STATEMENT BY HE JOHN DRAMANI MAHAMA,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA AT THE LEADERS' EVENT-
UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE, COP 21

President of the COP21,
Excellencies Heads of States and Governments

This record attendance of 150 Heads of States and Government to this international conference in Paris is not only reflective of the importance of the subject we are discussing, but also it is a statement of solidarity with the people of Paris. This gathering sends a statement to those who seek to attack us, that we shall not be cowed by their violence.

Statements made on this stage this morning have been very powerful and give me much hope that we will come away from Paris with effective consensus.

"Here in Paris, we shall decide on the future of our planet" President Hollande said.

"This is a pivotal moment" "History is calling" said SG Ban Ki Moon.

As we gather here in Paris, one can only regret the decades that have passed in which we did nothing but argue whether climate change was real. Now we know better. We probably are at a tipping point already.
In my country the effects of climate change are beginning to manifest. Several years of erratic rainfall are affecting agriculture production. Reduced rainfall volumes have also affected electricity generation from our major hydro dam on the Volta River. This has made us seek thermal generation based on fossil fuels and liquid natural gas.

We have lost 7 million hectares of rain forest over the last half century and currently have just a little over a million hectares of natural rainforest left. As part of climate change mitigation, we intend to convert more of our people from the use of fuel wood for cooking and provide them with cooking gas in order to slow the phenomenon of deforestation currently affecting the savannah and Sahelian regions of West Africa.

Newly discovered reserves of Gas offshore Ghana will enable us to phase out the use of crude oil and petroleum for the production of energy by the year 2025.

Ghana supports strongly the project of the Great green wall of the Sahara and Sahel initiatives. We hope this will establish an effective barrier to slow down the steady southward drift of the Sahara desert.
China has achieved a historical feat of raising the largest number of people out of poverty in the shortest time. Many more people in Africa, parts of South East Asia and South America still live in poverty. What is the development model for raising these people out of poverty without further upsetting the fragile balance of our ecosystems?

As far as I know, No planet has as yet been discovered that is habitable for humanlife. So the question we must ask is, How many more earths would we need to sustain the lifestyle we deem as modern and developed. The current high consumption western style societies cannot be the model that countries like mine must follow.

We must accept as emerging countries, that while we urge the developed world to turn around and reduce emissions, we must at the same time realize that we also cannot tread on the same path to development.

In my country Ghana we have been pondering on our options. We have been seriously considering which strategies would be the most viable, which strategies would realistically create change. Through these discussions, what comes to light is that in our society the very concept of development is different than that in other societies.

We must model our development on clean energy,
Ghana has submitted its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) on our climate change strategy and is determined to achieve ambitious cuts in greenhouse gases.

Ghana seeks an agreement here in Paris that is binding measurable and respected by all.

This gathering Paris meeting is a make or break for saving our planet and preserving it as a sustainable home for the human race. I wish to assure the people of the world that we their leaders will take up the moral challenge. We shall respond to the call of history.