

Ghana Compact Citizens' Convention

SUMMARY

The **Citizens' Convention for the Compact for Ghana's Political and Economic Transformation** took place in Accra on June 18-19, 2024, drawing 510 participants representing numerous key citizens stakeholder groups, including: political party delegations, government agencies, civil society organizations, the trade union congress, women and youth groups, traditional and religious leaders, professional associations, private sector groups, district representatives from across the country, and university students.

The convention was the culmination of a multi-dimensional consultation process around the Ghana Compact initiative, driven by the African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET) in collaboration with seven key policy institutes and think tanks in Ghana.¹ The Compact aims to put Ghana on a more secure path forward by bringing a better balance to democratic processes and bringing citizens into the policy dialogue. The goals of the Ghana Compact are three-fold:

- To provide a platform for setting a shared vision for the future of the nation.
- To outline collectively agreed solutions for the many challenges Ghana faces.
- To identify targets for tracking progress toward the agreed vision.

The Compact initiative began in earnest in December 2022. During that time, the Compact consortium conducted research studies to identify key policy areas for the Compact to prioritize and produced technical papers to serve as an evidence base. An extensive outreach and engagement was then undertaken to build consensus and ensure buy-in for the Compact goals.²

The Citizens' Convention was a testament to the passion, ideas, and energy of Ghanaian citizens from all walks of life coming together with a united goal: to build a better future for the country.

The outcome was a Citizens' Declaration for a social contract between citizens and government to take the initiative forward. The declaration was adopted by acclamation at the end closing session; it is included at the end of this summary. Detailed Articles, with the goals and targets for the relevant issues and challenges, are drafted and will be finalized soon.

¹ The organizations are the Center for Democratic Development (CDD), Afrobarometer, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG), IMANI, the Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research (ISSER), and the Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT).

² This included technical consultations with partner institutes, stakeholder engagements with eminent national institutions and groups, meetings with manifesto committees of two leading political parties—the National Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC)—and district-level citizens' engagements across eight of Ghana's regions, in collaboration with the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE).

Building consensus at the convention

To ensure that all the participants were well equipped to engage in meaningful discourse, policy experts shared a high-level overview on the various Compact thematic areas in plenary, highlighting some of the key issues and the specific goals and targets proposed over the past two years of engagements. The thematic areas covered were: gender equality, youth employment and skills, vision and planning, fiscal responsibility, private sector development, climate change, and health. The expert panelists also set the tone for subsequent breakout sessions, challenging participants to deliberate diligently and agree on specific goals and targets for each of the areas. Participants then broke into smaller groups for more detailed discussions on the proposed goals and targets.

Each participant took part in two breakout sessions, one on each day, and each breakout session had an average participation of 50-70 individuals. A resource lead offered technical assistance during the discussions and a facilitator walked the participants through a voting process to reach final consensus.³

Each breakout yielded a set of issues, actions, and targets, which were then used to update and finalize the various thematic Articles to be attached to social contract declaration.

Overarching issues: good governance and corruption

Additional plenary and breakout discussions focused on good governance and corruption, exploring the gap between Ghana's potential for development and actual outcomes. Participants acknowledged that the country grapples with corruption, inefficient public administration, and inadequate regulatory frameworks—all of which collectively erode public trust and impede effective governance. These challenges underscore the necessity for comprehensive governance reforms aimed at enhancing transparency, accountability, and public sector performance.

The convention therefore concluded that a Code of Good Governance should be formulated to lay the foundation for effective governance. The code would tailor international best practices to Ghana's socioeconomic and political circumstances. It would include an action plan for widespread dissemination, implementation, and monitoring.

³ Participants went through a voting process to help them reach a consensus. They used color codes to indicate their stance on each proposed goal and action: green indicating a complete agreement, yellow indicating some reservation, and red indicating a complete disagreement. Where participants indicated either yellow or red, they had the opportunity to express their concerns and make suggestions for further discussion until a clear consensus was reached.

Reaffirming values and civic education

In his opening remarks, K.Y. Amoako referred to a line from the historic song by Ghana’s Ephraim Amu: “whether a nation prospers or does not prosper depends upon the character of its citizens.” As such, the convention prominently featured the theme of values and civic education, including a spirited dialogue between four citizens from different generations that addressed how mindset and social responsibility impact development. Participants thereafter affirmed the constitutional role of the National Center for Civics Education and urged successive government to provide it with the budgetary resources it needs to carry out its mandate.

Accountability mechanisms

At the convention and throughout the consultation process, all stakeholders expressed a strong view that accountability mechanisms are needed to ensure the social contract produced by the Compact is not just a document but a living commitment that evolves to support Ghanaian needs equitably. Ghana’s historical record—wherein government commitments have often fallen short of citizens’ expectations due to a lack of continuity in planning—underscores this need. The convention endorsed three broad recommendations:

- Establish an accountability panel by the first quarter of 2025, consisting of a council of elders and the key members of Ghana-based civil society institutions, to facilitate government engagements and political prioritization of the social contract.
- Create a public online dashboard in 2025 to track development progress, including social contract commitments and related government actions, overseen and updated by the National Development Planning Commission in collaboration with the Open Government Partnership and the Ghana Integrity Initiative.
- Create an independent Ghana Compact Secretariat at ACET to generate annual reports on social contract progress and policy papers for government action.

Constitutional reforms

Lastly, convention participants shared a common view: the 1992 Constitution has served Ghana well but should be reformed to meet modern needs. The Hon. Osei Kyei Mensah-Bonsu, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, briefed participants on the report of the Constitutional Review Consultative Committee (CRCC), established several months ago in collaboration with the Ghana Compact. He shared several recommendations in plenary, focusing on the ones that directly relate to the objectives of the Compact. Participants then were given the opportunity in breakout to engage in more in-depth discussions—asking questions, making comments, and sharing further recommendations for the committee’s consideration to take forward.

Citizens’ Declaration for a Social Contract with the Government of Ghana

I. Preamble

We, as citizens of Ghana, recognizing the enduring social contract between the government and the people as enshrined in the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, affirm our natural and inalienable right to secure for ourselves and posterity the blessings of liberty, equality of opportunity, and prosperity. In this spirit, we reaffirm our commitment to the principles of justice, equity, and mutual respect through transformative governance in Ghana.

United by our common desire for a prosperous, equitable, and sustainable future, we declare our expectations for transformative governance in Ghana. This declaration is the result of extensive consultation and engagement with key segments of Ghanaian society, including the private sector, civil society, the informal sector, academia, and public institutions, reflecting their unique challenges and opportunities.

We assert that our process involved rigorous analysis of Ghana’s experiences during the fourth republic, learning from past successes and shortcomings. Culminating at the Citizens’ Convention held on June 18-19, 2024, representatives from major sectors of society gathered to distill the most pressing issues for Ghana’s transformation, crystallizing our collective vision and aspirations for the future we want. This declaration outlines our expectations to guide governance in Ghana as we approach our 100th year of independence in 2057.

II. Our commitment

Together, we commit to strong national values of patriotism, hard work, service, integrity, and loyalty that are critical for building the future we want. We also commit to work collaboratively as citizens to achieve transformative governance that reflects the will and aspirations of the Ghanaian people.

Recognizing the need to stay true to the elements of this declaration, we further commit to hold the government accountable to this declaration through an accountability mechanism that reflects the milestones for our aspirations over time.

III. Our call

We call upon our government to commit to this social contract and work collaboratively with all stakeholders to achieve these goals. Together, we can build a Ghana that is prosperous, equitable, and sustainable for current and future generations.

On **Gender Equality**, we call for:

1. **Equal Opportunities.** Ensure gender equality in education, employment and political participation.
2. **Protection from Violence.** Strengthen laws and enforcement mechanisms to protect individuals from gender-based violence and discrimination.
3. **Economic Empowerment.** Promote policies that support women's entrepreneurship and access to financial resources.

On **Education**, we call for:

1. **Quality and Accessibility.** Ensure access to quality education for all, irrespective of geographical location or socio-economic status.
2. **Teacher Training and Support.** Invest in continuous professional development for teachers and improve their working conditions.
3. **Curriculum Development.** Update the national curriculum to include skills relevant to the modern economy, including digital literacy and critical thinking.

On **Health**, we call for:

1. **Universal Health Coverage.** Provide universal access to quality healthcare services, including preventive, curative, and rehabilitative care.
2. **Health Infrastructure.** Invest in health infrastructure, particularly in rural and underserved areas.
3. **Health Workforce.** Increase the number of trained health professionals and improve their working conditions to ensure a robust health workforce.

On **Private Sector Development**, we call for:

1. **Business Environment.** Create a conducive environment for private sector growth through regulatory reforms and improved access to finance.
2. **Support for SMEs.** Provide support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through training, mentorship, and market access initiatives.
3. **Innovation and Technology.** Encourage innovation and the adoption of new technologies to enhance productivity and competitiveness.

On **Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability**, we call for:

1. **Adoption of Sustainable Practices.** Implement and enforce policies that promote the use of renewable energy sources, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and protect natural resources.
2. **Climate Resilience.** Develop infrastructure and systems that enhance the country's resilience to climate change impacts, especially for vulnerable communities.
3. **Education and Awareness.** Increase public awareness and education on environmental conservation and sustainable practices.

On **Youth Employment**, we call for:

1. **Job Creation.** Implement policies that create sustainable job opportunities for the youth, particularly in emerging sectors such as technology and renewable energy.
2. **Skills Development.** Invest in vocational training and skills development programs to equip young people with the skills needed for the job market.
3. **Youth Participation.** Foster youth participation in decision-making processes at all levels of governance.

To achieve what we are calling for, the government must plan wisely and manage its finances responsibly. We therefore make the following overarching calls:

On **National Planning**, we call for:

1. **Financial Autonomy and Adequate Funding of NDPC.** Enforce Clause 17 of the NDPC Act to provide the Commission with block funding from Parliament, allowing it to frame its own budget.
2. **Constitutional Amendment.** Amend Articles 86 and 87 to give NDPC's plans binding authority across successive governments and decouple NDPC from the Office of the President.
3. **Strengthening NDPC's Role in Budget Integration.** Enhance NDPC's role in integrating long-term plans with the annual budget and resource allocation.

On **Fiscal Responsibility**, we call for:

- 1. Transparency and Accountability.** Enhance transparency in government spending and ensure that public funds are used effectively and responsibly.
- 2. Debt Management.** Implement prudent debt management strategies to avoid unsustainable borrowing and ensure fiscal stability.
- 3. Revenue Mobilization.** Strengthen domestic revenue mobilization through efficient tax systems and the reduction of tax evasion.

Acknowledging that many of the above goals will require constitutional reform, we ask for the adoption and implementation of key reforms to enable the aspirations of this Declaration to be realized.

May God bless our homeland Ghana and make her great and strong.