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## Veep: Government will not sacrifice the welfare of the people

Date: 27-Oct-2009

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Vice President John Mahama on Tuesday assured Ghanaians that the Mills administration will not renege on the social compact it has with the electorate by sacrificing their welfare on the basis of fiscal and monetary expediency.

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"As a responsible government, we will not shirk our social compact with the people," he said, adding that as long as the welfare of the people remained a human rights consideration, it would be the outmost concern of the State.

Addressing delegates at the on-going Social Watch General Assembly in Accra, the Vice President assured Ghanaians that despite the severe impact of the global financial crisis and its attendant distortions in government's economic agenda, it would not reduce its investments in pro-poor programmes.

He said government had "its eyes wide open" to ensure that funds taken from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to stabilize the economy did not compromise its investments in poverty alleviation such as the school feeding, school uniform and agriculture programmes.

Mr Mahama appealed to Social Watch, a global human rights campaigner and development advocate, to work in tandem with other developing nations to challenge aspects of the international financial arrangements that are not in Africa's interest.

He said African countries were among the hardest hit by the financial downturn although they contributed

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little or nothing to the factors that precipitated it.

"We did not cause the crisis. We have no sub-prime mortgage problem. We own our property from mud houses to magnificent concrete edifices. Yet we face some of the harshest effects of the financial crisis."

Mr Mahama said it would take years of painful measures to recover from the crisis and urged advocacy institutions like the Social Watch to serve as moral conscience in the global policy making, by advancing ideas that would be useful in refining the system.

He said it was against this backdrop that Ghana welcomed the broadening of the global policy dialogue by the role of the Group of 20 developing nations as against that of the eight most advanced countries and at the United Nations to bring some leverage in the global decision making arena.

Mr Mahama also asked the delegates to engage in neglected issues that have fallen off the radar of the international advocacy groups, such as price fluctuation, which he said was a "dangerous Achilles heel" for African economies.

"I believe this issue deserves to be given more visibility in the laudable campaign work of groups such as Social Watch to ensure a more equitable global trading regime."

Mr Roberto Bissio, President of the Watch, said the conference, which is being held on the theme: "People First," was aimed at galvanising the people to demand accountability and transparency from their leaders in the management of national resources.

He said those in leadership positions should be accountable to the people and not use their positions as conduit to enrich themselves.

Dr Rose Mensah-Kutin, Convenor of NETRIGHT, a non-governmental organisation, asked African governments to prudently manage their resources to ensure that the vulnerable, who were still reeling from the financial crisis, were well-catered for.

**Source: GNA**

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## Social Watch Assembly Starts Next Week

Wednesday, 21 October 2009

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**Dr Yao Graham**

**This year's Global Social Watch Assembly, which is under the theme: "People First," will take place in Ghana from October 27 to 29, 2009.**

The forum would bring together civil society groups from over 60 countries to discuss the global recession that has widened the gap between the poor and the rich.

Vice President, John Mahama is expected to open the forum, which has become one of the main indices of the United Nation.

"You can point to a number of initiatives and resolutions of social watch that governments have adopted," Dr. Yao Graham, the Coordinator of the Third World Network (TWN), who are the organizers of this year's assembly.

"Let us set up a mechanism on how government is to implement certain programmes to eradicate poverty," he added.

Members of the planning committee include Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT), TWN, Ghana Trades Union Congress (GTUC), Integrated Social Development Center (ISODEC) and the Civil Society Coalition on Land.

Others are Ecumenical Association for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural development, Faatale Rural Foundation and Foundation for Grassroots Initiative In Africa.

The Social Watch is a global coalition that started in 1994.

This year's Social Watch Report 2009 concluded that it was unlikely that countries would meet the 2015 poverty reduction agenda.

According to the report, reducing poverty drastically would require more equitable distribution of resources as well as higher growth rates.

It noted that the country was experiencing rising inequality, growing regional disparities and increasing poverty.

It further noted that about 60 percent of the population in rural savannah remained poor and that poverty was declining at a slower rate than elsewhere in the country.

"While the poverty rate did not decline at all between 1991/92 and 2005/06 in the Upper East and Upper West regions, it increased in the Greater-Accra region and some other regions," the report stated.

**By Charles Nixon Yeboah**

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## GHANA TO HOST FIRST SOCIAL WATCH ASSEMBLY THIS MONTH

By My Journal Online. Social



**Come October 27 to 29, Ghana will host the first Social Watch General Assembly in Africa, to make a statement on the pressing issues of concern under the current world economic crises.** Disclosing this to newsmen during the launch of the 2009 social watch report in Accra, Dr, Yao Graham of Third World Network, noted that, the assembly which takes place every three years has so far been held in Rome 2006, Beirut 2003 and Sofia 2006. According to him, the Assembly which will take place at the Mplaza hotel, under the theme; Peoples First; will also discuss how to raise funds to assist the work of social work, and elect new leadership for the coordinating committee. This he said will be followed by a public forum at a later date. Graham stated that, the 12 member coordinating committee is a key political body for the daily work of the network. It is aimed at ensuring the political visibility and participation of the network in relevant processes, adding that, representation on the committee cuts across a geographical and gender balance. Giving highlights of the 2009 report Dr. Rose Mensah-Kutin, explained that, the network has published 14 yearly reports on the progress and setbacks in the fight against poverty, since it's formation in 1995. Ghana has published 13 of the reports. "With over 60 membership around the world, the network, is also working for gender equality, which have been used as a tool for advocacy on local, regional and in the international area" she added, Mensah-Kutin, mentioned human rights-based response to the financial and economic crisis, gender equality, global food price crisis and justice to cool the planet as some of the thematic areas under which the 2009 report was captured. The rest are holding transnational corporations accountable for human rights obligations, the role of civil society and the global economic crisis and the concern of the citizens of least developed countries. The report which has already been launched in New York, sets limits to how governments can be dictatorial or oppressive, because they can be held responsible by the citizenry, ensures that, the needs and concerns of marginalized people are catered for even in crisis, the need to reform the decision making process, among others. Social Watch is an international network of citizen's organization working around the globe to eradicate poverty and its causes in order to ensure that there is equitable

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**Ghana: Country to host General Assembly of Social Watch**

Daniel Nonor

21 October 2009

Ghana will from October 27th to 29th 2009, play host to the fourth General Assembly meeting of Social Watch, an umbrella body for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) from 60 countries, to deliberate over global issues, including its 2009 Report, released about a fortnight ago.

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The three-day meeting would be attended by representatives from Africa, the Arab Region, Asia, Europe, North America and Latin America, under the theme: 'People first, Social Watch's response to the Global Financial crises.

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The Assembly is the Social Watch Networks highest decision making body which takes place every three years and up to now has been held three times, in Rome 200, Beirut 2003, Sofia 2006 and now in Africa for the first time.



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Dr. Yao Graham, Coordinator of Third World Network Africa, local Convenors of Social Watch, addressing a press conference in

Accra on Monday, said over 100 participants from 60-member countries would attend the programme.

He said the meeting would provide the platform for different regional groupings to share experiences on the impact of the global financial crises. "It will also review the organisations efforts, reports and achievements on the economic and social front and determine what areas to concentrate on in future," he said.

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Dr. Graham said efforts by the various CSOs to ensure governments implemented social, economic and gender equality policies for the benefit of society had been yielding positive results.

He said it was a major institution that key international organisations including the United Nations consulted for reports on gender and other issues to develop protocols.

Social watch has over the years brought to light more than 600 reports from civil society organisations, all of the sharing the aims and reminding governments of their commitments of their commitments and tracking their implementation, both country by country and at the international level.

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## CSOs Have Supported Policy Making-Veep

Wednesday, 28 October 2009

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**Vice President, John Mahama says persistent demands by Civil Society Groups (CSOs) and other bodies have added new dimensions to global policy making.**

According to him, their actions had promoted transparency and accountability within governments in the world including Ghana.

Opening the 4th Global Social Watch Assembly yesterday, which is under the theme: "People First," the Vice President said the involvement of CSOs and other important organizations in policy-making had supported poverty reduction in the

country.

"In the last 17 years, poverty has reduced from 51 percent in 1992 to 28.5 percent in 2005. The number of people living with hunger has also reduced significantly," Mr. Mahama noted.

On the effect of aid support from the World Bank and the Institute of Monetary Fund (IMF), the Vice President noted that though it was necessary to help put the economy in a better shape due to the global crisis, the government was extra careful with the prescriptions of the Bretton Wood institutions.

"Over the last 10 months, the government has established stabilization programme to help deal with the impact of the global crisis our economy. It is on course to realize its agenda.

"Government is committed to modernizing agriculture and also empowering the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme to support the poor.

The welfare of the people is a basic responsibility of government that could lead to good governance and accountability," the Vice President emphasized.

The 2009 Global Social Watch report revealed that the recent global financial crisis had widened the gap between the rich and the poor.


The Vice President explained that government was committed to the enhancement of commercial agriculture in order to encourage more people to farm, adding that more food would reduce the food import bill of the country, which stands at \$1 billion.

The assembly is attracting CSOs from over 60 countries to discuss the global recession that had widened the gap between the poor and the rich.

Other discussions would include the looming effects of climate change on countries.

By **Charles Nixon Yeboah**

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## Ghana Will Not Submit to IMF Dictates-VEEP

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The Vice President, Mr John Mahama, has said the government will not submit to the dictates of the IMF and the World Bank at the expense of the people's welfare.

Instead, he said government as engaging the two multilateral institutions with its eyes "wide open", by using the opportunity to stabilise the economy while ensuring that investments in poverty eradication programmes achieved its intended purposes.

Owing to the impact of the world food and financial crisis, the government initiated a stabilization programme with financial support from the Bretton Wood institutions but this has raised lively discussions about the implications of their policies on the country. Opening the fourth General Assembly of Social Watch, an international NGO network in Accra yesterday, Mr Mahama gave the assurance that "government will not shirk its social contact with the people by sacrificing their welfare on the altar of fiscal and monetary expediency."

The three day assembly, on the theme, 'People first: Social watch's response to the global crises,' has brought together over 100 delegates from 50 countries across the world to examine the implications of the systemic crisis on human, social and gender rights, and alternative solutions to the crisis.

Vice-President Mahama pointed out that the welfare of



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the people was human rights issue in as much as the basic needs of Ghanaians- good, shelter, health and education - have implications for good governance and democracy.

He stressed that the fall-out from the global crisis calls for the need of each country to pay attention to its particular circumstances and carry out policies that best advance the interest of its people.

The Vice-President said even though there was great optimism in some countries and circles that the worst economic crisis to hit the world in 80 years was bottoming out and that an upturn was on the horizon, it would take some countries many years to recover from the negative impact of the multiple crisis.

Mr Mahama noted that the effects of the crisis on the poor and many women and children had been profound, adding the proportion of the incomes of the urban poor that went into food increase significantly. He said: "The global crisis and the responses to it have firmly place the issues of global economic governance including the role for the IMF and the World Bank firmly at the centre of the global policy agenda."

"Small countries such as Ghana will use the processes within the UN system to articulate its views on an equal footing with other states," he added.

Since its emergence into the global scene 14 years ago, vice President Mahama said Social Watch, through its network in more than 60 countries, had demonstrated the importance of contributions civil society could make generally to strengthening Democratic Culture as well as internal policy making.

Source: Times



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28th October 2009 11:59:57 by Timothy Gobah & Caroline Boateng

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## Government Dealing With IMF, World Bank Cautiously

Vice-President, John Dramani Mahama, has given the assurance that the government is cautious in its dealings with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to stabilise the economy.

He said the engagement with those institutions had been necessitated by the fact that the government wanted access to much-needed funds to pursue programmes such as the school feeding and the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) meant to cushion the vulnerable in society.

Speaking at the fourth General Assembly of Social Watch, an international group of civil society organisations championing poverty reduction initiatives, Mr Dramani said although some people might not like the the government's involvement with the Bretton Woods multilateral organisations as a result of some of the socially-unfriendly policies of those institutions, the relationship was to take advantage of some opportunities available to the country.

The Vice-President admitted that the National Democratic Congress's pledge of delivering "a better Ghana" to the people had become much more daunting and onerous as a result of the recent global economic meltdown.

He said the global economy had, since the last quarter of 2007, seen hiccups resulting from food and energy price hikes and the subsequent credit crunch.

However, like all other countries in the throes of the world economic challenges, the government had the duty of ensuring opportunities for its people.

"As a responsible government, we will not shirk our social pact with the people of Ghana," he promised. Mr Dramani challenged participants to highlight the price fluctuation of products from developing countries on the world market, as women and the most vulnerable in society were the people most often engaged in producing those products.

Giving an example, he said the prices of shea nut, the production of which is mostly engaged in by women and the poor, had slumped on the world market, meaning livelihoods would be affected.

He also charged the General Assembly to highlight equitable trade issues for developing countries to develop their competitive advantage in food production.

An official of the Social Watch Secretariat in Uruguay, Mr Roberto Bissio, said the General Assembly was a time for all partners and stakeholders to be accountable in all that they had engaged in and chart new paths for the future.

The Convener of Social Watch, Ghana, Dr Rose Mensah Kutin, emphasised the fact that the only way for developing countries out of the current economic crisis was for resources to be devoted to the development of the well-being of people.

She expressed the hope that the meeting would generate transformative and alternative economic policies for the future.

The Chairperson for the function, Ms Dorcas Coker-Appiah, said all countries, governments, civil society organisations, governmental and non-governmental agencies, as well as actors in the international arena, had duties to perform in the current economic challenges.

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For civil society organisations, she said, the challenge was for them to ensure that governments, in all their efforts, "put people first".




The Social Watch General Assembly meeting is being hosted in Ghana by the Third World Network, Africa (TWN-A) and it is the first time that the highest decision-making body of the group is meeting in the country.

The assembly will discuss current challenges in the global economy and institute plans for its advocacy work for the next two years.

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**Public Agenda (Accra)**

**Ghana: Govt to Continue Engaging With World Bank and IMF**

Irene Mensah and Frederick Asiamah

30 October 2009

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Civil society activists and organizations that have reservations about Ghana government's dealings with the Bretton Woods institutions will have to nurture the feeling for some time to come as the end to the relationship is not anytime soon.

On Tuesday, Vice President John Dramani Mahama said government recognized and appreciated the uneasiness of social movements about these institutions. But "Government is engaging the IMF and World Bank with its eyes wide open."

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According to him, government is "using the opportunity to stabilize our economy, but still ensuring that investments in poverty eradication programmes such as LEAP, School Feeding, school uniforms programme, investment in agric are not only maintained but increased."

The Vice President was addressing the opening of the 4th General Assembly (GA) of the Social Watch in Accra. The GA was hosted by Third World Network-Africa (TWN-Africa) and Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT), Convenor of Social Watch Ghana from October 27 to 29. It was the first time the GA has been held in an African country.

A major concern of many social activists has been the conditions that are always attached to support from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The latest concern has been that Ghana is set to miss out on a much needed US\$150m World Bank support to the 2009 annual budget, following its inability to keep faith with the Bank on agreed triggers for the release of the funds (see October 19 2009 edition of Public Agenda).

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Vice President Mahama was concerned that though Ghana, and Africa as a whole, had contributed little to the global economic crisis as well as the Climate Change, yet it was these poor and developing countries, especially the poor rural women and children, which were hit hardest by the effects of the crisis.

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He was also worried about the collapse of commodity prices on the world market, noting that it was very devastating for the poor African farmer. He cited the example of sheanut which grew in the poorest parts of the country - Northern Ghana, whose picking and processing was mainly dominated by poor rural women. He said the price of the commodity had slumped on the international market with the consequence

of deepening rural poverty in that part of the country.

He praised Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Non Governmental Organisations(NGOs) for adding a new dimension to governance in

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Africa. "Indeed the persistent demands from social movements and citizen groups such as Social Watch for accountability from governments and international institutions have added a new dimension and momentum to global policy." He was hopeful that Social Watch would advocate for equal rights for all.

Welcoming participants to the event, Dr Mensah-Kutin, Convenor of NETRIGHT, indicated that the objective of this year's GA was to ensure that governments of the world helped to eradicate the crisis of food and fuel which has bedeviled the world with women and children suffering most.

Ms. Dorcas Coker-Appiah, Executive Director, Centre for Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation (Gender Centre), who chaired the opening session, indicated that women were those who bore the brunt of the current economic crisis because in developing countries women were mostly bread winners of their families. She therefore encouraged CSOs, NGOs and other private sector institutions to ensure that their governments respond to the food, fuel, shelter and other social amenity needs of their citizens.

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Mr. Roberto Bissio of Social Watch Global Secretariat said governments should be held accountable for their pledges on eradicating poverty. He added that governments and citizens have roles to play to make eradication of poverty a success. Therefore, the methods that governments employ to help eradicate poverty should be people entered.

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Dr. Rose Mensah-Kutin, Convenor of NETRIGHT, told Public Agenda in an interview that civil society shall "hold government accountable on its promise" of engaging the Bretton Woods institutions responsibly.

She explained that social movements are anxious about engagements between the government, the WB and IMF owing to their role in fostering the interests of developed economies. Against the background of the unfavourable mass effects of the structural adjustment programme and other initiatives, she said social movements felt more comfortable if developing countries played ball with the developed economies in the arena of the United Nations.

The 4th Social Watch GA held under the theme "People first: Social Watch's Response to the Global Crises" brought together over 100 participants from over 50 countries around the world.

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