



# Report on the General Assembly Meeting of the Ghanaian Community in Geneva

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Date: Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2016  
Time: 17:30 – 19:00 hours  
Venue: Saint Jean XXIII Chapel

The meeting commenced at 17:30 with an opening prayer from Lady Pastor Edith Ephraim. The President asked for the adoption of the agenda (attached in the annex). The agenda was adopted and the first item was addressed.

### Agenda Item 1: Overview of 2 Year Plan

Mr Kofi Amekudzi, (the President) provided an overview of the work undertaken by the Executive Committee between January and May 2016. He explained that the initial efforts focussed on building the foundation of the Ghanaian Community in Geneva (the Community) and planning strategically for a 2-year period. The President expounded on the fact that the 2-year plan was informed by consultations with a broad spectrum of Ghanaians in Geneva. Actions undertaken to build the Community so far, include the following:

- **Bank Accounts:** A new bank account for the Community was opened and the details had been shared with the members. Members are advised to pay their membership fees directly into the Bank Account or through their respective focal points. Membership fees could be paid either in full or in instalments.
- **Focal Points:** Focal Points have been nominated by Ghanaian constituencies from the churches, private sector and the United Nations. This work is on-going and additional focal points will be nominated to serve on the Executive Committee of the Community. The aim is to ensure that there is a focal point representing each constituency where Ghanaians are significantly represented.
- **6-Monthly Newsletters:** The Executive Committee launched a 6-monthly newsletter. The maiden edition was published in April 2016 and the next edition is scheduled for October 2016. The bi-annual newsletter will be used as one of the communication channels for the Community.
- **Church Committee:** The Church committee was strengthened with the inclusion of focal points from Ghanaian churches otherwise unrepresented. The Church committee played an active role in the organization of the Independence Day church service held in 2016. It will continue to play the lead role in the organization of the Independence Day church service events.

Within the context of the 2-year plan, the President threw light on the following events:

- **Ghana@60 Essay Competition:** On 1<sup>st</sup> July (Republic Day) the Executive Committee will launch an essay competition for young Ghanaians between the ages of 18 and 22. Attractive prizes will be awarded to winners during the Ghana@60 celebrations. The essay contest will provide an opportunity for young people to learn more about Ghana as well as share their views on the solutions to some of our present challenges. All parents were encouraged to motivate their wards to take part in the competition.
- **Clothes Collection Charity Initiative:** On 1<sup>st</sup> July (Republic Day) the Executive Committee will announce a clothes (including shoes, etc) collection programme. The idea is for Ghanaians in Geneva to support orphanages and underprivileged homes in Ghana. Focal

points will be tasked with collecting items on specific dates to be announced. Discussions are ongoing with the Ghana Mission to facilitate shipment of the clothes to Ghana.

- **Ghana Cultural Event:** A Ghanaian cultural event is planned to showcase the rich cultural heritage of Ghana to Africans and people from all over the world. This event is aimed at promoting Ghana, and by so doing, contribute towards tourism in the country. A save-the-date flyer has been shared with the Community through email, whatsapp and Facebook.
- **Website:** To enhance the communication with and between the members of the Community, a website will be launched in December 2016. This website is expected to complement other communication channels currently being used by the Community.
- **Ghana@60 celebrations:** The President noted that Ghana@60 celebrations will be planned for March next year and the Executive Committee is in the process of strategizing towards the event. Additional information will be provided to the members of the Community in due course.
- **Summer School for Children:** A summer school is expected to commence in 2017 to provide children and wards of Ghanaians with opportunities to learn about Ghana, its history, culture, traditions, languages, etc. The President noted that some parents had expressed interest in supporting the Executive Committee to design this initiative and were currently working with them in this regard.
- **End of Year Dinner Dance, General Assembly and Elections:** The President stated that in December 2016 and 2017, a dinner dance and end-of-year party will be organized for the Community. The event in December 2017 will include a General Assembly and elections in line with the Constitution. The details will be provided in due course.
- **Bank balance:** Mr Seth Afari provided an overview of the financial status of the Community. The total number of registered members stood at 97, including 39 paid up members. The current account balance stands at CHF 9,360.80

## **Feedback and Contributions from Members**

### **Membership Fee**

Mrs Sarah Appiah asked whether the membership fees could be reduced for a large family, for example, a family of five (i.e. 2 adults and 3 children)? The President reminded members that in the Constitution, all children under 18 were automatic members of the Community and did not have to pay membership fees. Mr Collins Acheampong suggested that there should be a cap on the amount each family pays as membership fees since some families may include relatives who may be above the age of 18 and yet, unemployed. The President promised that the Executive Committee will review the suggestion.

### **Launch of Website**

Mr Collins Acheampong asked why the website was planned to be launched in December 2016 (and not earlier). The President explained that since the 2-year plan was comprehensive, it was

necessary to space the key events in a manner which will give the Executive Committee ample time to plan each activity/event. Mr Chris Amey also explained that there are many different channels of communication and the Community was currently communicating through its facebook page, newsletter as well as through whatsapp group messages. The President however promised to have a second look at the timing for the launch of the website and explore the possibilities of bringing the launch date forward.

Mr George Davies reminded members that there were quite a number of Ghanaians knowledgeable in IT within the Community, hence, the Executive Committee could work with such people to develop the Community website. A sub-committee comprising Mr Davies, Mr Hammond and Mr Amey was formed to support the development of the Community website.

### ***Summer school for children***

Mr Hammond noted that the idea of a summer school was a very good idea and suggested the inclusion of cultural dancing and games to enhance the appeal of the programme. The President informed the Community that some parents had expressed a keen interest in contributing towards the development of the programme for the Summer School scheduled for June 2017 and the Executive Committee is working with the parents to develop the elements of the programme.

### ***Internship Programme***

Mr Charles Kwenin spoke about an IOM Internship Programme which could be of benefit to the Community. He explained that the IOM often took interns and it would be useful for the Executive Committee to share information on internship vacancies with members. He also spoke about programmes which provide opportunities for Ghanaians in Geneva/Switzerland to travel to Ghana to provide tailored support in specific areas. Mr Kwenin accepted the request from the President to be the Project Manager for the Community internship programme and promised to work with the Executive Committee to integrate these ideas into the 2-year plan.

Mr Joe Appraku thanked the Executive Committee for the invitation to the General Assembly meeting and explained the reasons for the absence of the Ambassador His Excellency Sammie Eddico. In response to the 2-year plan, he touched on a broad range of issues which included the following:

- The Executive Committee should consider merging General Assembly meetings with parties and events in order to increase the attendance
- The Ghana Mission has been involved in internship programmes and could share ideas with the Community on its planned internship programme
- Cautioned the Executive Committee not to be too demanding with regards to the membership fees otherwise it would drive members away
- The Ghana Mission could support the Ghanaian Community with the delivery of donated clothes to Ghana
- The Ghana Mission is fully supportive of the Community and will continue to provide support for its activities

### **Church Committee**

Mr Mark Taylor suggested that the name of the Church Committee should be changed into a Religious Committee to make it more inclusive to Ghanaians who are not Christians.

In response to the feedback from Community members, the President promised that the Executive will take a second look at the 2-year plan and get back to the Community.

## Agenda Item 2: Nomination of members for Committees of the Ghanaian Community

The President drew the attention of members to the fact that there are 3 committees explicitly mentioned in the Constitution which are supposed to be established during General Assembly meetings. The Committees include the following:

- The Standing Finance Committee
- Auditors
- Electoral Committee

### The Standing Finance Committee and Auditors

The President summarized the terms of reference for each of the Committees as per the Constitution and asked for the nomination of members to serve on the Committees. Mr Collins Acheampong stated that there was a problem with the names and description of the roles and responsibilities of the Committees in the Constitution. Mr Chris Amey reminded members that the Constitution was drafted by many lawyers and very few finance people hence the General Assembly should create a sub-committee to review the finance-related aspects of the Constitution. Mr Alex Manu, Mr Mark Taylor, Mr Collins Acheampong and Mr Seth Afari constituted the adhoc finance committee tasked to review the finance-related aspects of the Constitution.

### The Electoral Committee

The President informed the members that some members had been nominated to serve as members of the Electoral Committee. The three nominees are Marianne Wilson, Lord Dartey and Sarah Appiah.

Members were of the opinion that since the office of the Electoral Committee is a very sensitive office, the nominees should be vetted before being confirmed as members of the Electoral Committee. A vetting Committee was created comprising Mr Charles Kwenin, Mr Francis Kofi and Lady Pastor Edith Ephraim. The duty of the Vetting Committee is to vet the 3 nominees and make recommendations to the General Assembly.

### **SUMMARY OF KEY FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS**

- The Executive Committee should look into the possibility of reducing the membership fees for large families
- The Executive Committee should explore the possibilities of launching the website earlier than December 2016
- Sub-Committee of IT experts formed to support the Executive Committee with the development of the website
- The Summer School will be enhanced with the inclusion of dancing and other cultural activities
- The Executive Committee should explore the possibilities of combining General Assembly meetings with parties and other events to increase attendance
- The Executive Committee is to work with Mr Kwenin to explore the possibilities of integrating internship programme into the 2-year plan of the Community
- Sub Committee on Finance formed to revise the finance aspects of the Constitution
- Vetting Committee formed to vet the nominees for Electoral Committee
- The Executive Committee to share final Constitution with members of the Community
- The Executive Committee will review and share the 2-year plan with members of the Community

### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AOB)**

Mr Francis Kofi reiterated the importance of respecting time and urged members to attend meetings on time.

Mr Hammond thanked the Executive Committee for its work in clearly outlining a 2-year plan for the Community.

Mr Amey informed members about the Convivial Stars (a sports club) and invited members to join the club to play football on Saturdays and Badminton on Mondays at the Vernier Sports Club.

Closing prayers were said by Lady Pastor Edith Ephraim at 19:00 hours after Mr Hammond moved that the meeting be brought to a close.

### **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The meeting ended at 19:00 hours prompt