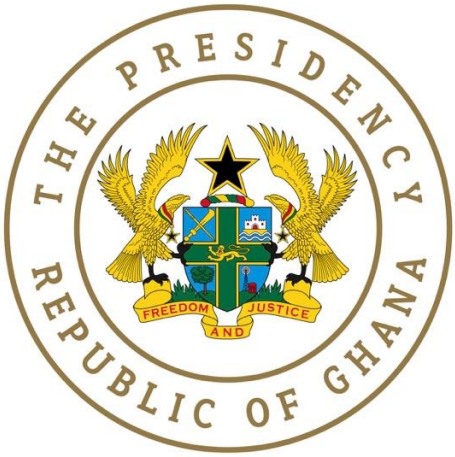

STATEMENT BY
H.E. JOHN DRAMANI MAHAMA

AT THE
PLENARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
TO COMMEMORATE THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE
OF THE VICTIMS OF SLAVERY AND THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE.

Wednesday, 25 March 2026.

Madam President,
Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Progress is made in steps. It's the forward motion toward something better, and the changes are often incremental.

Today marks the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

It is a day on which we honour the memory of the approximately 13 million African men, women and children who were enslaved over the course of several centuries.

We remember them through articles and oral histories, through broadcast programmes, books, music, visits to museums, monuments, and memorials, such as the Ark of Return, located right here at the Visitors Plaza of the United Nations Headquarters.

Through these activities, we do more than remember. We document and educate; we gain a greater perspective; we find the delicate balance of learning from history so we do not repeat it, while leaving the pain behind.

In doing so, we begin to heal, individually, within our immediate communities, and within the global community.

This day of remembrance did not happen by accident. In 2006, our global community gathered here, just as we have done today, and resolved to designate the 25th of March of the following year, a Day of Remembrance. It marked progress.

Then the following year, in 2007, we decided to make the event an annual one, so the 25th March of every year would be the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

That marked an additional step in our forward motion.

It is, indeed, fortunate to be here today, two decades later, addressing the General Assembly on behalf of the African Group, regarding the draft resolution entitled "Declaration of the Trafficking of Enslaved Africans and Racialised Chattel Enslavement of Africans as the Gravest Crime Against Humanity."

In September last year, at the 80th session of the General Assembly, I stated that Ghana would move a motion to declare the transatlantic slave trade the gravest crime against humanity.

This draft resolution is the result of months of consultation and consensus-building by continental bodies, nations, experts, scholars, and jurists, with the sole aim of achieving a united front and grounding the final outcome in truth, compassion, and moral conscience, remembrance, education, and dialogue.

Today, we come together in solemn solidarity to affirm truth and pursue a route to healing and reparative justice. The adoption of this resolution serves as a safeguard against forgetting.

I conclude with two significant quotes by two great leaders, one white, one black.

Former President of the United States of America, Theodore Roosevelt, said, “With a great moral issue involved, neutrality does not serve righteousness; for to be neutral between right and wrong is to serve wrong.”

Civil rights leader, Dr Martin Luther King, also reminds us that “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”

We have travelled the long road, each step guided by a desire to be better, to do better; each step bringing us closer to the kind of world we would like to leave for our children.

On this beautiful day in March, we are called to stand on the right side of history.

Let it be recorded that when history beckoned, we did what was right for the memory of the millions who suffered the indignity of slavery.

Let our vote on this resolution restore their dignity and humanity.

I thank you.