**PEACE MESSAGE FROM THE N.D.C. GROUP IN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA, DELIVERED BY HON. BENJAMIN QUARSHIE AT THE INTERNATIONAL PEACE SUMMIT, SOUTH AFRICA, 2024**

**Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guest, Ladies and Gentlemen, and all established protocols**

I stand before you today, honored to represent the National Democratic Congress (NDC), Ghana’s biggest social democratic and pan-Africanist political party, to add our voice to this crucial conversation on promoting peace, security, and development as we prepare to conduct this very important election to further accentuate South Africa’s democratic credentials.

As the sun rises over the horizon of history, casting its golden rays upon the African continent, we, in the NDC, and I dare say Ghanaians altogether, stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in South Africa as they embark on a journey of democracy once more. Today, as South Africa prepares to cast its vote in the sacred ritual of electing a leader on May 29, 2024, we are reminded of the indomitable spirit that courses through the veins of this great nation.

I must say, I deem it an honour, distinguished guests, to address this esteemed gathering on behalf of the leadership and the rank and file of my party, the National Democratic Congress. I extend warm regards from H.E. President John Dramani Mahama to each of you and express deep gratitude to the International Ambassadors of Peace Network (IAPN) for their unwavering dedication to promoting harmony and collaboration globally. Your tireless efforts in bridging cultural divides and fostering unity among nations are truly praiseworthy. I must also add, that a summit such as this, held before election, is very crucial in promoting dialogue among all stakeholders, ensuring the renewal of our commitment to peace in our effort to entrench the democratic credentials of this beautiful country.

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

Let us pause for a moment to reflect on the turbulent waters through which South Africa has sailed. From the shackles of apartheid to the beacon of hope in the form of Nelson Mandela, South Africa's journey has been one of resilience, courage, and triumph against all odds. It is a testament to the power of unity, forgiveness, and the unwavering belief in a better tomorrow.

**Excellencies,**

Our two countries, South Africa and Ghana, have several commonalities. I am deeply moved by the parallels between our two nations. Just as Ghana, under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, paved the way for independence movements across Africa, so too did South Africa's struggle against apartheid ignite the flames of liberation across the continent. Our histories are intertwined, our destinies entwined, bound together by the threads of freedom and justice. Our collective struggle and aspirations, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, bestowed the responsibility of looking out for each other and supporting each other on us, as comrades and brothers, in the struggle for self-determination and prosperity. After all, our first President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, declared that “our independence in 1957 was meaningless unless it was linked up with the total liberation of the African continent." So, for us Ghanaians, to wish South Africa well is to wish ourselves well, because when South Africa prospers, we prosper. This was true yesterday, and even truer today.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Democracy is not just a system of government, but a promise of equality and the power of the people. The utmost priority in any democratic process are the people whose mandate we seek to form a government that will ultimately serve them. Today, as South Africa stands at the crossroads of democracy, let us reaffirm our commitment to the principles that unite us—principles that put our people and their collective best interests first. Let us honour the sacrifices of those who came before us by exercising our right to vote with wisdom, courage, and integrity. For in the ballot box lies the power to shape the destiny of our dear nation, to chart a course towards a future where every voice is heard, every life is valued, and every dream is within reach.

It is therefore important that we do everything possible to ensure that our people are able to go through the process of election seamlessly without any eventualities. For this to happen, institutions that play very important roles in the provision of security and in the supervision of the elections should, bearing in mind that they are servants of the people, work diligently to ensure a smooth, transparent process.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This year is a watershed moment for Africa’s democracy. 19 countries are gearing up for elections. While South Africa goes to the polls in a few weeks, Ghana will follow suit in a few months. The concentration of two-thirds of elections in the last quarter shows the continent's firm commitment to multi-party democracy.

Here in South Africa, in Ghana, and across many African states, political parties spring up every now and then to challenge the status quo. The good news is that there is, so far, a battle of ideas and a healthy competition over who can serve the people better. Such competitions afford our people the opportunity to make sound choices, and to a large extent, the presence of such healthy political competition serves as a form of check on incumbents to do their best. We must be proud of this, for in democracy's dance, every voice finds its sway, and liberty's song paints the colours of the day.

After six and eight uninterrupted peaceful elections, respectively, since 1992, Ghana and South Africa have become experts in their own rights in the conduct of elections. I must commend the independent Electoral Commission of South Africa for the work done so far and further encourage the electoral management body to be diligent, transparent, and cooperative with all stakeholders to deliver a very credible election once again.

**Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As the echoes of history reverberate through the corridors of time, I urge all of us here gathered and the great nation of South Africa as a whole to stand shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand, as guardians of our democracy, champions of justice and fairness, and as stewards of peace before, during, and long after the elections. Let us build bridges across political divides here in South Africa, forge alliances across borders as comrades in Africa and beyond, and march forward as one people towards a brighter, more prosperous democratic Africa for all.

This, ladies and gentlemen (on behalf of the National Democratic Congress), is my solidarity message with the good people of South Africa. May this election be a beacon of hope, a celebration of freedom, and a testament to the enduring power of peace and democracy.

**Thank you.**