

**THE BLUEPRINT FOR CHANGE**  
**Ato Van-Ess' Plan for the Sekondi / Takoradi Chamber**  
**of Commerce, Trade & Industry**



**NEWLY ELECTED CHAIRMAN**  
**MR. ATO VAN-ESS**

Honorable Past Executives, distinguished Members of the Chamber, the Executive Secretary, The Electoral Commissioner, illustrious Members of the Media, all other protocol observed... I hope that my manifesto will spark a dialogue and that after you have finished listening to me and you have

elected me as your chairman, we will sit down and together fine – tune these policies; ***Our Blueprint For Change.***

We all know what is at stake. This is a defining moment in our history. Never have we reached a point so critical in determining the course of our own future. We either act now or never. The challenge now is, how do we make our natural resources discovered, being discovered and yet to be discovered reflect positively on us? Many local businesses are under serious threat from foreign investors and businesses have been left to fit into the system or break.

But the power lies in our hands because this moment of challenge is also a moment of opportunity. We have a chance to bring local businesses together in a new majority - to finally tackle problems that have been ignored for too long. And that is why the time is now to breach a new frontier.

I have a vision for the chamber. My vision, your vision... our vision is to get our chamber **to be Ghana's leading business organization providing maximum value to its membership by recognizing and encouraging the private sector's role as the driving force in the economy.**

And our mission will be to get our chamber **to serve as the Voice of Business committed to the enhancement of economic prosperity and quality of life in the Western Region.**

Our **Strategic Goals**, which will be used for strategic success, will be:

- 1. To create and sustain reinforcing relationships among businesses and between businesses and the community.*
- 2. To participate in the development of public policy, as it affects economic growth and development for the Western Region.*
- 3. To effectively express the views of the business community to appropriate levels of government on matters of relevance to the Western Region.*

4. *To promote private enterprise, business excellence and individual achievement.*
5. *To provide proper levels of member services and to foster member involvement in the community through the Chamber.*
6. *To strengthen the organization through increasing its membership and resource base.*



These goals and action plans only represent another step in the continuous improvement process of the Western Regional Chamber of Commerce. Strategic planning is not a one-time effort. Once goals are set, commitment must be maintained, progress monitored, and adjustments made until those goals are reached.

Our **Action Plans** will turn these goals into reality by implementing the set goals. Implementation will in turn be accomplished through the Chamber's various committees, boards and task forces.

And in working for the grand attainment of these...

- My principles will be **Professionalism** and **Integrity** united in the delivery of high value services and benefits;
- My values will be **Respect** for and celebration of the contributions and achievements of our members and volunteers; and
- My behaviour will be constantly striving to achieve the top ranking among Chambers and other competing organizations in the execution of our Mandate, Vision and Goals.

Our Chamber of commerce shall provide opportunities for members to make an impact on critical business and community issues.

Together with other talented leaders in business, community, and government, chamber members and professional staff will work to make the community a better place

Tomorrow's chamber of commerce, rather than being narrowly focused on one particular industry, issue, cause, or activity, will focus on a broad range of activities and support for both businesses and communities.

With alacrity and a renewed sense of purpose, we will strategically direct the Chamber through the coming years.

**What will our Chamber Do? What specific programs, products and services will our chamber offer?**

Our Chamber will be funded by membership dues as well as non-dues items such as events, sponsorships, contracts, and sales of various products and services. A well – resourced Chamber secretariat will be established to implement diversified business development and support services and events to facilitate the reengineering of the business environment.

Our Chamber will:

- Provide business-building programs for businesses large and small, from trade shows to business development and management seminars and training, to discounts on business-related goods and services.
- Provide custom research, economic or cluster analysis, or local/regional economic forecasts.
- Offer one-stop solutions for starting a business
- Fight for pro-business and important community legislation and form public and private alliances.

- Be the primary source for businesses and individuals seeking information on the business climate in the Western Region.
- Be the primary economic developer in our areas, responsible for marketing our community to recruit new businesses to the area.
- In conjunction with the tourist board and the centre for National Culture, form a cultural – tourism bureau for our Region, which will be responsible for marketing our Region to tourists as well as attracting conventions and large events.
- Have strong interest in child, youth and women development programs
- Collaborate with the appropriate sectors to revive the show – biz and the sports industries.
- Encourage the forging of strong links within the Western Regional business community to ensure an exchange of skills and best practice, which will act to the benefit of all.
- Form business partnerships with other foreign Chambers of Commerce and industry.

But our chamber will not only address economic issues, we will provide leadership in civic and social programming as well. Our Chamber will address community issues health care concerns, education, transportation, workforce quality and availability, housing, and crime with innovative programs, research, coalition-building, and more.

Our Chamber will accomplish all these ideas by being specifically conscious of what binds us together as Westerners... our culture. We will collaborate with our honorable chiefs to uphold our culture through massive marketing of our rich festivals and other related cultural programmes.

And we shall accomplish all the above and even more with the media... our sisters, our mouth, and our eyes.

I will be dedicated to the spreading the Chamber to every part of the Western Region and the formation of the Western Regional Chamber of

Commerce Group, to be made up of other trade organizations, which will monitor and respond to issues of specific trade relevance.

With a strategic implementation drive, we hope to be in the position to attract about 300 members in the first year, setting us on the road to achieving our vision of being the largest accredited Chamber in Ghana.

### **"Putting Business First" – the Business Priorities of the Western Regional Chamber of Commerce**

The Western Regional Chamber of Commerce under the auspices of its Business Manifesto "*Putting Business First*" will set out the key issues to business and establish the priorities we expect Government to deliver to ensure the success of our Region.

We will dialogue, negotiate and assist the Government at all levels to:

1. Maintain a stable macro-economic policy, creating the stable economic environment vital for growth and long-term business planning.
2. Reduce Business Taxation and cut business payroll costs
3. Reduce and simplify inappropriate regulation and red tape which create inefficiencies and stifle innovation. We will advocate for a business environment that encourages productivity, allows fair competition and supports business development.
4. Support business training by prioritizing our commitment to continuing skills development and business-focused training emphasizing cutting-edge trends in leadership, communication, team-working and interpersonal skills.
  
5. Invest in modernizing the planning system, transport and infrastructure to create a planning process and a system of trade

- infrastructure that meets the needs of business in a modern, dynamic and fast moving economy, which is an impetus to business efficiency.
6. Commit to reducing crime against business. We will advocate for adequate resourcing for the Police Force to meet the needs of the local community in response to business' demands for high profile security.

## **Conclusion**

It is time to put government back in your hands, where it belongs. If we want to have policies that are good for Chamber members, then we need Chamber members to help shape those policies.

I will make a difference in the lives of the people of the Western Region through the Chamber because I will lead by accepted principles and conviction; when I will summon the entire business community to a common purpose - a higher purpose. I am in this race because I want to lead the Chamber to the next level... the professional level... where we will be well geared up to be an autonomous Chamber of Commerce and industry.

The Western Region is one of the powerhouse areas of the Ghanaian economy. Its continuing prosperity is crucial to the success of the nation. Hence, my fundamental objective will be to ensure that the Western Region begins to thrive, propelled by a strong and dynamic business community, which will directly involve itself in the community to create the environment where people want to live and work.

And when we have accomplished our tasks, at the heart of the local economy and the backbone of the Nation's economy, you will find our chamber of commerce.

That is why I am asking you to stand with me... that is why I am asking you to caucus for me, because I believe together we can make our oil another blessing from God. In this election - in this moment - let us reach for what

we know is possible. A changed Chamber – our own Chamber, which believes that when we celebrate and promote the diversity and uniqueness of our communities, the Western Regional Chamber of Commerce will form the fabric of the Western Region.

And remember...when God ordains, He sustains.

Thank you, and May God Bless You All.