young people. This work is training a total of 3200 young people in Kumasi and beyond. This is essential as no country can truly flourish if parts of the population are left behind, or excluded. Inclusivity is a necessary part of Ghana's vision for moving 'Beyond Aid' and underpins Ghana's reputation as a bastion of stability in the region.

Since its creation in 2009, I am proud that the Otumfuo Osei Tutu II Charity Foundation has supported this vision through its important work – at the community level – in support of Ghana’s education and health outcomes, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

And I hope the British Council and the Foundation’s new partnership will become a force for positive change. I hope that some of those with ties to the Ashanti Region, such as fashion designer Ozwald Boateng and broadcaster June Sarpong, will join us and help us spark action on that will benefit all of Ghana.

On behalf of the British Council and the entire UK Government, I am delighted to witness the signing of this MoU today. The MoU will cement strong collaboration, particularly in four areas of mutual interest: art & culture; Education; enhancing the Asantehene’s 20th Anniversary Celebrations; and joint participation in events that support community level development in the Ashanti Kingdom.

At the same time, it provides a framework for how the British Council can deepen the relationship with the Foundation on culture, sports, Diaspora and other shared priorities. I am confident that it will raise the bar for the UK’s partnership in the Ashanti Region. And it is another sign of the UK’s commitment to the development of the Ashanti Kingdom, and Ghana.

Medaase [Thank you]