Address by Osagyefo the President
and other Speeches and Messages
delivered at the Inauguration of the
Volta Power

Saturday, 22nd January, 1966
Inauguration of Volta Power
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ADDRESS BY OSAGYEFO DR. KWAME NKRUMAH, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA ON THE OCCASION OF THE INAUGURATION OF THE VOLTA POWER, 22nd JANUARY, 1966

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

We are gathered here today to formally inaugurate hydro-electric power from the Volta.

What you see before you is the happy result of the faith and determination of our people and their friends. It is the outcome of the readiness of the United States Government, the World Bank, and other financial institutions which apart from our own contribution to the scheme, have granted loans and other forms of assistance in this great enterprise. It is an achievement in co-operation and joint endeavour.

I am personally happy that so many of those connected with this scheme are here with us today for this inauguration. In addition, I am pleased that His Holiness Pope Paul VI has seen fit to send a Papal nuncio to witness the ceremony. On behalf of myself, and the Government and people of Ghana, I extend to you all a sincere welcome.

We had looked forward eagerly to welcoming in our midst today Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy. We had wished her to unveil the plaque commemorating the part which her husband the late President Kennedy, and President Eisenhower played in this endeavour. Mrs. Kennedy is unable to be with us today. She has, however, written to tell me that she hopes to visit Ghana with her children, in the very near future. I have assured her that a warm and truly Ghanaian welcome awaits her.

Next to the late President Kennedy and President Eisenhower, I must make mention of my friend Edgar Kaiser, whose faith and enthusiasm for the Volta project provided the spark that brought it to life when the prospects for its continuation were at their lowest ebb. It is a pity that Edgar’s father, Henry Kaiser cannot be with us. He has been a tower of strength and inspiration to Edgar and myself throughout our efforts on this project.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

By this inauguration ceremony, our great and dynamic Party, the Convention Peoples Party, has kept faith with the
people. In our Party Election Manifesto in 1951, we made a promise that when we were voted to power, we would do everything possible to bring the Volta River Project into being. From that time, this scheme has been one of our greatest dreams. My faith in it never faltered, in spite of the disappointments and frustrations created by the difficult and intricate financial negotiations involved.

I have on a previous occasion, told the story of my meeting with Edgar Kaiser in New York, in 1958, which proved to be an important watershed in the story of this scheme. I cannot minimise the part played by Chad Calhoun as a go between me and Edgar. My meeting with Edgar Kaiser illustrates the way, in which individuals of faith and goodwill can contribute to close relations between peoples and nations, between governments and governments.

With Edgar’s characteristic way of “getting down to brass tacks”—to use an American slang—he took me straight along to see President Eisenhower who happened to be in the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York where I was also staying. It was there that Eisenhower expressed surprise that the United States had delayed consideration of this scheme for so long. There upon he turned to one of the principal aides in his party, who I believe was one of the key men in the White House at the time. He turned to him and asked, “Then why don’t you get on with the damned thing?” It was then that “the damn thing”—this giant hydro-electric scheme—was triggered back to life.

Even then, years of further negotiations followed. Throughout, we had to demonstrate by resolute action and practical decisions our determination to go ahead with the project by all means. Thus in 1959, when the financial arrangements were still incomplete, I decided that, whether we succeeded in raising loans or not, we would go ahead with the scheme from our resources. I therefore gave orders for the preliminary works to be constructed, namely: the Tema–Akosombo highways, the necessary access roads to the site, and the building of a new township in Akosombo. By this time we were nearing completion of the construction of the Tema Harbour and Township which were also essential parts of the preliminary works. And so we commissioned Kaiser Engineers to undertake the preparation of the necessary plans and tender documents. These decisions, risky as they then appeared, gained for us at least a year in construction time and its equivalent in money. It was
this calculated risk which really gave the impetus to the scheme. In all this Edgar Kaiser share our optimism and gave us full support and encouragement.

I wish I had time here to discuss in detail the magnitude of Edgar’s contribution. However, I will mention only one: The Kaiser Company’s re-examination of the project enabled us to lower substantially the cost of the entire project, a reduction which was a critical factor making construction of this vast project economically feasible.

It was not until the 16th of December, 1961, after three years of negotiations that the legal documents providing for the financing of the project, said to be the most complicated of their kind were signed.

The financing of the project on such a scale involved many Governments and International Agencies. Its achievement was largely due to the sympathy and understanding of the late President Kennedy. He had a positive belief in this Volta River Project. I was the first President to meet him after his inauguration. From that very moment I knew that I was in the presence of a sincere and honest man. Between us a real bond of friendship was established and we knew that whatever differences of opinion we might have, they could be discussed rationally. It was characteristic of Kennedy that despite the opposition of forces both in his Cabinet and Congress, he put his full personal weight behind the scheme. Indeed, at one time he stood alone in his Cabinet on this matter.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We live in a world of contradictions. These contradictions somehow keep the world going. Let me explain what I mean. Ghana is a small but very dynamic independent African State. We are trying to reconstruct our economy and to build a new, free and equal society. To do this, we must attain control of our own economic and political destinies. Only thus can we create higher living standards for our people and free them from the legacies and hazards of a colonial past and from the encroachments of neo-colonialism. In such a world we certainly need great friends. The United States is a capitalist country. In fact, it is the leading capitalist power in the world. Like Britain in the hey day of its imperial power, the United States is, and rightly so, adopting a conception of dual mandate in its relations with the developing world. This dual mandate, if properly
applied, could enable the United States to increase its own prosperity and at the same time assist in increasing the prosperity of the developing countries.

Edgar Kaiser, President Eisenhower and President Kennedy, were genuinely interested in this project because they saw, behind the cold figures and the rigid calculations, that the Volta River Project was not only an economically viable project, but also an opportunity for the United States of America to make a purposeful capital investment in a developing country. In other words, they saw in the Volta River Project a scheme with new dimensions of growth and development which they felt could benefit both Ghana and the United States.

It was on this common ground of our mutual respect and common advantage that our two countries—Ghana and the United States—made the contact from which grew this project. The result of this contact is living proof that nations and people can co-operate and co-exist peacefully with mutual advantage to themselves, despite differences of economic and political opinions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Four years ago today, in January, 1962, I set off the blast which marked the beginning of construction of this scheme. Since then, we have witnessed a marvel of construction, organizational efficiency, and administrative achievements.

You see, before you, in all its majesty, strength and power, the Akosombo Dam, 463 feet from the lowest foundations, and twenty-two hundred feet long, which has tamed the turbulent waters of the Volta, turning them into the beautiful vast lake which will ultimately cover over three per cent of the surface area of our country. Due to the fact that the River Volta is very deep at this very point, over two-thirds of the Dam lies hidden beneath the surface of the water. The result of this is that this huge structure blends harmoniously and imperceptibly into the natural landscape, giving the impression that this dam and its vast lake are not man-made, but a creation—a creation of nature.

To the east are the two Spillways with their twelve gigantic gates. Further east is the Saddle Dam, closing a gap in the hills, a large dam in its own rights. To the west of the main dam is the Power House wherein are installed the large turbines fed by water tumbling down the huge penstocks, and generators
which will provide the country with electric power, nearly ten times the present power production in the country from all sources. We have enough power for our immediate needs from the Volta Dam and for the Aluminium Smelter which VALCO is now constructing at Tema. But we are ready and prepared to supply power to our neighbours in Togo, Dahomey, the Ivory Coast and Upper Volta. As far as I am concerned, this project is not for Ghana alone. Indeed, I have already offered to share our power resources with our sister African States.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The story of the Volta River Project will not be complete without reference to the 80,000 people who had to be moved from their villages, and resettled in other areas, because of the formation of the Volta Lake. The story of this resettlement scheme is an epic in itself. I would like to pay tribute to the thousands of families who were called upon to move from their traditional homes, in the interests of the nation. Today, as we inaugurate Volta Power, they can share in the joys of the country, in our sense of achievement, and in our gratitude for the sacrifices which have made this project possible.

I must also record with pride the important role which thousands of Ghanaians have played at all levels and in all aspects of the scheme. As we move into the new phase of our development, we have every confidence that all Ghanaians who have worked on this scheme will bring to bear on the problems of our nation and continent the experience they have acquired in the implementation of this scheme. And here I would like to pay tribute to the work Sir Robert Jackson and the Staff of the Preparatory Commission who prepared much of the detailed over-all planning on which this scheme is based. I must also say a special word of thanks to Mr. Frank Dobson, Chief Executive of the Volta River Authority and all the members and executives of the Authority. They have done a grand job. In this connection, I must congratulate the contractor Impregilo and Company. This consortium of giant Italian Construction Organisations combined their strength and skill to build the Volta Dam. It was a magnificent and challenging job, and they have done it magnificently.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Volta River Project is a concrete symbol of the type of international co-operation which can, to quote my friend
Edgar Kaiser, help to “forge world peace”. It is perhaps the greatest tragedy of today’s world that billions of dollars, rubles and pounds should be spent every year on military armaments and on wars. If the money wasted on wars and war preparations were invested in projects like the one spread out before us, these enormous capital funds could revolutionize the economies not only of the developing world, but also of the developed countries. It would in fact eliminate what is the major threat to world peace, namely, the ever widening gap between the developed and developing nations. Unless this gap is closed, no peace effort of any kind can save mankind from ruin and ultimate destruction.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is in this spirit of fruitful collaboration for a better world for all, that I welcome you here to inaugurate the Volta River Project. Let us dedicate it to Africa’s progress and prosperity. When, in a few moments, I turn the switch to shed the full radiance of Volta Power on this scene, may it symbolise not only a great achievement of Ghana, but let it also be a light leading us on to our destined and cherished goal—a Union Government for Africa. Only in this way, will Africa play its full part for the achievement of world peace and for the advancement of the happiness of mankind.
A MESSAGE FROM POPE PAUL, VI TO OSAGYEFO DR. KWAME NKRUMAH, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA

We are deeply grateful for Your Excellency's kind invitation to attend the inauguration of the Volta River Project at Akosombo, which We blessed at its commencement, and regret that it is not possible for Us to be present.

At Your Excellency's request, We have named the Most Reverend Archbishop Luigi Bellotti, Our Apostolic Delegate, to represent Us at the celebrations.

To Your Excellency and to all those present at the ceremonies, We send cordial greetings. Rejoicing over the successful completion of this important project, We pray that it may bring many advantages to the citizens of Ghana, and contribute to the progress and welfare of the Nation.

With prayerful good wishes, We invoke upon Your Excellency, upon the Government and people of Ghana, the richest and most abundant graces and blessings of Almighty God.

From the Vatican, January 22, 1966.

PAULUS PP. VI
A LETTER FROM ARCHBISHOP L. BELLOTTI, APOSTOLIC DELEGATE IN CENTRAL WEST AFRICA

LAGOS,
18th January, 1966.

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

I have the honour to inform Your Excellency that the Holy Father Pope Paul VI has learned with pleasure that on the 22nd day of this month Your Excellency will inaugurate the great Dam on the Volta River.

His Holiness asks me to convey his cordial greetings to Your Excellency and to the civil authorities as well as to the Most Reverend Members of the Hierarchy and clergy, and all present.

The Holy Father had the pleasure of visiting the Dam when work had recently commenced, and rejoices on its successful completion.

It is his prayer that it may bring many advantages to the citizens of Ghana, and contribute towards the progress and welfare of the Nation.

His Holiness expresses prayerful good wishes to Your Excellency and to your Government, to the Hierarchy, clergy, religious and faithful, and upon all He invokes the choicest and most abundant graces and blessings of Almighty God.

With my personal felicitations and good wishes, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

ARCHBISHOP L. BELLOTTI
Apostolic Delegate in Central West Africa.

HIS EXCELLENCY,
DR. KWAME NKRUMAH,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA,
ACCRA.
SPEECH BY MR. EDGAR F. KAISER, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE KAISER INDUSTRIES CORPORATION

Today we not only participate in dedicating a project that was a challenge to men's imaginations for half-a-century—but we also witness the beginning of a bright new era for Ghana—born with the generation here of low-cost power that will nourish and support the growth of diversified economy.

My associates and I are privileged to be here with you—and to take part in this ceremony—for several reasons. And I think it's appropriate today that I share them with you.

It's my belief—to the innermost core of my being—that when man aspires to an uncommon goal for the common good—and when he pursues that goal with a persistency that springs only from unwavering faith, vision and determination—he will succeed in achieving that goal, regardless of whatever obstacles are encountered in his path.

I'm certain we are all aware that world conditions—economically and politically—demand increasing cooperation and understanding among the world's nations.

I believe deeply that men of different nations—representing different viewpoints and interests—can work together successfully. The requirement is a bond of mutual trust—mutual respect—and mutual self-interest in accomplishing the specific task. These kinds of human bondage are the priceless ingredients that bring the sense of understanding which we know can be achieved between peoples.

To me—the Volta River Project—the Akosombo Dam and the Valco aluminium plant—are solid examples of the soundness and the ultimate triumph of these two beliefs. And that's why I say that I am privileged to be able to participate in this ceremony with you. And speaking for Mrs. Kaiser—and my associates here today with their wives—including Chad Calhoun who has lived closely with this project for the past eight years—I know they, too, share this feeling of privilege.

This project—Mister President—was one of your primary goals for an independent Ghana. The concept of harnessing
the powerful and limitless energy of the mighty Volta had hovered in men’s sights—but beyond their reach—for nearly two generations.

When you reached out for it—however—your effort was strengthened by three new elements—faith, vision and determination. Your efforts were further strengthened by the faith you inspired among your people. The people of Ghana have demonstrated this faith—not only by joining in the difficult reach for this goal—but also by fulfilling every commitment made for the project’s completion.

From its beginning—this project has been a history of cooperation among men and nations. It’s a history well known in your country and mine. Every history—however—offers a lesson to those who study it.

I think that the lesson here is perhaps best described in a Ghanaian student’s eight simple words—written in chalk on a classroom blackboard:

“If hope are not, our lives would break.”

A deep river of hope flowed throughout this effort—and all the men and nations involved were its tributaries.

Consequently the life of this project has moved forward—unbroken—from one milestone to another—your visits to the United States, Mister President, and your meetings with President Eisenhower and the late President Kennedy—Kaiser Engineers’ reappraisal study relocating the dam and smelter, adding the power grid and reducing the project’s total cost by $30 million—your calculated risk—Mister President—in proceeding with engineering and development work before the financing was set—the formation of VRA—the call for world tenders and awarding the contracts for construction and supply of equipment—the financial agreement—and the master agreement between Ghana and Valco that makes this project financially feasible—then the start of construction—resettling 80,000 Ghanaians—international construction crews conquering record floods—then the Valco groundbreaking—Impregilo’s completion of the dam ahead of schedule—the successful efforts of the engineers, the contractors and the suppliers to complete the project below cost estimates—and now this inauguration.

At this point, Mr. Lodigiani and Mr. Baldassarrini, my associates in Kaiser Engineers join me in a tribute to you and
your people not only for your performance on the job but also for the spirit of cooperation that prevailed throughout the past four years.

Today—with this ceremony—hope turns a corner for Ghana and flows in a new direction. The new lifelines are those overhead—that will ultimately carry 500,000 kilowatts of low-cost power for the development of tomorrow’s Ghana.

And now the new hope that this project offers—carries with it new challenges to you—the people of Ghana.

Your President’s dream of a better life for the people of Ghana is now one major step closer to reality.

A leader of a nation—any nation—can inspire his people with faith and vision and determination. He can formulate plans and programs for building a structure of industry.

But whether this structure rises or falls depends not only on the blueprint of the plan—but also on the materials that go into it—and on the quality of effort by every individual involved in its construction.

In building a better Ghana—you are building not only for your own better lives—but also for new generations of Ghanaians. You are building for that young schoolboy who wrote on the blackboard: “If hope are not, our lives would break.”

You are his hope—for a better future of opportunity and abundance.

And from our own experiences with you on two separate projects—this hope is well entrusted in you.

I speak not only for myself—but also for my associates in Kaiser Engineers when I say that the performance and dedication of thousands of your countrymen working on the dam project left a lasting impression on us. No one knows better than Ray Ware—who supervised this engineering project for us and who is here with Mrs. Ware—how well the Ghanaian workers learned such new skills as operating heavy equipment—and moving large quantities of materials.

And now some 3,500 of your countrymen are now involved in the construction of the Valco plant. Many of them—too—are acquiring new skills in welding and carpentry and other trades.
Each of these thousands of workers brought to these projects an eagerness to learn—and to perform to the best of their individual abilities.

If their performance is truly representative of the capabilities of the people of Ghana—and my associates and I are convinced it is—then that hopeful schoolboy can be confident that his life will not be broken.

You will achieve a better way of life—through diversification of your economy and industrial growth—speeded forward by the electrical power generated here for homes and industry.

Mr. President—Kaiser Engineers is proud to have had a part in translating the Akosombo Dam from an elusive dream to the reality of the present. And Kaiser Aluminium and our partners, Reynolds Metals—represented today by Mr. and Mrs. Walter Rice—are looking forward beyond completion of the next phase of the Volta River Project—to Valco’s role in helping to achieve Ghana’s full economic potential.

Mr. President—today you are dedicating still another stepping stone in the direction of peace and understanding. And from stepping stones such as these, a watching world can experience a resurgence of faith.

Faith never fails. It’s a miracle worker.

Our faith knows because it sees what we cannot see. It sees resources, powers, potencies which our doubts and fears veil from us.

Faith is assured, is never afraid, because it sees the way out—sees the solution of its problem. It has dipped in the realms of our finer life—our higher and diviner kingdom.

All things are possible to him who has faith—because faith sees—and recognizes the power that means accomplishment. It looks beyond all boundaries—transcends all limitations—penetrates all obstacles—and sees the goal.

Thank you.
A MESSAGE FROM HENRY KAISER, FATHER OF EDGAR F. KAISER AND FOUNDER OF THE KAISER INDUSTRIES CORPORATION

MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT,

Completion of the Akosombo Dam is a great tribute to your courage, foresight and faith in the future of your country. In Kaiser Organisations our tradition is to build and we are proud to be partners with you and the people of Ghana in building together towards peace and a better world. The Akosombo Dam is a tribute to your leadership and a tremendous symbol of the opportunities the future holds for your people. I regret that I could not be with you at the dedication ceremonies to share the pride of the accomplishment. My congratulations to you all.

HENRY KAISER
OSAGYEFO THE PRESIDENT, HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND AMBASSADORS, NANANOM, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

It is indeed a privilege to be able to address a few words to you, on behalf also of my colleagues and our staff, on this occasion which is so significant for our Company.

Today's date marks a historic moment for Ghana, and it is a source of great satisfaction to us that we have taken part in a venture which is officially accomplished today and is being so fittingly celebrated.

It is not for me to illustrate the tremendous importance of the Volta River Project for the future and development of Ghana, nor to emphasise the significance that its achievement has had and will have in the history of relationship between western technology and economics and the industrial development of the new African nations.

I feel however, that I might be allowed to express my, and indeed our, admiration for the ingeniousness of the original idea, for the foresight and practical realism with which the concept of the Volta River Project was launched, its details developed and finally brought to fruition.

I have always considered this Project an example from which many other initiatives on this continent could and should draw inspiration. It blends together in perfect harmony two fundamental trends of modern economics. These are often considered to clash, but when they pull together they can lead to mazing results: I am referring to Government and public enterprise, as opposed to private enterprise.

Without his political vision, his desire of progress for his people and his country, and his capacity to direct these aspirations towards a well-defined and economically sound purpose—in short without the decisiveness and strength of will of President Nkrumah, this Project would not have been accomplished.

But it was fortunate that this inspired idea aroused the interest, or I had better call it the enthusiastic support, of a great industrialist as Mr. Edgar Kaiser.
This cooperation put into relentless motion a series of consequences, encouraged further cooperation and attracted further assistance—particularly of a financial nature—which were absolutely essential for the final success. All those who have given their support deserve our genuine admiration and gratitude, not only because they made possible our work as Contractors, but because we too are conscious of being involved in a historical process. This process demands the closest collaboration and cooperation between those peoples and countries who have more, and those who have less, between those who have fully developed their resources and those who are endeavouring to do so. We are therefore grateful to all those who strived towards this goal.

Our effort as Contractors was to comply to the best of our capabilities with the interests of the organisations who had called upon us for this job: The Volta River Authority and Kaiser Engineers & Constructors, Inc.

I believe we can say that we have worked hard and that we have spared nothing in the way of personnel and equipment, in order to achieve, and if possible better, the scope of our contract. This is proved by certain figures which I would like to quote:

At Akosombo during the peak period, over 5,000 men were working (including our sub-contractors, the principal ones being Sadelmi and Rodio) of whom almost 4,500 were Ghanaians and the remainder Expatriates.

The total value of equipment and plant used reached nearly £4,000,000. The number of man-hours worked exceeded 35 million.

At certain moments, particularly during the execution of the foundations and the lower part of the Dam, difficulties of a quite extraordinary nature were encountered, and we went through some very critical days. However, our entire personnel, at all levels, led by Mr. Baldassarrini, met these difficulties with unwavering confidence, while the Management did not hesitate to resort to exceptional measures in order to ensure success.

I am happy to say that the support and collaboration of the Volta River Authority and Kaiser Engineers & Constructors, Inc., never failed us.
I wish to express our Company's most sincere thanks to them and above all to their top men, Mr. Frank Dobson and Mr. Ray Ware.

These joint efforts enabled us even to gain some time on a very tight contractual schedule, as evidenced by the fact that the Main Dam was completed one month ahead of schedule (in spite of the greatest recorded flood in the history of the Volta), the first Generator produced power on schedule, the 2nd and 3rd Units were each one month ahead of schedule and finally the last Unit and the overall completion of the job should be some three months ahead of schedule.

But a fundamental factor of this success—and I have preferred to keep this appreciation till the end because it is particularly heartfelt—has been the Ghanaian people at all levels, and the spirit of collaboration that grew up between our local and expatriate personnel. If I might be allowed to express my personal feelings, I recall that when I first came to Ghana in 1960, I took an immediate and spontaneous liking to this country and its people because of their friendly spirit and the cheerfulness of their disposition. Later on I came to know and appreciate other qualities—their quick-wittedness and their willingness to learn and to work. These impressions which not only I, but all of us have gained, leave us with the memory of an amazingly warm and happy human relationship throughout our work in Ghana.

It is to this Nation and its President, that we therefore address our most heartfelt wish that the Volta River Project may mark only the first step of its progress towards the prosperous future which it so rightly deserves.