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Criticality Analysis of Governance & Economic Issues

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Criticality Analysis of Governance Issues

August 24–30, 2025





What is the Criticality Analysis of Governance Issues?

The output of good governance is socioeconomic development that has greater impact on the citizens. Government takes the wheels of affairs of the state on the back of the many promises made to the electorates. Yet, it is no easy task when it comes to the processes and mechanisms required for true public services delivery. It must follow policy guidelines religiously, maintain the social contract, avoid excesses and wastages, and be an accountable steward of that which it has been entrusted.

IMANI Centre for Policy and Education in a bid to monitor the processes and mechanisms for public services delivery has devised the Criticality Analysis to evaluate the key actions of the government in this pursuit. The Criticality Analysis follows the major news reports on the key governance issues categorised under the following six (6) themes:

1. Policy and administration.
2. Transparency and accountability.
3. Anti-corruption.
4. Peace, security and stability.
5. Human rights and justice.
6. International relations and development

The Criticality Analysis assesses the key governance issues by employing rigorous narrative analysis. First, we collect the key governance issues from reliable and credible news sources. A preliminary screening is conducted to filter out low-impact and non-governance related issues. The issues are then categorised under the 6 main themes. The criticality analysis is not a performance assessment of government actions.

During the assessment, critical attention is paid to the factual accuracy of the reports, relevance and timeliness, and impact and significance. In view of this, the reports are corroborated by analysing same from multiple sources and monitoring the trends and development. In addition, expert opinions on the key issues are analysed to inform the final output of the Criticality Analysis which includes our recommendations for policy and practice to enhance public service delivery and accountable stewardship



Oobake Vs. Akwaaba: Navigating Ethnic Heritage and National Unity in Ghana

When a new welcome sign went up at the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park earlier this spring, few predicted it would ignite a national conversation about identity. The sign read "Akwaaba" in Twi and "Woezor" in Ewe, words that have long stood as Ghana's official, internationally recognised greeting. But the omission of the Ga word "Oobake" provoked an immediate online uproar among Ga community leaders and youth activists. Within days, the sign was taken down and reprinted, this time emblazoned not with "Akwaaba" but with "Oobake." Even at the Kotoka International Airport, the country's global gateway, advertisers and brands eagerly followed suit, plastering the reclaimed Ga greeting across billboards and social-media feeds.

At first glance, this may look like a simple linguistic correction. Yet in Accra, the ancestral home of the Ga-Dangme people, language is inseparable from history, political clout, and questions of belonging. Earlier in 2024, the Ga Mantse, Nii Tackie Teiku Tsuru II, publicly expressed his desire to then-President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo on renaming Greater Accra the "Ga-Dangme Region."

The president responded with a light-hearted jab, reminding the Chief that formal renaming is his prerogative, but the exchange underscored deeper tensions. After all, Ghana already boasts an Ashanti Region and Bono Region, each bearing its dominant ethnic group's name. Why, Ga advocates ask, should Accra be exempt from that same recognition? An ethnic group within the country has been allowed to design and hoist its own flag, and its Chief uses an emblematic coat of arms as his vehicle's number plate on official travels, even to the Presidency.

Social-media skirmishes have since grown more heated, with some comments veering toward ethnic superiority. And every sharp retort in a tweet or Facebook post risks planting seeds of division that could be exploited for political instability. Here, the latest Afrobarometer data on national and ethnic identity offers a sobering backdrop. In Ghana, only 22 percent of respondents today say they feel more Ghanaian than tied to their ethnic community, a dramatic fall of 22 points over the past decade. Meanwhile, two-thirds (67 percent) profess equal attachment to both national and ethnic identities, and the share of those who prioritise ethnic identity alone has crept up from 4 percent to 11 percent.

At face value, these numbers suggest a healthy balance: Ghanaians by and large embrace their heritage without rejecting their citizenship. Indeed, 85 percent of citizens affirm that "other Ghanaians think of me as a citizen just like them," and nine in ten say they would welcome a neighbour from a different ethnic group or would have no objection to a close family member marrying an "outsider." Yet beneath this veneer of tolerance lies an undercurrent of mistrust. Fewer than half of Ghanaians (44 percent) report that they trust people from other ethnicities "a lot" or "somewhat," leaving 56 percent who trust them "just a little" or not at all.

Perceptions of unfair treatment mirror that uneasy ambivalence. Sixty-five percent of Ghanaians insist their ethnic group is never discriminated against by government, but nearly one in three (33 percent) say bias occurs, 19 percent say it happens "sometimes," while 14 percent say it happens "often" or "always." Though Ghana's democratic institutions have fostered far fewer ethnic flashpoints than those in many other African states, such grievances still simmer. The fear is that incremental slights, from a misplaced welcome sign to the absence of a Ga appellation on official maps—can be magnified by social media into calls for exclusive privilege or even separatism.

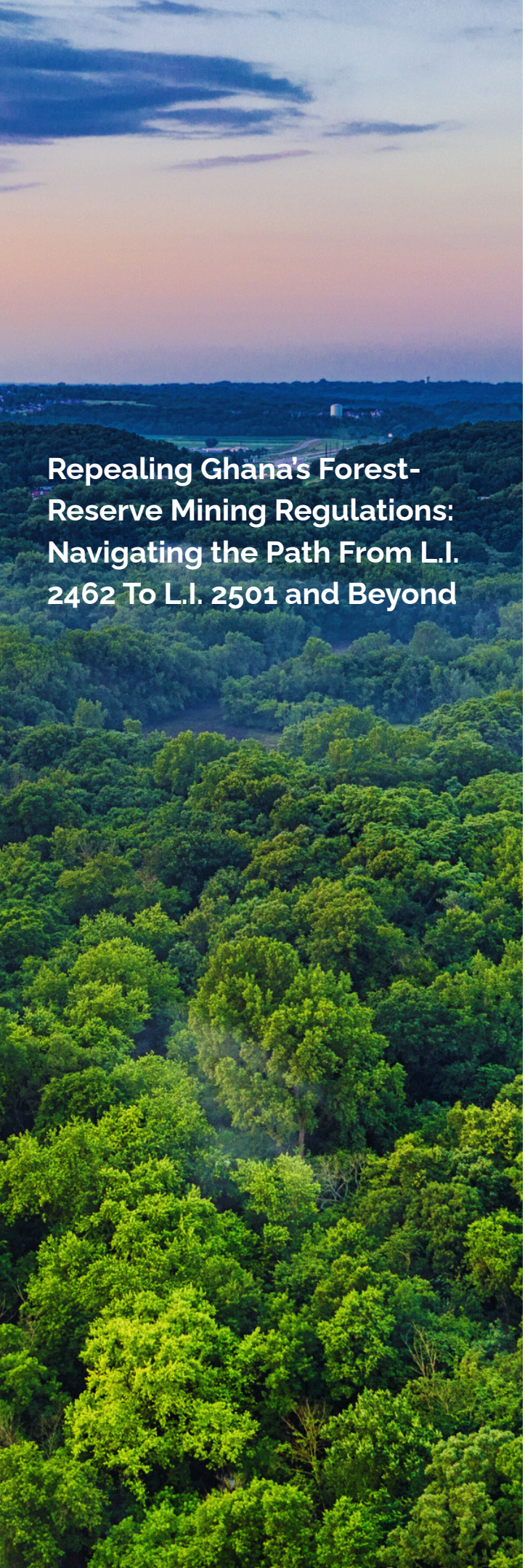
Volta Region separatists learned this lesson the hard way when their movement was crushed under treason charges in 2019. As the late scholar Claude Ake observed in 1973, many African states remain politically fragile precisely because "the loyalties of their subjects tend to be focused on primary groups, such as tribes, instead of on the more ecumenical institution, the state." Ghana's leaders face the same dilemma today: how to uphold constitutional guarantees of cultural expression while reinforcing pride in the Ghanaian nation.

At this critical crossroads, policy choices matter. Government and civil society must double down on inclusive programming that weaves ethnic traditions into the national narrative, through festivals, curricula, signage, and public ceremonies, without allowing any one group to co-opt state symbols for exclusive gain. A pragmatic way forward might include rotating language displays on official buildings, establishing inter-ethnic youth councils, and strengthening local governance structures to ensure every chief's voice is heard but none is elevated above the republic.

The Ga greeting "Oobake" deserves its place on Accra's walls and airport terminals, just as "Akwaaba" and "Woezor" reflect Ghana's broader tapestry. Yet restoring a single word cannot substitute for the deeper work of building trust across communities. If Ghana is to remain West Africa's model of peaceful pluralism, it must reaffirm that its first allegiance is to the national red, yellow (with a black star), and green striped flag, the anthem, and the 34 million citizens who together make up one nation in diversity. The welcome we offer will truly ring out for all when this is done.

Further Reading

- AD940-PAP23-Africans-struggle-with-interethnic-trust-but-embrace-coexistence-Afrobarometer-27jan25.pdf



Repealing Ghana's Forest-Reserve Mining Regulations: Navigating the Path From L.I. 2462 To L.I. 2501 and Beyond

Ghana's struggle against the scourge of illegal mining has entered a new chapter with the government's bold decision to repeal both L.I. 2462 and its subsequent amendment, L.I. 2501. What began in 2019 as a targeted subsidiary instrument to regulate mining in forest reserves has evolved into a complex legal tapestry and now stands on the brink of total dismantlement. As officials proclaim that no "regulatory vacuum" will emerge from this sweeping repeal, some commentators warn that the fine print may leave critical gaps in environmental oversight and licensing.

L.I. 2462 was originally conceived to impose clear restrictions on mineral exploitation within forest reserves, carving out an exceptional presidential power to greenlight projects deemed in the "national interest." Three years later, L.I. 2501 revised that framework: erasing the presidential override, reallocating licensing authority squarely to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Minerals Commission, and beefing up conservation-first clauses. In theory, these amendments strengthened inter-agency coordination and tightened rehabilitation bonds, but they also generated fresh friction over institutional mandates and the EPA's role.

Fast forward to today, and the government is preparing to strip away both regulatory layers entirely. Proponents argue that the primary statutes, the EPA Act, the Minerals and Mining Act, and the Forestry Commission Act already furnish comprehensive powers for permitting, enforcement, and remediation. According to the acting Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, repealing these subsidiary instruments simply excises redundant text without stripping any substantive authority from existing bodies. In this telling, the core legal machinery hums on, untouched.

Yet this confident narrative collides with warnings from civil-society observers. IMANI CPE's CAGI of March 16–22, 2025, recalls the late Environment Minister's caution that a full repeal would effectively hollow out the EPA's jurisdiction over forest-reserve mining, justifying that the decision to amend is to save some ¢4 billion of investment of already licensed companies. With both L.I. 2462 and L.I. 2501 gone, the question becomes: which instrument compels site audits, enforces reclamation bonds, or adjudicates community restitution claims? Without explicit transitional clauses, would operators and regulators alike face a legal void?

To appreciate the stakes, consider the residual mandates of each agency. The EPA retains broad powers to demand environmental-impact assessments, levy pollution fines, and halt unauthorized activities under its founding legislation. The Minerals Commission can still issue mining permits under the Minerals and Mining Act, but only beyond forest reserves. Meanwhile, the Forestry Commission oversees general forest protection, yet lacks specialized mining-in-reserve protocols. Absent a dedicated rulebook, the coordination that L.I. 2501 sought to institutionalize risks unravelling.

This fragility is more than theoretical. Pending permit applications could languish unprocessed, existing licences may enter legal limbo, and enforcement athletes, from bonding to on-site inspections, could find themselves without a statutory playbook. Local communities poised to hold operators accountable might lose formal channels for affected-area monitoring and restitution, creating openings for renewed 'galamsey' incursions.

Similar missteps elsewhere underscore the dangers of repeal without replacement. Reflecting on Mali's Law No. 2023-040 gold-royalty reforms and Burkina Faso's 2016 mining-code overhaul, sweeping fiscal and oversight changes, designed to boost state and local revenue shares and tighten environmental and social standards, outpaced the necessary transitional decrees for permit renewals, transfers, and legacy agreements. In Mali, the absence of clear procedural guidance stranded projects at the Loulo–Gounkoto complex, leading Barrick Gold to initiate ICSID arbitration. Likewise, Burkina Faso's rapid code revisions prompted investor warnings and treaty-based claims until emergency regulatory clarifications restored administrative certainty. Ghana's policy architects have the chance to learn from these cautionary tales.

Repealing L.I. 2462 and L.I. 2501 offers the promise of streamlined governance and reinvigorated primary statutes. But without deliberate, phased replacement measures, Ghana risks leaving its forest reserves, and the soaring momentum against galamsey in regulatory limbo. The next steps will determine whether the repeal becomes a celebrated reset or a cautionary chapter in environmental policy gone awry.

Further Reading

- Final-CAGI-2025_March-16-22.pdf
- Gov't initiatives move to revoke L.I 2462 to combat illegal mining | Ghana News Agency
- Mali faces gold mining arbitration – African Law & Business
- Mali to partially lift mining permit suspension

Criticality Analysis of Key Economic Issues

August 24–30, 2025





Introduction

The objective of this report is to provide a clear and concise evaluation of the most important economic news stories in the preceding week, focusing on their factual accuracy, relevance and timeliness, and impact and significance.

Methodology

Selected publications are grouped under five central economic themes. These include:

- Economic Stability.
- Growth and Job Creation.
- Taxation and Revenue Mobilization.
- Trade and Investment.
- Infrastructure Digital Economy.

Evaluation

The analysis criteria are applied at this stage. News stories are evaluated based on the following:

Factual accuracy: can the facts in the news be verified; is the news published by other outlets; are there links and references to original sources.

Relevance and timeliness: is the news a developing story or does it provide updates on existing stories?

Impact and significance: does the news have a potential impact on society, policy and the economy; is it of high interest to the public?

Qatar's $1.5bn Agriculture Deal and Aljadad's $5bn Fertilizer Plant — Building Blocks for a Stronger Agro-Economy?



The Ministry of Food and Agriculture has announced two investments that could reshape Ghana's agriculture sector: Qatar's investment of $1.5 billion in agriculture by November 2025, and Aljadad Group's plan to invest $5 billion in a fertilizer production facility at Atuabo. Together, they reflect not just foreign confidence in Ghana's agro potential but also the enduring reality that agriculture remains the backbone of growth, jobs, and food security.

For years, Ghana's farming fortunes have been tied to imported fertilizer. In 2023 alone, the country spent $254.95 million on imports, leaving farmers vulnerable to global price shocks and supply chain disruptions. The Aljadad investment represents a long-awaited break from that cycle. Anchored on a gas processing plant at Atuabo, the facility will produce urea and ammonia locally, directly addressing the input bottleneck. The benefits are multilayered: Ghana can withstand external supply disruptions, local production should lower costs for farmers, boosting productivity, and Ghana could become a fertilizer supplier to West Africa.

This aligns squarely with the Institute of Fiscal Studies' (IFS) call for the government to prioritize fertilizer manufacturing in the 2025 budget[1]. Instead of government alone carrying the load, a $5 billion private-led investment gives the sector the scale and seriousness it has lacked. If implemented efficiently and transparently, this project could solidify Ghana's agro-industrial base for decades.

The Qatar deal is equally significant but carries more nuance. The minister reported that Qatar will finance and irrigate farmland, allocate plots to farmers, and then purchase the harvest for export. The Ministry projects 2,500 direct jobs, higher productivity, and a stronger export value chain. On the surface, this is a clear win: Ghana gets irrigation infrastructure, farmers get markets, and the state earns foreign exchange.

Yet the structure raises critical questions. If the bulk of production is contracted for export to Qatar, how much will remain for Ghana's own food needs? The country is already struggling with high food import bills, particularly rice, poultry, and processed items. The risk is that Ghana becomes a breadbasket for Qatar while still importing basic staples. Are these farms dual-purpose, serving both domestic food security and external demand? And more importantly, can they act as feeders for local agro-processing and manufacturing industries, rice milling, canning, packaging, and food exports beyond raw produce? If the focus is only on producing and shipping raw goods, Ghana risks repeating the old colonial pattern of exporting primary commodities while importing finished products.

The combined impact of these two investments could be catalytic if well managed. Fertilizer production ensures that farmers have the inputs they need at predictable prices. Large-scale irrigated farming provides the scale and structure to move agriculture from subsistence into agribusiness. And exports can generate foreign exchange, reducing pressure on the cedi. But the real opportunity lies in industrial linkages. Fertilizer should feed smallholder farmers, not just commercial agribusinesses. Harvests from Qatar-backed farms should flow into Ghana's food processing plants, not simply onto cargo ships. Done right, these deals can help Ghana build a competitive agro-industrial ecosystem where jobs, technology transfer, and value addition remain in-country.

The fertilizer factory points Ghana in the right direction of self-sufficiency and resilience, while the agriculture deal brings fresh capital and jobs. But the real measure of success will be in how Ghana ensures these projects serve domestic needs first, industrialize the economy, and avoid the trap of being merely a contract farm for foreign nations.

NEWS TRENDS

- Qatar to invest $1.5bn in agric sector by November 2025 – Eric Opoku.
- Qatar's Aljadad commits 5bn to establish fertilizer factory in Ghana – CitiNews.
- Ghana to host 5 billion fertilizer hub – MoFA.



Ghana on the Global Stage: Renewed Investor Confidence from Asia

President Mahama's recent trips to Singapore and Japan mark more than ceremonial diplomacy. They are strong signals that Ghana is once again regaining the confidence of major global investors and partners, and positioning itself firmly on the path of growth through foreign investment, economic transformation, and technological advancement.

In Singapore, the $1 billion package covered agriculture, agribusiness, tourism, education, transport infrastructure, and digital finance. From OLAM's $200 million processing plants to Shangri-La's $300 million ultra-modern hotel and convention centre, to the revival of Tema's dry dock and airport upgrades, the breadth of these projects speaks volumes. They promise jobs, industrial growth, and a more competitive Ghana under AfCFTA, while boosting the country's capacity to integrate into global value chains.

Japan with equally significant commitments during TICAD 9. Toyota's decision to expand its West African hub in Ghana, the $100 million injection into agriculture, groundbreaking scientific collaboration on rice production, and the training of 300,000 youth in AI, biotechnology, green transition skills, and modern agriculture stand out as forward-looking investments. Infrastructure also received a lifeline with renewed funding for the Volivo-Dorfor Adidome Bridge and the Kumasi ring road project. These are not marginal add-ons but strategic investments that touch on nearly every lever of long-term growth: infrastructure, industry, human capital, and technology.

Taken together, these wins reveal two deeper truths. First, Ghana is broadening its investment base. This diversification makes Ghana less vulnerable to single-source dependency and places it in a stronger position to weather global shocks.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, the optics matter. For investors, confidence is as much about perception as about numbers. When two global heavyweights in a single month commit billions into projects across diverse sectors, it sends a clear message: Ghana is once again open for business and credible on the world stage. This renewed perception strengthens Ghana's hand in future negotiations, whether in capital markets, bilateral trade, or multilateral partnerships.

The task ahead is execution. Ensuring that these agreements are followed through with discipline and transparency will determine whether they create real jobs, build industrial capacity, and embed technology transfer. If managed well, however, this moment could mark the beginning of a new investment wave, one where Ghana uses foreign partnerships not just for capital inflows, but to reset its economy through industrialization, human capital development, and green, tech-driven growth.

NEWS TRENDS

- Mahama secures US$1bn investment in Singapore – CitiNews
- Mahama touts 'Big Push' agenda, urges Japan to invest in energy, agribusiness and manufacturing – MyJoy News.
- 8 big wins for Ghana from President Mahama's Japan visit.





Ghana and Africa's Debt Crisis: Beyond the Numbers

The flurry of rallies, petitions, and policy statements in Accra last week underscores one truth: debt has become Africa's single biggest development bottleneck, and Ghana sits at the heart of this storm. With Ghana's debt now estimated at over GH¢800 billion, and Africa's overall external debt surpassing US$1.3 trillion, the urgency is undeniable. But as Finance Minister Dr. Cassiel Ato Forson rightly observed, the question is not whether countries want to pay, but whether they can pay.

Why Is Debt So High? It is tempting to frame Africa's debt woes as purely a story of mismanagement, but that is only half the picture. External shocks have piled pressure on already fragile economies. The COVID-19 pandemic derailed fiscal plans, shrank revenues, and forced emergency borrowing. The Ukraine war pushed food and fuel prices sky-high, worsening current account balances. On top of that, Africa borrows in a global financial system tilted against it; facing higher interest rates and shorter maturities than peers elsewhere. Frameworks like the G20's Common Framework are slow, creditor-biased, and often leave distressed countries hanging. Climate disasters further complicate matters: floods, droughts, and storms wipe out infrastructure, forcing governments back to lenders to rebuild.

But honesty demands we acknowledge internal failings too. Fiscal indiscipline, weak revenue mobilization, and governance lapses have deepened vulnerabilities. Political instability and coups across parts of the continent have equally dented investor confidence and driven up borrowing costs. In Ghana's case, election-cycle overspending, underperforming state enterprises, and limited structural reforms are central drivers of the current crisis.

The United Nations, in its 2024 report, 'Unpacking Africa's Debt: Towards a Lasting and Durable Solution'[1], makes a critical point: debt is not inherently bad. When well-managed, borrowing can finance investments in roads, schools, energy, and technology, fueling growth and development. The problem is when debt becomes a survival tool, used to patch budget deficits and pay interest on older loans.

Among its recommendations are:

- Access to affordable finance: Reform multilateral development banks (MDBs) to extend 30–50-year concessional loans, lend in local currencies, and scale up predictable climate finance.

- Lower borrowing costs: Convert high-interest, short-term debt into longer-term, lower-cost instruments, and improve the Common Framework to ensure timely and fair restructuring.

- Debt sustainability innovations: Embed state-contingent clauses that suspend debt during crises, and expand debt-for-development, debt-for-nature, and debt-for-climate swaps and establish a Sovereign Debt Authority to prioritize development in debt treatment.

- Regional cooperation: Strengthen African financial institutions, promote cross-border financing, and deepen regional capital markets to reduce dependency on external creditors.

For Ghana, the stakes are immediate. Rising debt service costs have crowded out spending on education, health, and infrastructure. The TUC's call for urgent action reflects how ordinary workers experience debt not as an abstract figure but as failing hospitals, overcrowded classrooms, and wage arrears.

What is clear is that neither blanket debt cancellation nor endless austerity is a sustainable solution. Ghana and Africa more broadly must strike a balance: reform domestic fiscal management while demanding a fairer global financial system. Debt, if realigned with development priorities, can become a tool for transformation rather than a trap.

The rallies in Accra and the voices of labour, policymakers, and citizens are therefore not cries of despair but a call for fairness. If global partners are serious about shared prosperity, they must meet Africa halfway with reforms that give countries like Ghana the fiscal breathing room to invest in their people and their future.

NEWS TRENDS

- Pan-African debt cancellation rally kicks off in Accra – CitiNews.

- TUC demands urgent action on Ghana's soaring debt.

- Ato Forson backs calls for fair deal on Africa's $1.3 trillion debt.

IMANI
Center for Policy & Education

IMANI Center for Policy & Education is a Think Tank of considerable local and international repute based in Ghana. Founded on the 9th of March 2004, IMANI has carved a niche in Ghana's policy environment for putting out objective, independent analysis and critique on many issues, using tried and tested techniques that apply across different disciplines.

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