

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY MR. N.E.C. POWER,
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ON BEHALF OF THE LENDERS**



Your Excellency Chairman, Members of the PNDC, Chief Executive of the Volta River Authority, Excellencies,

It gives me enormous pleasure to participate in this ceremony today and I say this with the utmost sincerity.

It is rather a special privilege for me to speak, not only on behalf of my own country, but also on behalf of the other lenders who have contributed so significantly to this undertaking.

All of us, but particularly the Government of Ghana and the people of Ghana have joined together in a great enterprise – and we see today the fruits of that enterprise.

I would not hide from you for a moment the pleasure it gives me to revisit Ghana to witness the opening of this project and to join you in celebrating this event with the people of Ghana and with friends and colleagues in the Volta River Authority with whom I have been associated for some fifteen years. This is a success story we are celebrating today and I personally feel, and know that my confreres from the other lending agencies would join me in saying that it is a success the whole world should know about.

This project has been completed with great efficiency, on schedule and at a time when all countries have been experiencing grave economic dislocations. This is a tribute to Ghana and to all the agencies and Governments involved in this vast undertaking. It is a particular tribute to the management of the Volta River Authority – an institution, which has consistently managed its affairs with efficiency, dispatch and a remarkable degree of devotion and commitment. It is also a special tribute to the abilities of the main contractor, the consultants and to all of you who have brought to a successful conclusion.

In spite of the fact that all countries have experienced the spiraling costs of inflation, and Ghana has been on exception, the costs of this project have been kept in check and this too is a major accomplishment on the part of the managers.

The ramifications of the project are of course immense and it has called for an array of skills in its implementation.

It has been a challenge in every area of endeavour and this challenge has been met – and met with flying colours. All of us are proud of this achievement – and justly so.

One may well ask why so many governments and agencies have come together to participate in the design and construction of this project. It is true that Ghana has many friends and partners throughout the world and this is an expression of that friendship and that partnership in development of which our former Prime Minister Lester Pearson spoke over a decade ago.

But it is now more than that – Kpong is an illustration of the whole concept of international development and co-operation and the realization of our true inter-dependence. Surely, this splendid project is one more example of the links that are being developed between North and South –

between developed and developing nations.

People in the North, where I come from, recognize the urgent need to forget these links. We recognize that, in the world today, we are facing “a new reality”, the international environment is changing and it must change drastically, and we as a group are playing a part in that change.

We know that we are now in one of the watersheds of history. The age that is dying was characterized by empires of all sorts and all persuasions which dominated the countries of the Third World. We have emerged from that age and have entered a new global society whose interdependence grows day by day.

I say in all frankness and with a sigh of embarrassment that for us Africa is no longer a map composed of distant lands whose problems and destinies we mistakenly thought were irrelevant to us. It has become a reality that affects our daily lives.

This new reality is forcing us in the industrialized world to redefine the relationship between the developed and the developing world that we call the North and the South.

In our own interest, we in the North, for our part, must understand what is happening and, as never before, question our old attitudes, re-think our old values and adapt our behaviour to respond to this new environment that is being created around us – for our interests and future are intertwined, we know that. We also know that a relationship of domination is no longer acceptable to any single nation on earth.

As a Canadian, I have no hesitation in admitting that the economic development of the Third World is necessary for the economic buoyancy and growth of the countries of the North, including especially my own country, not only because of the influence of Third World countries on world stability and security, but also in terms of our daily needs.

It is surely in all our interest to help facilitate an orderly evolution of international economic structures and in particular a rapid development of Third World countries.

What I have been attempting to describe then is the basis of our philosophy of development co-operation and the role of donor agencies in the Third World, which can be useful instrument in the process of development – but only one of many instruments at hand.

Over the past two decades, as long as I have been involved in international development, and especially during the 1970s, we learnt a good deal more about development co-operation – we learnt a basic lesson. I think my colleagues would agree with me when I say that development must not be seen as a “physical thing” – something that we count, something that we identify, something that we quantify in the normal sense. It is rather an impact, a qualitative change in the way people think, act and relate to their environment. We now understand that development happens only when our development efforts free Third World people – and I mean every day people – the poorest among us – free these people from the constraints that limit their lives, so that they too can participate in their own national development.

A fundamental lesson that we have learnt in the North is that we must respect the rights of others to choose their own path. We, in the North, used to assume that the people of the Third World wanted only to develop exactly along the pattern of the Europe and North America. Today, far more wisely I feel, the North is trying far harder to understand the different social and cultural values of the Third World. The implications are enormous. Development is a slow process precisely because it is cross-cultural. The transfer of technology takes a long time to achieve its full impact at the grass roots.

A vast capital enterprise, such as Kpong, also has, as we all know, immense implications for the people in this region. The resettlement problems, the development of new communities, their health, their education, their well-being – these are all problems equally challenging to the human intellect, as was the great engineering and construction feat we see before us.

Based on the experience of the 1970s, the development co-operation programmes of the donor countries have at least matured from a simple pursuit of growth for growth's sake to a more complete vision that takes into account the cultural role of the development.

This new emphasis in development incorporates much of what some of the great thinkers of the Third World have been telling us for years, including Ghandi of India who long ago tried to tell the economists and planners “the essence of development is people”.

This is why we in Canada have attached so much importance to the training component of our contribution to Kpong. The lesson that we have at least learned then is that the development of human capital in developing countries is the most important and most precious element in future stability.

These then are a few thoughts about the far-reaching implications of this great project we are launching today. I know I speak for all lenders when I say it has been a privilege to be associated with Kpong.

It remains for me only to express my admiration for all of you who have been involved in its construction.

In perhaps a broader sense, Kpong is as I said at the opening of my remarks, an expression of our friendship and our partnership with Ghana and I hope that for generations to come people will continue to think of Kpong in those terms.

Finally, I thank you for the honour of being able to speak today on behalf of all the lenders.