

June 17, 2022

PRESS RELEASE

THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL AND MATTERS ARISING

I. INTRODUCTION

1) The National Cathedral represents a key moment in our national life. As the President explains it: “as a deeply religious people, the National Cathedral provides a historic opportunity to put God at the center of our nation’s affairs, and serves as a symbol of our eternal and continuous gratitude to Him, for the favors that He continues to shower and bestow on our Nation.”

2) With an auditorium space of 5000 expandable to 15,000; chapels, and prayer rooms, it provides the missing infrastructure for solemn national occasions like state funerals, presidential inaugural services, and national thanksgiving services. As an infrastructure, it also provides a platform for Christian unity for the over 70% of our population who are Christians, thereby fostering national cohesion, as the Supreme Court agreed in its January 23, 2019 seminal ruling in favour of the project. In a context where our politics is retrogressively partisan, and our church landscape problematically denominationalized, such unity and cohesion are essential to our future.

3). The addition of Africa’s first Bible Museum that has a thematic focus on the role of Africa, and Africans, in the Bible; and the Biblical Gardens of Africa that includes the trees, shrubs and flowers of Bible, provides additional relevance for the National Cathedral project. Potentially, therefore, it enables the development of the country into a major site for religious pilgrimage – a religious hub and a home for African Christianity. Ultimately this is aimed at radically transforming our tourism industry, by serving as a major source for revenue mobilization, and job creation.

4). The Cathedral and Museum will also serve as a convening platform for National, African, and Global conversations on the role of faith and national transformation. The addition of an “economic engine” to this national monument consisting of multiple revenue sources, including multipurpose rental spaces, 1000+ seater banquet hall, a 350-seater restaurant, café, shop, theaters, conference hall, etc., introduces a sustainable model for managing our national monuments.

5) The development of such infrastructure **always** involves upfront investment that might seem to be competing with other societal needs. Yet the history of economic development shows that the economic impact of such projects is almost immediate once the project is completed. In the meantime, there is an economic benefit in the building of the project resulting in new jobs and the benefit to those supplying construction equipment and materials. Increase in tourism is one of the best ways for a country to create "new " revenue, not just regurgitate existing revenue. For instance, the prospects of attracting even just 10% of the over 600 million Christians in Africa as religious tourists – who may aspire to visit the National Cathedral at some point in their lives – present a

major economic opportunity for the country. Similarly, the growing interest in the project by black churches in America augurs well for the National Cathedral, and the country.

Yet, four years into the development of this historic, and game-changing project, questions still persist about the nature of the project, its funding, and its relevance to the nation.

This Press release responds to the ongoing discussions in the country focusing on the following issues: i) the nature of the National Cathedral project, and whether it is private or public ii) the legality of the disbursement of state funds, including Seed Money, to the National Cathedral project, iii) the status and membership of the Trustees, v) the status of the construction, and finally, vi) the state of financing and fundraising

The Press release clarifies these sets of issues, and concludes with a call to elevate the discussions on the National Cathedral project.

II. THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL: PUBLIC OR PRIVATE?

2) In his first official announcement on the project on March 6, 2017 the President underscored the nature of the project as a national cathedral for interdenominational worship services for the nation. Subsequent elaborations, led to three main reasons as the rationale for the project, namely i) gesture of thanksgiving ii) symbol of the Christian presence and contributions to the nation, and iii) a personal pledge to God. Of these three reasons, the personal pledge came to be associated with the Cathedral as a “private” project that needed to be developed without state support.

3) For the avoidance of doubt, the National Cathedral is a National Monument, and thus a public, not private, project. Legally, the National Cathedral of Ghana is a state-owned company limited by guarantee, and was incorporated under the Companies Act, 1963 (Act 179) on July 18, 2019.

4) We hope this brings to a closure the seemingly vexatious issue of whether the National Cathedral is a private or public initiative. The National Cathedral is a National Monument and Asset, and not a Private project. It is, however being developed in partnership between the state and the church.

III) DISBURSEMENTS FROM THE STATE: LEGAL OR ILLEGAL?

5) The President, in introducing the National Cathedral indicated that although it was a National Monument, he is determined that its building would not put undue financial burdens on the state. Thus, the President proposed a partnership between the State and the Ghanaian Christian community, at home and in the Diaspora, to develop it. Within the partnership, the role of the state was specified as follows:

- Appointment of the Architect and Design team
- The Land and its Preparation
- Setting up and equipping the Secretariat, and
- Seed Money

6) The release of the Seed money, as the Finance Minister indicated in his Talking Point discussion on June 13, 2022, is thus a practical response to the commitment made by the state to the National Cathedral project, which the Minister for Finance informed Parliament, and the nation, in his Budget presentation in November 2018.

7) Given the need for the public to understand this partnership, in particular the role of the state, **all** publications from the Secretariat, including the *National Cathedral Update*, sent individually to members of Parliament, include this structure and the role of the state. “Seed Money” for the National Cathedral, as part of the role of the state in the project, should therefore be public knowledge.

8) Following a procurement process approved by the Public Procurement Authority (PPA), and with the input of the Attorney-General, a contract was developed and signed between the office of the President and Sir David Adjaye and Associates in August 2019 for full Architectural and Engineering Services for the project. It encompassed the following services:

Architects
Structural Engineers
Civil Engineers
Envelope Engineers (Facade & Roof)
Geotechnical Services
Mechanical Engineers
Electrical Engineers
Public Health Services (Plumbing)
Fire Safety Engineers
Transportation Engineers (Lifts)
Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
Traffic impact Assessment
Geotechnical Report
Network Survey
Lighting / Sustainability
Signage
Landscaping
IT / AV
Auditorium Acoustic / AV
Kitchen / Catering
Health & Safety - Design
Quantity Surveying / Procurement
Project Management

9) Payments to the consultants, Adjaye Associates, is therefore based on this contract signed in August 2019 between Adjaye Associates and the Office of the President. These payments represent the fulfillment of the State's commitment in the "Appointment of the Architect and Design team", and is separate from the Seed Money for the construction of the edifice.

10) Following the signing of a Letter of Intent (LOI) between the Board of the National Cathedral and the contractors, negotiations for the release of part of the Seed Money promised by the state was concluded and the first tranche of the Seed Money, the cedi equivalent of \$25m, representing 10% of the total cost of the project at the time, was released on November 25, 2020.

11) Incidentally, the Minister for Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs, Hon Ebenezer Kojo Kum, informed Parliament about the \$25m seed money from the government to the national cathedral project during his vetting in February 2021. And this was reported extensively by the media (<https://www.gna.org.gh/1.19938118>). This first tranche of Seed Money was used for the mobilization of the contractors to the site, site excavation, builders works, equipment and materials, the design of the integration of a Bible Museum and Biblical Gardens to the project, and operational issues related to the domestic and international fundraising activities of the National Cathedral. The second tranche of Seed Money of GHS 25m cedis was released in May 2022 to pay the contractors for work described in section IV.

12) **All** the disbursements from the state to the National Cathedral, therefore, have been based on the framework for the state's participation in the National Cathedral project. And the procurement of services using these funds have all been within legal procurement practices.

13) Similarly, the establishment of positions at the Presidency for the National Cathedral of Ghana is a practical response to the state's commitment to "set up and equip the Secretariat" of the National Cathedral. These positions are used to coordinate and mobilize for the project.

14) These positions notwithstanding, the National Cathedral Secretariat works to keep costs down, by operating with a very thin staff, and using volunteers, including national service personnel, and seconded personnel from the churches --- whose remuneration are covered by the sponsoring church.

III. THE STATUS AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE TRUSTEES

15) On January 13, 2017 the President inaugurated a 13-member Board of Trustees made up of leading clergy in the country. This was clergy appointed not as institutional representatives of church denominations, but rather as individuals with influence and visibility in the various church denominations.

The National Cathedral was registered as a company limited by guarantee, to be used as the instrument for the construction and management of the National Cathedral. The company was legally registered on 18th July 2019.

The Board of Trustees had to be registered as the Directors of the company. A member of the Trustees, Dr Mensa Otabil, the General Overseer of the International Central Gospel Church, had indicated that he couldn't give the needed attention to the project so didn't register.

So, Dr Mensa Otabil did not resign from the Board as being alleged, but excused himself at the point of registration of the Directors in July 2019. For the avoidance of all doubt, Dr Otabil has not been a member of the Board or Trustees since July 2019.

Dr Mensa Otabil, nonetheless, remains actively interested in the project and continues to share his views on strategy with the Secretariat.

The continuous use of his name and pictures on the websites and publications was an administrative lapse by the Secretariat.

IV. THE STATUS OF THE CONSTRUCTION

16) A rigorous international procurement process ultimately led to the selection of a joint venture led by the Italian firm, Rizzani de Eccher, whose project portfolio includes the Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi; and two of the leading construction firms in Ghana, Messrs Barbisotti & Sons, and De Simone. The consortium of these three leading construction firms namely: **Rizanni de Eccher, BARbisotti & Sons, DE** Simone together formed the **RIBADE JV**

17) Construction has started, but to understand the scale of work that has been done already, it is important to understand the following general details:

The Cathedral includes the following :

- Seven (7) levels - Two (2) basement levels and five (5) upper levels making it the highest civic building in Accra with a height of about 50m (cf. Job 600/Parliament offices is 45m) as a stand-alone structure and with the bell tower reaching 58.5 M high
- Total internal area of 86,000 m²
- external civic realm including gardens, driving and walkways encompass 36,000 m²

Works executed on Site

- The NCG Site Establishment is completed - 5 cranes were purchased and delivered to site, 3 cranes have been installed to date, a concrete batching plant has been set up in the East Gardens, a Rebar cut and bending yard has been set up, Offices, Staff Canteen, Wash-and Toilet Blocks, Warehouses, Storages, Laydown areas, etc. have been set up. Further establishments items like management, site staff, security, technical equipment and machinery, generators, tools, etc. have been provided by the contractor.
- Area of about 70,000 m² has been cleared
- About 120 Trees within the construction perimeter have been retained

- Existing Services on Site (Electricity, Water, Sewage and Telecommunication) have been relocated
- About 230,000 m³ have been excavated and removed from site
- About 1,400 m³ concrete has been laid so far
- About 1.900 to of Rebar have been purchased and delivered to site
- About 220 to of Rebar have been installed to date
- About 10,000 m² Waterproofing material has been purchased and started to be installed

18) A project with the magnitude of the National Cathedral requires a substantial amount of preparation before structure begins to rise from the ground and visible to the general public.

Construction has stalled for the time being due to the vagaries of the fundraising, but should restart soon.

V. FINANCING AND FUNDRAISING FOR THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL

19) Besides the state financing, a fundraising strategy has been developed by the Trustees to operationalize this state-church partnership envisaged by the President for the development of the National Cathedral. The strategy has four elements, namely:

- **Mass Mobilization Strategy**, at the heart of which is a 100-cedis-club, which seeks to mobilize a million Ghanaians able, and willing, to give 100 cedis a month to the project. A short code *979# has been developed for this purpose.
- **Church Mobilization**, including statutory budgetary support from the churches, and a National Cathedral Week, which for 2022 is slated for July 4-10
- **Private Sector Strategy**, at the heart of which is a Business roundtable to mobilize Christian businesses, and Christian businessmen and women, to financially support the project.
- **International Fundraising**, which includes Ghanaian Diaspora churches, and other international actors who support the vision of the National Cathedral Project.

The Board of Trustees would be holding a Press conference on June 27th, 2022 during which they will launch the National Cathedral Week slated for July 4-10, 2022.

At the Press Conference, they will also provide a comprehensive overview of our financing and fundraising efforts, and the targets going forward.

V. CONCLUSION:

20. Throughout the sixty-five (65) years of our nationhood, a number of long-term infrastructural projects have often been discussed without the dispassionate analyses of cost and long-term value.

This historic, and game-changing project, - the National Cathedral of Ghana - deserves a more elevated national conversation on its nature, funding, and relevance than has been the case so far.

The Secretariat of the National Cathedral commits to this elevated discussion on the project, and to an open and transparent process of communication, to achieve this.

Please direct all requests for information to the Executive Director at the National Cathedral Secretariat.

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In the service of God and Country,



Dr. Paul Opoku-Mensah

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National Cathedral of Ghana