

SECRETARY GENERAL'S SPECIAL TRIBUTE to the late President of Ghana H.E Professor John Atta Mills

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Brussels, 30 July 2012: It was with much grief that we learned of the passing of H. E. Professor John Atta Mills, President of the Republic of Ghana. At the time of his death on Tuesday 24th July, the late President was the Chairman of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States by virtue of Ghana having hosted the Sixth Summit of ACP Heads of State and Government in October 2008. We had been working assiduously with the late President to ensure the successful hosting of the Seventh Summit which is due to hold in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, during December 2012. We at the ACP will greatly miss his wisdom, guidance and good counsel at such a momentous juncture in our history.

The English playwright William Shakespeare declared that "there are many events in the womb of time." In the Book of Ecclesiastes we are reminded that there is a time and a season for everything: a time to be born and a time to die; a time to laugh and a time to weep; a time to meet and a time to part. The late President's life was packed full of accomplishments. Born into the highly cultured Fanti people of Ghana, he attended the famous Achimota College where he was a star pupil. He later studied law at the University of Ghana, Legon. He did post-graduate studies at the London School of Economics and Political Science, completing a doctorate in Taxation and Law at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London. The late President was an accomplished law teacher at the University of Ghana and held visiting professorships at Stanford, Temple and Leiden. As an intellectual and an activist he would long be remembered for the deep sense of integrity, passion and patriotism that was infused everything he ever undertook. He was indeed a model of what Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah described as 'the African Personality'.

It is easily forgotten that, apart from his academic and political career, the late President Atta Mills was also a consummate public servant. From 1986 to 1996, he was Commissioner of the Ghana Revenue Service, at a time when the country was undergoing a major social shake-up as well as restructuring of its economic fundamentals. It is to his credit that the Ghana Revenue Service is today one of the best performing public institutions. Political Science makes it clear that there is a strong correlation between taxation and democracy.

The late Atta Mills was an unlikely candidate for the High Magistracy of the Ghanaian Republic. Frail and soft-spoken, he was always under-estimated by colleagues and opponents alike. History will testify that he was a giant. He was among the foremost crop of Ghanaian intellectuals who laid the foundations of the democracy that the country enjoys today. As a lawyer and jurist, he belonged among a select galaxy of brilliant stars. As a statesman, he governed with even-handedness, compassion and humility, as he steadfastly worked to consolidate the peace, stability, good governance and inclusive development that make Ghana a shiny beacon on the continent.

Although it was an open secret that he had been unwell, hardly anyone knew that the illness was as dire as would claim his life and take him away from us in such a sudden and irrevocable manner. The entire family of ACP nations mourns with Her Excellency Madam Naadu Mills and the family and the Government and people of Ghana for this great loss. Surely there can be no greater honour than that a man should die at the highest duty post of service to his country. In life as in death, John Atta Mills was a drum major for righteousness and justice. In the words of the Prophet Micah: "*He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?*"

Dr. Mohamed Ibn CHAMBAS

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