

Speech: H.E Iain Walker speaking at the Queen's Birthday Party 2019

1. Welcome remarks a. Your Excellencies former Presidents of the Republic, JJ Rawlings, John Agyemang Kufuor and John Dramani Mahama
- b. Honourable Minister for Justice and Attorney General, Ms. Gloria Ekooffo Honourable Ministers and Honourable Members of Parliament
- c. Your Excellencies and colleagues from the Diplomatic Corps
- d. Niimeɪ, Naameɪ, Nananum, Torgbewo-o, Mamawo
- e. Dear Guests, Dear Friends (including friends in the media), one and all
- f. Ete sen? Wo ho ye? (How are you? Are you well?)
- g. Yoo, me_nso me_ho_ye (I'm also well)
- h. Mema mo akwaaba (I welcome you)
- i. Mai-paa-kyew, mote broffo? (Please, do you understand English?)
- j. On behalf of Claire and I, you are indeed very welcome to our Residence for the birthday of Her Majesty the Queen.

1. Before I begin, let me say a few thank-yous:

- a. To our sponsors tonight i. Apex Health Ghana, British Airways, Contracta, Goil, Prudential, Vitol, Tullow Oil, Vivo. ii. ABL, Accra Marriot Hotel, Movenpick Ambassador Hotel, Labadi Beach Hotel, Holiday Inn Hotel, Kempinski Gold Coast Hotel iii. Blue Skies, Decokraft, Diageo (Guinness), Electroland, Environment 360, G4S, Joy Prime, McVities, Rendeavour Company, TT Brothers, Voltic, Kairos, Ray Styles, Wara 1. Nice to see the Wara family visiting by premises for a change, rather than my family visiting theirs
- b. To my sensational team, who have worked their socks off to ensure you all enjoy this evening i. Particularly – Jasmine, Abi, Pippa, Helena, Eric, Clement, Charlene, the organising committee : you know who you are
- c. And to the weather. Our focus for this year's QBP is Tourism. If the rain had stayed on, I was going to switch the subject matter to agriculture
 1. I wanted our focus this year to be about tourism; because tourism really matters.
- a. If the world is a book; those who do not travel read only one page.
- b. Tourism allows us to share, protect and preserve humanity's most valuable cultural and environmental treasures with the world

c. Creates jobs.

i. Globally – 1 of every 11 jobs is linked to travel & tourism. Research shows tourism has – proportionately – twice as many women employees as other sectors.

ii. The more the market grows, the more local talent & supply chains develop to meet standards

d. 10% of the world's GDP based on tourism

i. Globally, the numbers are significant:

1. International tourist arrivals went up globally last year by 7% to 1.3bn; generating \$1.6tn in export earnings globally. One-third of this was spent in countries categorised as “developing”.

2. Every £ spent on tourism generates £3 of spending in other sectors.

ii. The UK

1. Outbound tourist market is expected to be \$70bn by 2020. In 2017, the average UK resident was abroad for 10 nights (...I don't think just trying to escape the Brexit debate), spending £600 when away.

iii. In Ghana

1. The World Economic Forum, in 2017, recorded Ghana 120th of 136 countries as world's favourite tourist destinations. What a secret for Ghana to keep! For everyone's benefit, this needs to change.

2. But why choose to focus on Tourism now?

a. We want to celebrate the 250k Brit-Ghanaian Diaspora who are defining modern Britain (in sport, fashion, politics, healthcare), and many more doing exceptional things here in Ghana. We know many of them want to re-connect with Ghana.

b. 2019 declared the Year of Return by HE The President. Ghana is urging the many African Diaspora to come home or look towards Ghana as their home.

c. “What you don't know, you don't know”. I can see why Ghanaians around the world are deeply proud of their roots. There is so much to love: i. A stunning natural environment ii. A rich cultural tapestry iii. A climate that many of us – certainly in the UK – rarely enjoy

...others now need to find out too!

1. Ultimately, Tourism is about people. Ef-eea, who performed quite brilliantly for us earlier, could have been talking about the disposition of the Ghanaian people at large when she sang "You Bring out the Best, the Best in Me". Ghana is famed for her hospitality and tolerance. I was moved when I saw the Chief Imam attending the Easter Sunday Service at Christ the King Church.

a. We often talk about what makes us different, or separates us from our neighbours. In the UK, with Brexit (you may have heard of this?), there is a big debate on identity presently. We need to talk about what we have in common.

b. The UK and Ghana have more in common than we realise:

i. We share the same language, the same time-zones; the same common law traditions; and the same values (democracy, respect for human rights and the international rules based system).

ii. We share and pool our efforts through the Commonwealth: creating a safer, fairer, more prosperous, and sustainable world.

iii. We are only 6 hours away by direct flight.

c. I'm mindful that a country's people also live outside its capital city. This year, I have had the good fortune to visit and experience the different parts of Ghana: Navrongo, Nalerigu, Kumasi, Takoradi, Kyebi, the Volta, Sunyani, Brong Ahafo.

d. I was particularly pleased to pay my respects to the new Yaa Naa of the Dagbon Kingdom, at his Palace soon after his enskinment. A historic moment for the Kingdom, made possible by the mediation efforts led by the Government and the Committee of Eminent Chiefs, chaired by the Asantehene, HM Otumfuo Osei Tutu II. I look forward to visiting all six new Regions and seeing how Ghana is realising the President's commitment to bring government closer to the people.

e. The richness of a country is imbued in the diversity of its people. So, in August this year, with my colleague from the High Commission Joel Downham and – hopefully – others if they choose to join us, I plan to meet communities across Ghana by travelling 1,000km across Ghana. I plan to see people not through the window of a 4*4, or out the window of an aeroplane but by riding my bicycle. They say "the best routes are the ones you haven't ridden" – I thought I'd take that literally.

i. As I ride this 1000km – "the Ghana Grand" – across the country, I hope to share my experience of Ghana

ii. I hope to meet people in their schools, places of worship, health centres, on their football pitches and in their playgrounds.

iii. If you want to know more, or wish to share ideas about where we should go, please connect with me on Twitter.

iv. I already know Ghana's jollof in the best on the continent; I now need to find other world-beating local fare.

v. We think this will be challenging, so will take the chance to raise some money for Korle Bu teaching hospital – you can be sure I'll be in touch (□)

1. A personal highlight last year was welcoming back to Ghana His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales to Ghana, and welcoming for the first time Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall.

a. Memorably, this co-incided with a 7 day visit by his younger brother His Royal Highness The Earl of Wessex as he chaired the Global Forum for the Duke of Edinburgh International awards, known as the Head of State Awards.

b. There were many highlights during the Prince of Wales visit to Ghana in November; in addition to the highlife music, one was certainly the frenetic, authentic experience of a durbar in the Royal Palace in Kumasi. Ghana's traditional cultures are important to the proper functioning of State; they are fascinating to visitors too. Partnership 7. I am proud to call Ghana my home and to live among, and work alongside, Ghanaians who share the same values. I am pleased that Ghana recently took the step to pass the Right to Information Law; and I look forward to seeing the impact that this will have on opening up government and enhancing transparency. Our values are what bind us. And in an increasingly inter-connected world how we tackle shared threats and challenges in the future will be what defines us: on matters of climate change, plastics, cyber security.

1. My focus as High Commissioner is to prioritise and develop the UK-Ghana partnership to make it even better.

a. We have created the UK-Ghana Business Council to be the primary vehicle for our governments to work together at the highest levels in pursuit of shared priorities, has focused our efforts around trade and investment, economic development, job creation and the business environment.

b. As Ghana looks to develop its industries to create jobs and value in agro-processing, oil and gas, extractives, digital, tourism, pharma – the UK will use this mechanism to bring all of its capabilities to bear where we can: from development support and development finance through to private sector direct investment.

c. As a trusted friend we want to support Ghana in whatever way we can to meet its goal of becoming the most business-friendly environment in Africa.

1. We are bringing a similar approach to bear on many other areas of our work:

a. On security our partnership is making the region safer. There is more to come, and I look forward to deepening this work to protect Ghana and the UK from shared threats.

b. On development, we have been working side by side to realise our shared commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals and to ensure that no one is

left behind as Ghana moves Beyond Aid.

1. To do this properly, we are significantly expanding the UK Government's footprint in Ghana by ten per cent, with new frontline policy work on trade, trade policy, investment, defence, serious & organised crime, cyber security, infrastructure, climate change, illegal wildlife trade, and a new Diaspora office.
2. This is a clear sign of our commitment to the partnership as we leave the EU, a commitment to supporting 'Ghana Beyond Aid' and our commitment to invest in Ghana's as a leader across West Africa and the Commonwealth.
3. Before concluding I want to say a final word of thanks to Lt Col Simon Westlake, our defence attaché and his wife Angie who will soon complete their tour of duty. He has led our defence engagement with distinction. He has also led the forward-line of the HC football team with distinction – reaching out local communities throughout. I want to pay tribute to all the service he has given to furthering relations not only between the UK, Ghana and the sub-region but with so many friends and allies who join us here this evening.
4. I also want to say thank you to our artists performing here this evening: Ef-ee, The Jollof Balls, The Characters. And it's great to see my good friend King Promise back here – he has had a huge number of his own hits (Oh Yeah, Abena, Selfish and Tokyo (the only hit song I know with London and Tema in the lyrics). He's also collaborated with so many others : Sarkodie, M.anifest, Wizkid – I'm hoping sharing a stage with him tonight may mean his next youtube hit has King Promise ft. HC Walker.
5. This year, we mark a number of notable milestones: 70 years of the Commonwealth, The Chief Imam being 100, The Asantehene celebrating 20 years on the Golden Stool, 100 years of British Airways and 70 years of UK Export Finance. So too, we celebrate the 93rd birthday of Her Majesty the Queen tonight. Let me raise a toast :
 - a. "To His Excellency the President and the people of Ghana"