

## MESSAGE FROM INCOMING CEO J. Asunka

I feel more like the prodigal son than the biblical Joseph to whom Gyimah compared me in his beautifully written farewell message. After more than a decade away from home (i.e., AB), I am touched that you all opened your hearts and arms to welcome me back, and eternally grateful for the warm welcome and numerous well wishes you extended to me when my appointment was announced in September last year. I am delighted to be 'back home', and very proud of AB's numerous achievements, all thanks to your dedication to bring African voices to the policymaking table.

It is not a coincidence that I take on this role on a unique day. It is 1<sup>st</sup> April, and you know what that means; it is also Holy Thursday for those who profess the Christian faith. I say it is not a coincidence because (1) I try not to take myself too seriously when dealing with serious matters. We are in the serious business of putting the public back in public policy, but sometimes we need a supportive and less stressful environment to perform at our peak. I will build on Gyimah's foundation to ensure that all our systems and processes are fit for purpose and geared towards making your work less stressful and more impactful. And because (2) Holy Thursday is a day of sacrifice. At AB, you all go to extreme lengths—through floods, in extreme heat, over hills and valleys etc. —to ensure that the voices of ordinary Africans are heard. You sacrifice a lot for a good cause, and I could not have joined you on a more appropriate day.

I step into this role today with gratitude and deep respect and admiration for the co-founders of AB. It is uncommon to see an academic inspiration blossom into a fully-fledged continental research and policy influencing institution. I view the next decade as a time for growth and consolidation for AB and I gladly accepted this role to do just that. I have no doubt that AB has the technical expertise in our staff, Core and National Partners as well as our capable Support Units to grow and prosper and I see my role as a facilitator of a fantastic team.

I agree with Gyimah that *the road ahead is bright*, though it is certainly not going to be all rosy. We need to be innovative in all we do—surveys, analysis and publications, capacity building, resource mobilization, communications, etc., —to keep the road to AB's vision bright. I know that I can count on your continued support and intrinsic drive to take AB to the next level.

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Finally, though Gyimah is stepping back from the day-to-day management of AB, we are fortunate to continue working with him in his capacity as AB board chair. We will also continue to benefit from the wise counsel of Profs. Bratton and Mattes, who serve on the board and have continued to play active roles in several aspects of our work. Our Board and International Advisory Council members are invaluable and committed partners in this journey and I could not be more thrilled for the opportunity to work with them and the whole AB team to take AB into its next decade.

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