

**“Effective Governance, Leadership and Morality in Public Life”**

**Lecture Delivered by Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the  
Secretary General and Head of UNOWA,  
Special Guest Speaker at the 5th Annual Dr. Sheikh Usman Nuhu Sharubutu  
Ramadan Lectures in Accra**

**17 July, 2015**

Chairperson,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Guests

It is a great pleasure for me to be among you today, for the 5th Annual Dr. Sheikh Usman Nuhu Sharubutu Ramadan Lectures. When I consider the caliber of those who have preceded me in doing honour to a great leader, I feel highly privileged that I have been asked to give the 5<sup>th</sup> Ramadan Lecture in honour of the Grand Mufti of Islam in Ghana. As you all know, last year’s lecture was given by no less a person than our dear former President John Kufuor – a man who has continued to dedicate himself to providing Ghana with leadership on many scores, including effective governance that has a reasonably high sense of public morality.

No one would deny the fact that the National Chief Imam of Ghana, in his own right, will be counted among dedicated leaders who had shown leadership by example; over the years has demonstrated leadership imbued with a high level of public morality. The Sheikh’s religious and peace-building role in our country and beyond has taught us that effective governance, leadership and morality in public life are not a monopoly of political office holders only.

Dr. Sharubutu has been leading us for many years by giving ethical and moral leadership in Islam and more. Everyone would readily agree that many situations that would have resulted in conflagrations elsewhere have been easily doused by his interventions, as a dedicated lover of peace. He has, over the years, continued to demonstrate exemplary qualities: selflessness, restraint, equity, probity, fair-mindedness, devotion to duty, and highest ethical standards - for all citizens to emulate. I have personally been privileged to be his friend. Patience and constant striving for social justice are among the things I have learned from him and applied to many situations at home and abroad. I am happy to report that I have been better for it in my relations with family, friends, colleagues and associates. I wish our dear father and Sheikh many more active years as a leader who inspires us and is worthy of emulation in all aspects of our lives and especially with regard to Islam, peace and stability in our country and continent.

Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ethics and morality are firmly rooted in the core teachings of most religions. Islam is no different in this respect. One of the cardinal tenets of Islam has to do with the devotion of the self to a month of abstinence. The month of Ramadan, which we have concluded, is a month when Muslims around the world are constantly reminded of values that are crucial to leadership driven by public morality and targeted at effective governance. These values include: tolerance, patience, fairness, forgiveness, charity, sacrifice, truthfulness and so on. Ramadan is a period of contemplation, reflection, compassion and reconciliation for the benefit of self and society, both materially and spiritually. The observance of Ramadan should be a means to bring strength and the earnest will to live in peace together with fellow humans. It is a month when we extend our hands to all of humanity in genuine brotherhood. This quest for perfect peace was an inherent attribute of the great

Founders of various faiths, who practiced fasting and self-denial as the path to spiritual enlightenment and the promotion of Peace, Love, Mercy, Justice and Forgiveness. A leader should imbibe these basic tenets which Islam and other religions promote as the bedrocks of ethical living in society.

Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The topic “Effective Governance, Leadership and Morality in Public Life” suggests that we should be looking at effective governance (also known as good governance) as a function of good leadership imbued with a strong moral fibre in public service. As a point of departure, we need to share meaning or establish a common compass on the key words or ideas in our topic: effective governance, leadership and morality (in public life).

In dealing with the virtues of our grand patron and spiritual leader, Sheikh Sharubutu, I hope I have made it clear that the topic I have been given is larger than only those who seek political office in the executive or legislative arms of government, that is, people we tend to refer to as politicians. We do understand that there is good governance and leadership in running other human affairs in society. Dr. Sharubutu has been demonstrating positive leadership infused with high morality as he provides good governance in a religious institutional arrangement in Ghana. However, I will be looking at the situation with greater reference to politicians who invariably provide the more obvious formal leadership in society.

The need for effective government and leadership can be traced back to the origin of mankind, when bands of families came together to constitute communities for their common survival. This nascent organizational arrangement eventually resulted in the acceptance of a central, higher authority. Ever since, the idea of

effective governance – or good governance –has connoted predictable, open and transparent policy making. It suggests an executive that is accountable for its actions; it involves a legislature that is made up of the people’s legitimate representatives, who debate and approve bills; it embraces a judiciary that interprets and applies laws as well as societal codes to specific situations.

The Mo Ibrahim<sup>1</sup> Foundation defined governance “as the provision of the political, social and economic goods that any citizen has the right to expect from his or her state, and that any state has the responsibility to deliver to its citizens.” Defining governance as the interaction between the State and its citizens involves seeking collective answers. Thus, effective government and governance are participatory, transparent and inclusive. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has provided guiding principles for good governance, which are commonly accepted. These benchmarks are participation, consensus oriented, equity and inclusiveness, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, transparency and the rule of law.

Applying all these principles in decision making can be very complex. How they play out in practice in determining a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and sustainable human development and in determining the requirements for achieving such development depends on the historical, cultural and social contexts of the society in question. The ultimate objective of the process should not only be the results of the exercise of power, but also how well power is exercised for the common good, and how legitimate it is perceived by the citizens. In this context, leadership is essential as recalled by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation: *“Governance and leadership lie at the heart of any tangible and shared improvement in the quality of life of African citizens”*

In effect, I can safely suggest that effective or good governance is the organization and the process of the governing which caters to the safety, security, socio-economic, civic and political needs of a people in a democratic, inclusive, participatory, transparent, accountable, efficient, effective, and equitable manner.

There is no doubt that leadership is crucial if we are to realize good governance over society.

Leadership is that awesome responsibility of being the rallying point for the conceptualization, articulation and consummation of a people's aspirations, goals and accomplishments. To be a leader, therefore, is to be the face, the symbol and the representation of a people. To be a leader is to be a pathfinder, a beacon, a torch, a model of the collective best of the people. To be a leader is to demonstrate the uncommon ability to plot a way out when a people are faced with a thicket of obstacles and engulfed by a dark cloud of confusion, a cul de sac of sorts. To be a leader is to belong to all and bear the burden of all without belonging to any personal or particular interest. To be a leader is to realize that one has been entrusted with a sacred trust and a rare privilege to be handled with the utmost care and the supreme interest of the people always at the forefront of all other considerations. One's comportment must be such that others in society see special qualities in a leader that make them willingly agree to follow his or her lead.

Such special qualities that propel people to follow another human being derive from the morals and norms of a particular society. So, morality in public life in this context refers to the fortitude to be mindful and respectful of societies' moral sensitivities. It is to be sensitive, faire and just. It is to be prudent. It is good sense to apply such consciousness and care in dealing with those you are leading. It is common or moral sense to know that there is no justification for official profligacy

while millions wallow in abject squalor and misery around you. It is the good sense to know that public resources put in your trust are not yours; they are solely for procuring and ensuring the welfare of the citizens. It is the moral sense to know that your needs are exactly the same as those of the hewer of wood and drawer of water. It is ensuring equity for all.

Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us now see the interplay of the foregoing ideas – to show that good governance is a function of good leadership and sound morality in public life. The first question then is: What will it take for a leader to deliver good governance?

- A democratic political environment
- Well-developed public institutions
- The supremacy of the rule of law
- An edifying value orientation on the part of all, leaders and followers alike
- The leader's own personal qualities and endowments: courage, wisdom, knowledge, uncommon vision such as shown by leaders such as Nkrumah, Nyerere, Mandela, Awolowo whose ideas continue to shine the path for generations long after they have departed; fair-mindedness, conscious and consistent commitment to equity, sincerity and honesty (you don't ask the people to tighten their belts while you are loosening yours).

Isn't the good leader, thus, a bastion of moral endowments?

Yet, the more difficult element of the equation is praxis of public morality. It raises so many questions:

- How morally upright can a leader be? – particularly a political leader, who, forever, is marrying and balancing incompatible interests and goals, as well

as juggling personal preferences and prejudices. This dilemma is what S. K. Baily (“Ethics and the Public Service,” in *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 24, No. 4, Dec. 1964, pp. 234 – 243) captures as the “moral ambiguity of men and measures” – men used to refer to decision makers, and measures implying policies and decisions.

- How many political leaders have the moral temerity to risk beneficial, populist policies that could endanger their re-election chances?
- How many political leaders can shun pressures from acolytes to divert money from the public till to fight elections?
- How many political leaders can punish those in the trenches with them during the heady days of electioneering, even when they commit unpardonable malfeasance and crimes in office under their watch. We must salute the current Ghanaian president who fired a female minister for privately boasting about her ambition to make a million dollars in office. Somewhere else, a female minister who bought two armoured BMWs with public money at incredibly inflated prices received a soft landing even as the scandal became a major paralysis of sorts for good governance.
- How many leaders can refuse to be helped to rig elections or shout out that the election that got them into office was not without blemish as the late President Yar’Adua reportedly did at a meeting he had with the UN Secretary-General?
- How many leaders are mindful that their profligacy and corruption in office are a major part of the reason why there are no desks and chairs for pupils in schools, no drugs in hospitals, no water, no roads, no light? In an African country, a study of its budget a couple of years ago revealed that the budget of the Presidency was more than the combined budget allocations to the country's key social sectors - education, health and agriculture!

Let me pause and tell a joke a friend once told me:

The late President Juvenal Habyarimana was said to have called the late President Mobutu Sese Seko on phone shouting for help because the rebels – as he called Kagame’s Rwandan Patriotic Front - were moving rapidly towards Kigali.

Mobutu’s response was to ask: “How are they coming?”

Startled, President Habyarimana retorted: “How else? Of course by road”

Mobutu gently quipped: “But I told you not to build roads”.

Laurent Kabila’s experience in moving from one end in the east to Kinshasa took so long and illustrates how not to build a country. But the moral is that with time, Kabila did arrive in Kinshasa as Mobutu fled Gbadolite to enjoy villas he had maintained in Europe at the expense of better quality of life for the Congolese people.

- How many leaders are worried in Africa that the bulk of their budget is spent maintaining public officeholders, while capital projects and basic services are left unattended to year in, year out?

These discouraging queries notwithstanding, the political leader who must deliver good governance knows that he must still govern from a high moral ground from where he leads from the front as an exemplar of high moral standards, without which a government will be soulless and unconscionable. He must know that no decision is ever going to mean the same thing to all citizens: it is always different strokes for different persons. Dr. Anil K Sinha reminds us that "A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and patience to



listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leaders but becomes one by the quality of his actions and integrity of his intention."

But the leader must still operate such moral consciousness that propels him to always strive for the greatest good of the greatest number. In essence, ensuring social justice becomes crucial for good governance that is based on ethical and morally upright leadership. Here, I would like to quote late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. He stated: "I am not interested in power for power's sake, but I'm interested in power that is moral, that is right and that is good for the people".

How many leaders in Africa really understand that power is not held for the sake of power but that it is a trust to do what is right and good for the people? If they were to do, we would not have been involved in the many upheavals, revolutions and coups that this continent has witnessed in the last 50 years and still continue to witness in many parts of the continent where leaders have eschewed social justice.

The import of social justice for good governance is not new. As Ibn Khaldun many centuries ago remarked: *"Nations can survive and rise without religion but not without social justice. If we cannot provide our fellow-citizens equal access to the opportunities of education, health and employment, no prophecy is required to predict the disintegration of the nation."*

Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The cardinal goal of governance, leadership and morality is to ensure the greatest good for the greatest number of citizens, to improve the lives of the peoples.

How then has Africa fared in good governance driven by good leadership which is in turn powered by solid public morality?

With the wave of democratization which has infused governance across the continent for about two decades now , and with the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs, henceforth) guiding African governments, the dividends of democracy are beginning to manifest in improved governance and economic growth. The 2014 UN report on the Millennium Development Goals notably states: “Sub-Saharan Africa has put its lost decades behind and made significant strides on the social, political and economic fronts since the turn of the 21st century”

Apart from the UN MDGs, there have been other inspiring initiatives lifting the standard of governance in Africa. These include the African Peer Review Mechanism of the African Union, the Mo Ibrahim and the World Bank programme of collaborative governance. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) ensures that the policies and practices of participating countries conform to agreed values in the following areas: democracy and political governance, economic governance, corporate governance and socio-economic development. In turn, the World Bank Institute has established a world-wide programme labelled *collaborative governance*, through which it connects and leverages international expertise on good governance through global, regional and country-based institutions and practitioner networks. It does this by supporting collaborative exchanges, enhancing social accountability and transferring leadership skills to push for reforms: those are seen, indeed, as a key factor benefitting governance. The Mo Ibrahim Foundation established the Ibrahim Prize to celebrate excellence in African leadership and showcase exceptional role models from the continent. It is awarded annually to a former Head of State or Government with Executive responsibilities. To qualify for the award of the prize, a nominee needs: to have been democratically-elected, to have stepped down after serving the

constitutionally mandated term, and to have demonstrated excellence in office. Every year, all 54 African countries are monitored and progress on the 95 indicators is assessed and measured. In its 9 years of existence, the prize has been awarded to 5 former heads of state. In 2009, 2010, 2012 and 2013 there was no winner in all the 54 African countries.

Beyond rapid democratic transformations since the 1990's, there have, indeed, been continuous economic growth and macroeconomic stability. In West Africa, we have seen how the private sector, especially in the areas of telecommunication, finance, retail, trade, housing and construction, has expanded. Simultaneously, an African middle-class has grown in strength. New technologies are spreading rapidly across the continent, leading to accelerated access to information and communication. There have also been considerable improvements in human development, in terms of welfare, health and education. UNDP welcomes the fact that close to 90% of African children now have the chance to attend primary school, and that disparities between boys and girls in enrollment have narrowed. Remarkable gains have also been made in the fight against malaria and tuberculosis, and health indicators in general. The likelihood of a child dying before age five has been nearly cut in half over the last two decades. Africa is described as the world's second fastest growing economy, boosted by new discoveries of oil, gas, and other mineral resources, and growing inter-regional trade.

Unfortunately, this economic development has not been felt equally by all Africans. While some countries such as our own - Ghana - and others such as Botswana, Mauritius, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa to name a few, are growing and consolidating democratic achievements, others remain stuck in protracted

conflicts: insecurity, increasing threats of terrorism and extremism, religious divides or internal political feuds remain much too often obstacles to steady economic growth and increased welfare for the people. Economic growth has not benefited the poorest and women's participation in decision making remains marginal. Insufficient planning and rapid urbanization leave cities unable to provide basic services such as housing, power, water, not mentioning jobs. Youth unemployment is increasing. Many countries, despite being endowed with tremendous amounts of natural resources, are unable to harness those benefits for economic growth and to the benefit of the people. In a context of sustained demographic growth, it is all the more urgent to improve the redistribution of wealth and create job opportunities.

Evidence from the Ibrahim Index of Africa Governance (IIAG) demonstrates that democratic governance is fragile in most countries in the West African sub-region, for example. The data suggests that since the year 2000, the Africa governance scores have not changed significantly. In some countries such as Guinea, Liberia and Niger the scores have retrogressed.

A combination of structural and institutional factors has often been used to explain the democratic deficit in Africa. These include weak representative institutions such as parliaments, *lack of moral leadership*, a dearth of informed and active citizens and an often feeble civil society.

Some analysts argue that the primary weakness of governance in Africa can be traced to the tiny size of the middle class in most countries. In the cases where a sizeable middle class has been emerging such as in Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya, institutional factors have impeded improved governance. Furthermore, weak

institutional factors have been used to undermine the stability of countries in West Africa as reported by the West African Drug Commission in 2014. The report confirmed that an estimated \$1.25 billion worth of cocaine was trafficked from West African countries to other parts of the world in 2014. Interestingly, the total national budgets of a bulk of the countries in the region are beneath the estimated drug money of \$1.25 billion. In short, poor governance predisposes countries to security risks.

Furthermore, there are constant reminders that the exercise of power can corrupt any leader, and bring him to breach basic rules of morality and ethics, and ultimately bring disgrace upon his subjects. Personal and political ambitions, when left unchecked, lead to prejudice and violence, waste of resources and misery, instead of ensuring the welfare of the society. Abuses of power may also lead to revolutions, as witnessed across Africa at the end of the 80's and recently when the unmet aspirations of the people brought unrest and ultimately forced changes in North Africa and Burkina Faso. Let us therefore learn from history.

Let me recall here President Sawyer's 2005 book *Beyond Plunder: Toward Democratic Governance in Liberia*, which retraces the resurrection of a democratic state in Liberia: following years of pillage, carnage and chaos, changes were only made possible by new constitutional arrangements and governing institutions that differed markedly from those of the past. As part of lessons learned, President Sawyer identified the determining factors of a strong political leadership, willing to implement necessary reforms including in national institutions and administration.

At this junction, I call on all of us to demonstrate leadership within our respective communities and societies in order to promote the permanent eradication of

poverty and share prosperity. Kevin Kruse, an American entrepreneur who extensively wrote on “Leadership and Employee Engagement,” defines leadership as “a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others, towards the achievement of a goal”. It has nothing to do with seniority or one’s position in the hierarchy of the society; it has nothing to do with titles and has nothing to do with personal attributes. Citizens are eager to see changes in the way governments are working, with greater transparency and accountability. This is the key to legitimacy. Indeed, it is proven that countries with strong institutions prosper better and faster. We should therefore participate in building open, effective and accountable institutions to support human development in our countries, leaving no one behind.

I cannot end my presentation today without a comment on violence and impunity in our political firmament. This is the ugly side of our democratic dispensation otherwise touted as a model on the African continent. The recent events in Talensi and in Bimbilla have, once again, brought to the fore the urgent necessity to address these two cankers - vigilante violence and impunity. When the leading political parties - the NDC and the NPP - and traditional authorities cannot trust and rely on constitutionally authorized law enforcement agencies, and have to resort to recruiting armed non-state vigilante groups, then something is broken that needs to be fixed.

In his column, “*From My Roof Top*”, in the Daily Graphic of Wednesday July 14, Kofi Akordor asked a poignant question, “What have machetes, guns, clubs, stones and other offensive weapons got in common with elections?” The obvious answer, as he suggests, is none whatsoever except, sadly in our part of the world where exercising an inalienable constitutional right of choosing one’s leaders could be

turned into an act of war. In a similar vein, how does trying to uphold a simple customary practice become a declaration of war resulting in the loss of more than twenty lives?

Boko Haram terrorism and Niger Delta militancy both had their roots in violent citizen vigilante groups that operated with impunity in the North-East and South-South zones of Nigeria respectively with the sponsorship and connivance of political, traditional, religious and business leaders. Let us in Ghana learn from this current history of Nigeria. Let us stamp out this rising violence and impunity before it turns our beautiful and peaceful country into a Hobbesian jungle where everyone is left to fend for him/herself and life is, “violent, short and brutish”.

So what do we do? The National Peace Council should urgently convene a national dialogue on vigilantism, violence and impunity to interrogate and throw the spotlight on these heinous and destabilizing phenomenon that threatens our still young democracy. We must all recommit and dedicate ourselves to the supremacy of the Constitution and the rule of law. Let us have a dispassionate national discourse on how to fight back against growing vigilantism, violence and impunity. This is especially called for as we approach 2016 which will be an election year. In this regard, my Office, the UN Office for West Africa and the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator will be happy to partner with the National Peace Council as part of the UN’s efforts to ensure a peaceful, enabling environment for credible elections. Nigerians have always learned from Ghana’s democratic experience. Perhaps this time Ghanaians, especially the political leaders, should also listen to former President Goodluck Jonathan who said before the last presidential elections that “the ambition of no politician is worth a single drop of blood of any Nigerian.” The time to act is now.

To conclude, I seize this opportunity to congratulate a father figure to many of us, my spiritual leader and friend Dr. Sheikh Usman Nuhu Sharubutu, the National Chief Imam. A great leader, scholar and peacemaker. We thank God for sparing all of us to successfully see the Ramadan through. I pray that Allah will continue to favour our Grand Mufti with long life, wisdom and fortitude, and to continue his good leadership for the betterment of Ghana.

**Thank you and Salam Allekum.**

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