

## A CONVERSATION WITH RT. HON. TONY BLAIR

Poor governance remains one of Africa's biggest challenges. In this regard, accelerating the continent's progress from the current state requires a rethink of development and governance issues. As part of the **Institute of Economic Affairs' (IEA)** mission to promote good governance in Ghana and across the African region, the IEA in collaboration with the Tony Blair Africa Governance Initiative (AGI) hosted a roundtable discussion on the theme: '**Governance and Development in Africa**' with **Rt. Hon. Tony Blair**, former Prime-Minister of the United Kingdom (1997-2007).

In the welcome address by Dr. Charles Mensa, Board Chairman of the IEA, he congratulated Rt. Hon. Blair for the establishment of the Blair Institute for Global Change – an Institute that is focused on strengthening effective governance. Dr. Mensa argued that the challenging issue in African economies is the nature of our own economic policies. In his opinion, although many African states are independent they are still caught up in practicing old "colonial economics". They prioritize to produce raw materials for the factories of the world instead of our own factories.

Rt. Hon. Tony Blair in his remarks thanked the IEA for its valuable role in promoting democratic values and political stability in Ghana. He also complimented Ghana for the peaceful transfer of power in the 2016 election. He stated that a country's governance is a critical factor to seize the opportunities of the modern and globalised world. According to Rt. Hon. Tony Blair, effective governance is a key challenge to most leaders in Africa. He thus called for leaders to build the capacity of officials around them in order to deliver on their priorities.

Speaking about his commitment to Africa, Rt. Hon. Tony Blair stated "*My commitment to Africa is strong as ever*". In his view, Africa faces a historic opportunity to make the kind of economic leap that Asian countries have made over the last 30 years. Africa needs to look beyond aid to an era of partnership and collaboration; Africa's future belongs in the hands of African leaders and its people, he added.

The roundtable discussion was well attended by prominent guests from the Diplomatic Corps, Civil Society, Traditional Leaders, Government Officials, Parliamentarians, Media Practitioners and the Private Sector. Among these guests were; H.E. Ron Strikker, Ambassador, Royal Netherlands Embassy; H.E. Jon Benjamin, High Commissioner, British High Commission; Ms. Melinda Tabler-Stone, Deputy Head of Missions, US Embassy; Mr. Lasse Udsholt, Counselor for Development, Danish Embassy; Mrs. Jean Mensa, Executive Director, IEA; Dr. Edward Brown, Director of Policy Advisory Service, ACET; Hon. Kojo Oppong Nkrumah, Member of Parliament; and Hon. Dr. Zanetor Agyeman-Rawlings, Member of Parliament, among others.

The event came to a close with a media briefing where media practitioners had the opportunity to interact with Rt. Hon. Tony Blair.

29<sup>th</sup> March, 2017.