

# **PRESIDENT MAHAMA'S TO-DO LIST: SIX KEY EXPECTATIONS FROM GHANAIS**

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## **Introduction**

On January 7, 2025, Ghana witnessed a historic moment as John Mahama was inaugurated as the 6th President of the Fourth Republic, alongside Vice President Professor Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang. This event was significant for two reasons: Mahama became the first former President to be re-elected and sworn in again, and Opoku-Agyemang made history as Ghana's first female Vice President. The inauguration highlighted themes of regional solidarity, evident in the attendance of numerous African leaders, and the president's vision for Ghana's role in global partnerships.

In his speech, the President unveiled a four-pillar strategy aimed at resetting Ghana, focusing on economic restoration and stabilization, improvement of the business/investment, governance and constitutional reforms and accountability and the fight against corruption<sup>1</sup>. These are issues the president feels are necessary for the development of Ghana but do Ghanaians share the same sentiments as the president?

Discussions on radio, television, interviews and media reportage online showed Ghanaians hold clear expectations for the new administration, with priorities centered on key areas. Economic recovery and growth remain paramount, alongside demands for accountability and the prosecution of corrupt officials. Citizens also emphasize the need for efficiency and meritocracy in governance, as well as election of the MMDCEs. Additionally, there is a renewed interest on agriculture and rural development as discussed below.

## **Economic Recovery and Growth**

A report by Oxfam International reveals that the majority of Ghanaians live on less than \$1 a day, highlighting the widespread poverty in the country. Additionally, Ghana ranks 140th out of 189 countries on the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI). This ranking reflects the significant

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challenges faced by Ghana, with approximately 24.2% of citizens living below the poverty line<sup>2</sup>.

Therefore, it is not surprising that many Ghanaians want the Mahama's administration to make swift and decisive actions to alleviate economic hardship and set the nation on a path to recovery. They expect that the economic progress will reflect in their lives. Belinda Amuzu, a teacher from Tamale, expressed to the BBC her hope for policies that would alleviate the economic hardships faced by citizens<sup>3</sup>.

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*"I'm expecting the new government to change the economy, so that the hardship will come down." Belinda Amuzu, a Teacher from Tamale*

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Dr. Abdul Hakim Ahmed, a political and economic analyst from the University of Education, Winneba, echoed similar sentiments, urging the president to [stabilize the economy](#) and cut down expenditure<sup>4</sup>. However, Prof. Godfred Bokpin from the university of Ghana cautioned that achieving complete economic transformation and inclusive productivity growth will take significant time—possibly 15 years or more—if consistent and correct measures are implemented<sup>5</sup>. Bright Simons of IMANI agreed that the journey to economic recovery is marred with challenges, including a looming power crisis and arrears amounting to \$2.5 billion, which has to be addressed to achieve any meaningful progress. These perspectives underline the complexity of Ghana's economic landscape and the need for a sustained, long-term approach to ensure stability and prosperity.

## **Jobs Creation and Youth Employment**

Unemployment, particularly among the youth, remains a critical issue in Ghana, as highlighted by ISSER (2024). Despite being the most affected demographic, the youth form the majority, constituting about 57% of the 2024 voter register, positioning them

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<sup>2</sup> [Ghana | Oxfam International](#)

<sup>3</sup> [John Mahama: Can the president-elect meet Ghana's high expectations?](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Ghana: Mahama sworn in, vows to deliver on promises – DW – 01/07/2025](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Ghana's Mahama returns as president, vowing to boost economy | Reuters](#)

as influential decision-makers in Ghana's democratic process. Their demand for job creation as a priority is therefore justified, given the direct impact of unemployment on their livelihoods and future prospects. Many young people, like Ophelia Ansah from Accra, have voiced her [expectations](#) that the government, particularly the president, should take decisive actions to create jobs through the 24-hour economy.

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*"So, I think creation of jobs should be more, that should be a priority for the president." Ophelia Ansah, unemployed resident of Accra*

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The president's establishment of a Ministry for Youth Empowerment and Employment have further raised expectations about the need for an enabling environment for job opportunities. However, questions linger about the [feasibility and timeline](#) of implementing these initiatives to alleviate the nation's economic challenges effectively.

### **Accountability and Prosecution of Corrupt officials**

Corruption remains a major concern for most Ghanaians, with many, including Johnny Andoh-Arthur, a Social and Community Psychologist and Senior Lecturer at the University of Ghana, emphasizing that billions of Ghana cedis are lost annually to corrupt practices. He added, that this has increasingly turned politics into a burden rather than a blessing for the nation. Consequently, citizens are calling for accountability and the prosecution of corrupt officials. Dr. Asah-Asante, prior to the inauguration, stressed that the new president should demand financial accountability from the outgoing government during the handover phase. This sentiment is widely shared among the public, who believe that tackling corruption is critical for the nation's progress<sup>6</sup>.

Ghanaians from diverse backgrounds, such as Belinda Amuzu, a teacher in Tamale, according to [BBC](#) have voiced strong expectations for the new administration.

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<sup>6</sup> [Ghana: Mahama sworn in, vows to deliver on promises – DW – 01/07/2025](#)

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*"I'm expecting the new government to prosecute corrupt officials so that it will be a lesson to others." Belinda Amuzu , Teacher*

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Meanwhile, Philip Panford, a taxi driver, expressed his frustration with the previous administration to DW, stating,

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*"I know Mahama can do better, but for me, my problem now is his predecessor, which is Akufo-Addo. The mess that he caused. [Mahama] Promised us that he would deal with those who take our money. That is my expectation." Philip Panford, Taxi Driver*

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These expectations highlight the widespread desire for swift action against corruption and the hope that the new administration will deliver on its promises. However, the Operation Recover All Loots (ORAL) initiative by the president has sparked mixed reactions among the public. While some view the recovery of state properties by ORAL as a necessary and progressive step toward accountability and justice, others have raised concerns about the legality of its operations. This divide highlights the need for transparency and adherence to due process to ensure public trust in such efforts.

### **Boosting Governance through Efficiency and Meritocracy**

Members of the academia believe that the challenges Ghana faces are significant, with Prof. Godfred Bokpin telling the [BBC](#) that President Mahama's promise of a 60-member cabinet is crucial, and achieving it while doing better is critical for the country's progress.

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*"What Ghana needs right now is credible leadership, lean government and efficiency in public service delivery. Without that, there cannot be a future." Prof Godfred Bokpin*

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Dr. Kwame Asah-Asante, a political analyst, emphasized that the appointment of the 60 ministers should be based on merit rather than loyalty in order to enhance efficiency in governance. Similarly, Johnny Andoh-Arthur from Department of Psychology, University of Ghana, Legon expressed his sentiments below<sup>7</sup>.

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*“For effective delivery of President Mahama’s mandate, I suggest avoiding what I call carte blanche appointments. Instead, I propose the careful selection of individuals who possess the requisite expertise and are role models to the youth. When this is done, the youth will see such appointments as honours derived from worthy service to God and country.” Johnny Andoh-Arthur from Department of Psychology, University of Ghana, Legon*

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Reflections on appointments and public sector recruitment have often revealed a trend of rewarding party loyalties, as well as favouring family and friends, rather than prioritizing merit, expertise, and competency (Arasli and Tumer 2008). This raises an important question: can President Mahama lead a transformative change by focusing on competency, experience, and expertise over loyalty in his appointments? Dr. Kwame Asah-Asante, emphasized that the effectiveness of such an approach will depend on the president’s ability to resist political pressures and create a more transparent and performance-driven system.

### **Election of MMDCEs**

In response to President Mahama’s revocation of the appointments of MMDCEs and the 30% appointed Assembly members, many Ghanaians, including members of the [media](#), have shared their opinions on the matter. During a News Review Discussion on Joy FM, by Winston Amoah, Raymond Acquah, Mamavi Owusu Aboagye, and Kojo Yankson, the following sentiments about the election of the MMDCEs were expressed.

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<sup>7</sup> [Symbolisms of Mahama’s inauguration and urgent need for resetting our country - MyJoyOnline](#)

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*“As long as MMDCEs are appointed, they will do nothing, often serving only the interests of their party and constituency chairpersons. We have had enough of the appointment of the MMDCEs, so it is time for the MMDCEs to be elected so that they can be held accountable.”- Winston Amoah.*

*“Our local government system is a joke and we just pretend it exists as a functional unit. It is a complete joke and undermines development in many ways.”-Raymond Acquah*

*"Political parties, when in opposition, advocate for the election of MMDCEs, but once in power, it suits them to maintain the status quo. Politics takes precedence, and they use these appointments to reward party loyalties, including those who aspired to be MPs but couldn't succeed. Enough is enough." Winston Amoah*

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These sentiments are shared by many Ghanaians, who feel that the election of MMDCEs as manifesto promises is often politicized by presidential candidates to win public votes, yet successive governments have failed to fulfill their promises. As a result, many are questioning whether John Mahama will honour the NDC's manifesto commitment to amend Article 243(1) of the Constitution and implement the election of MMDCEs within his four-year term<sup>8</sup>.

Dr. Harrison Kofi Belley from Ho Technical University during the Annual New Year School at the university of Ghana, however emphasized that election of MMDCEs without the active involvement of the political parties is not sufficient. Professor Atsu Ayee added that for Ghana to maximize the dividends of democracy, then article 55 (3) must be amended to legalize political parties who are the bedrock of development to participate in the local government system to enhance inclusive development.

### **Prioritization of Agriculture and Rural Development**

A report on [Poverty and Hunger in Africa](#) showed that hunger is a common experience that results in living in extreme poverty in Africa and Ghana. Therefore, the call for

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<sup>8</sup> [News Review: President Revokes MMDCEs Appointments](#)

prioritizing food production and rural development by Ghanaians, especially those in rural areas is justified. Godfred Bokpin, a finance professor at the University of Ghana, highlighted the urgency of addressing basic needs, telling [Reuters](#),

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*"We can talk about the skyscrapers and complex things, but the reality is that the average Ghanaian is hungry. You must prioritise food production."*

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This sentiment highlights the pressing need for policies that directly tackle food security and uplift the agricultural sector. Meanwhile, Mohammed Abubakar, a 50-year-old farmer from Tamale, expressed his hope for President Mahama to focus on rural development for a better future<sup>9</sup>. The combination of rural development initiatives and increased investment in agriculture could address immediate needs and rural-urban migration while laying the foundation for sustainable growth<sup>10</sup>.

## **Conclusion**

The voices of Ghanaians calling for a government that prioritizes the essential well-being of its people over less urgent, ambitious projects reflect a collective desire for practical and immediate solutions to pressing challenges like unemployment and poverty. These expectations underscore the need for policies that directly address the everyday struggles of citizens, particularly the youth, who are pivotal to the country's future. However, whether the government will meet these demands remains uncertain and will ultimately be judged by the tangible outcomes delivered over time. This will require sustained commitment, transparency, and accountability to bridge the gap between promises and action.

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<sup>9</sup> [John Mahama sworn in as Ghana's president, promises to 'reset' the country | Politics News | Al Jazeera](#)

<sup>10</sup> [A renewed promise: Resetting Ghana's future - The Business & Financial Times](#)