



COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTORATE  
JUBILEE HOUSE - ACCRA

26<sup>th</sup> June 2022

**For Immediate Release**

**RE: RESPONSE TO HON. SAMUEL OKUDZETO ABLAKWA'S RECENT CLAIMS ON THE PRESIDENT'S TRAVEL TO BELGIUM, RWANDA**

I have taken note of the Facebook statement by Hon. Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, made in response to my press release of Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> June, where I sought to clear inaccuracies and untruths peddled by the Member of Parliament for North Tongu.

Ordinarily, there would not have been the need for a second response to a matter that has been dealt with conclusively. However, the determination of the Honourable Member of Parliament to shift the goal post, and run-away conveniently from statements he boldly made on Thursday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, has necessitated this response.

Like many well-meaning Ghanaians, I was hopeful that Hon. Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa would do the needful, and apologise for the false allegations he made regarding the President's trip to Belgium and subsequently to Rwanda. However, and unsurprisingly, he has refused to make the honourable concession.

Having been exposed to the country, he has now sought to create a new set of facts, in the hope that we will forget what he told the Ghanaian people in his Thursday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> statement. We will not forget, neither will the Ghanaian people.

Let me remind the North Tongu MP of what he said on Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> June. He stated categorically that **"for President Akufo-Addo's current trip to Belgium and Rwanda beginning Sunday the 19th of June, 2022 ... we can confirm a conservative bill of €480,000... The 480,000 Euros which is derived from 21 hours of total flight time plus other industry charges works out to some 4.1million Ghana Cedis at current exchange rate."**



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To someone who has a basic understanding of the English Language, the aforementioned statement by the MP clearly indicates that the cost of President Akufo-Addo's trip to Belgium from Accra, and then to Kigali, was aboard a chartered flight, and cost the nation €480,000.00. This is plain, simple English, and no amount of verbal gymnastics by the MP can alter the import of his statement.

I was hoping that he would back up this claim of the President having travelled to Brussels aboard a chartered plane, as his Thursday statement suggested. Unashamedly, he refused to make mention of it, let alone apologise for it.

Again, after being caught out on the Accra-Brussels-Kigali lie, the Honourable Member of Parliament tries to justify the so-called "21-hour" cost of the flight with some voodoo charges. What is shocking, in his Friday statement, is the admission of the fact that he does not know for a fact the cost of the charter. The so-called €480,000 cost he is bandying about is the result of guess work, and on the reliance of a "generous 21-hour cost analysis". He provides no evidence or documentary proof whatsoever to back up his €480,000 cost claim, because he has none. Once again, it is obvious that the Honourable Ablakwa finds these attacks on the President to be his pathway to political prominence through negative propaganda, and is determined to pursue this course, no matter how ridiculous and insulting his statements are.

He further states that, if Brussels Airport was closed due to the strike, President Akufo-Addo could have arrived in Kigali "through the many (other) busy transit routes", for example Paris. For Hon. Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, the President, sitting in a cafe at the train station in Paris, with practically no official security around him, and waiting to board a train, is of no moment. The State owes it a duty to be fussy about these things, even though the President may not be fussy about them. Is it acceptable to Hon. Ablakwa that the President cannot attend engagements that he is spending his valuable time to make because connecting flights get cancelled? Or that he has to wait around airports because flights have been delayed? Or, as happened in his last trip, he arrives at his destination from an overnight flight without any luggage of his arriving with him, such that he cannot even have a change of clothes to make the appointment he travelled for in



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the first place? It is a shame that an honourable Member of Parliament has no regard, whatsoever, for the security and safety of his President.

In his statement, the MP conveniently avoids the issue of President Akufo-Addo having to arrive from Brussels to Kigali on time to participate in the commencement of the Pan-African Vaccine Manufacturing Project, a project which is a collaboration between Ghana, Rwanda and Senegal. This event and the President's participation was one of the reasons for which the decision was taken to charter a flight for the President, so he could arrive on time, demonstrate Ghana's solidarity, and deliver his far-reaching remarks at the start of this strategic Pan-African project. I am sure that the people of Ghana will recognise this as a good reason for the President to travel. Undoubtedly, the Hon. MP's motives are not well intentioned, as he is merely seeking to score cheap political points to incite public disaffection against the President.

Hon. Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa states that "less endowed countries" continue to keep faith with their jets, and tries desperately to compare them with our presidential jet. Of course, they would. As the Ranking Member on the Committee on Foreign Affairs in Parliament, he should know that the presidential jets of "less endowed countries" in the West African Region, for example, are far superior to what Ghana, West Africa's second biggest economy, can boast of. Niger has a Boeing 737-700(BBJ); Mali an Airbus A319; Burkina Faso a Boeing 727; Chad a Boeing 737-74Q(BBJ); Togo a Boeing 707-3L6B; Cote d'Ivoire an Airbus A319; and Senegal a new Airbus "A320 Neo". Which of these aircrafts, operated by "less endowed countries", in terms of capacity and flight range, can Hon. Okudzeto Ablakwa compare to Ghana's Falcon 900EX?

It is important to put on record that the President's trips, since he assumed office in 2017, have been immensely beneficial to the country, the latest being his trip to Belgium, in connection with the financial assistance to Ghana from the European Investment Bank for both the establishment of the Development Bank Ghana (which has been in the offing for the better part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic), and for the construction of a vaccine manufacturing plant in Ghana. It is noteworthy that the country's search for a solution for the perennial lack of long-term financing for the



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private sector in Ghana has been going on for the better part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic, and it is through the President's efforts that we now have a vehicle and the means to provide it in Ghana. Is Hon. Ablakwa suggesting that the construction of a vaccine manufacturing plant is not essential to the development of Ghana? It seems that he, to quote President Kufuor, knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing.

Quite apart from the financial and other bilateral and multilateral benefits that his travels bring, such as the successful Year of Return initiative which has made Ghana the destination of choice for African Diasporans and other leisure and business tourists, and the impressive conduct of Ghanaian diplomacy which secured the location of the Secretariat of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to Accra, the profile of the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic, under the Presidency of Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, has never been as high or strong on the world stage. But, of course, that is an inconvenient truth for the likes of Hon. Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa.

It is, therefore, unfortunate that Hon. Ablakwa would throw out such a cheap shot as that the President flies around for the purpose of "meet me there". That kind of language, with respect, cheapens any discourse on these matters. The President's so-called "meet-me-there" has brought the entire US Congressional Black Caucus and the Speaker of the US Congress to Ghana, in turn motivating Africans in the Diaspora to come to Ghana, where some have decided to make our country their second home. It has brought the first Google Artificial Intelligence Centre in Africa to Ghana, which is partnering 84 young Ghanaian start-ups, being run by young entrepreneurs. It has also brought the Twitter HQ in Africa to Ghana; it has brought Volkswagen, Toyota, Nissan, Sinotruk Assembly Plants to Ghana, with Isuzu soon to follow. There are several other critical investment initiatives that the President has led from his travels.

Stranger still is the clear impression I get that Hon. Ablakwa does not seem to know that a key part of the President's job is to travel and engage in economic and political diplomacy, and to project the image of the country abroad, in order to maximise its investment potential. Sad that, as a former Deputy Minister and



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current MP, he does not appear to appreciate this. I am confident that the people of Ghana do. Presidential jets are not meant to provide Presidents with luxurious lifestyles, but to afford them the means to carry out effectively all the tasks of the modern President.

Indeed, one may be tempted to ask just what benefit our nation has derived from Hon. Ablakwa's foreign trips as Ranking Member on the Foreign Affairs Committee of Parliament, ostensibly, to "inspect" Ghana's Foreign Missions?

We must all, sincerely, acknowledge that these ultimately unproductive discussions about the cost of presidential trips would have been obviated had the far-sighted decision of the 2<sup>nd</sup> President of the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic, His Excellency John Agyekum Kufuor, to procure two (2) presidential jets not been altered by the government of his successor, as a result of the same kind of propaganda that the North Tongu MP is engaging in today. President Kufuor placed orders for the current presidential jet, the Falcon 900EX aircraft, for short haul travel, and a 120-seater Airbus A319 for long haul travel. Due to populist reasons, the processes for the acquisition of the larger Airbus A319 aircraft, which could have been used for both long haul and short haul travel, and which would have accommodated the President's entire delegation, including security and media personnel, were scrapped in favour of the smaller Falcon 900EX aircraft, which seats fourteen (14) people for short-haul travel and between eight (8) to ten (10) for longer haul travel. Having trivialised the importance of secure and efficient presidential travel, the successor government, of which Hon. Ablakwa was a loud member, had no option but to cancel the larger aircraft to the detriment of the country. We are reaping the rewards of the bitter seeds sown, and this is why sincere and candid public discourse on such matters must be undertaken at all times.

It is worth pointing out that the President is known to have travelled widely as a private citizen, and, perhaps, with the exception of Svalbard in Norway, there is no place he has visited as President that he had not known before.

President Akufo-Addo continues to work for the development, progress and prosperity of Mother Ghana, and is determined to chart a sustainable path out of



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the current difficulties confronting the citizenry. The Ghanaian people reposed their confidence and trust in him in the elections of 7<sup>th</sup> December 2016 and again those of 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020, and he will continue to work hard to discharge this mandate satisfactorily.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eugene Arhin".

**Eugene Arhin  
Director of Communications  
Office of the President**

