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PRESS RELEASE

# # RESET THE GHANA NATIONAL & REGIONAL MUSEUMS

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## Joint Press Statement: International Museum Day 2025

*Issued by the Centre for Research in Culture & Creative Arts (CeRCCA), Art Teachers' Association of Ghana (ATAG), and Artwatch Ghana*

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On this International Museum Day, observed annually on May 18, we, the Centre for Research in Culture & Creative Arts (CeRCCA), Art Teachers' Association of Ghana (ATAG), and Artwatch Ghana, proudly join the global community to celebrate Ghana's museum workers. To every curator, educator, archivist, and custodian, we salute your dedication and hard work. Your work helps preserve our shared heritage, educates generations, and keeps Ghana's history alive. Today, we honour you.

This year's theme, **"The Future of Museums in Rapidly Changing Communities,"** calls on us to reimagine museums not just as guardians of the past but as dynamic forces shaping inclusive, innovative, and sustainable futures. This theme advances the primary role of museums as spaces for preservation, and it focuses on how museums capitalise on technological, social, and environmental opportunities to engage audiences. In other words, beyond their role in preservation, museums are active institutions in shaping sustainable and inclusive communities. Museums create employment opportunities and organise empowering educational programmes. They foster creativity and embrace technological advancements in a way that enhances accessibility and drives innovation. Museums act as cultural centres that promote inclusivity, resilience, and heritage preservation.

We stand with the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in recognizing museums as spaces where tradition meets innovation, where technology, creativity, and community converge to inspire progressive development. Museums are more than repositories; they serve as classrooms, cultural hubs, and engines of economic growth. They create jobs, empower learners, and bridge divides. Yet, in Ghana, their potential remains untapped.

### **A Legacy Neglected, A Future at Risk**

Ghana's national, and regional museums are a testament to our nation's visionary beginnings. The Ghana National Museum, inaugurated on March 5, 1957, was once a beacon of Pan-African pride. Founded by Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah to cultivate national consciousness and a true unified African identity, it earned acclaim as a "Mecca" for the global African diaspora. Today, however, this legacy lies in peril. The museum still operates from its original 1957 temporary structure, a building intended only as a gallery. The 1958 extension, meant to complete Nkrumah's vision, stands abandoned, occupied by squatters, its walls crumbling. Successive governments have allowed this symbol of our heritage to fade into obscurity.

Our regional museums, managed by the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB), fare no better. They struggle with *obsolete laws, leadership gaps*, and inadequate funding. While staff salaries remain the sole consistent government support, operational costs rely on meagre internally generated funds. This has led to **weak collection policy, reliance on donated artworks, and disconnection from Ghana's vibrant contemporary art scene**. Our museums, once vibrant citadel of pre-colonial history, colonial resilience, and ancestral pride, now risk becoming relics themselves.

## Museums as Catalysts for 21st-Century Ghana

In a rapidly digitizing world, museums globally are embracing technology to preserve oral histories, curate virtual exhibits, and engage younger audiences. Yet Ghana's institutions lag behind, lacking the resources to adopt modern tools or even maintain their physical spaces. A 21st-century museum must reflect *who we are, where we come from, and where we are going*, a nation rich in diverse cultures, innovation, and artistic brilliance. It must collect, preserve, and display art in all forms, from ancient artifacts to digital installations. Most critically, it must educate: teaching our children their history, inspiring artists, and reigniting pride in our identity.

## Our Appeal: Reset the Ghana National Museum

We call on the Government of Ghana, and all stakeholders to urgently *Reset the Ghana National Museum*. This requires:

1. *Proactive Leadership*: Empower visionary, action-oriented leaders to overhaul governance and modernize operations.
2. *Infrastructure Revival*: Complete Nkrumah's original vision. Restore the abandoned extension and transform the museum into a world-class facility.
3. *Sustainable Funding*: Allocate dedicated budgetary support to end reliance on donations and ad-hoc revenue.
4. *Legal & Branding Reform*: Update antiquated laws and craft a bold branding strategy to reposition museums as cultural powerhouse.
5. *Community Integration*: Partner with artists, Creative Arts related tertiary institutions, and technologists to make museums inclusive spaces for dialogue, research and learning.

Museums are not luxuries; they are the cultural powerhouse and soul of a nation. They hold the stories of our ancestors, the creativity of our present, and the dreams of our future. Let us not be the generation that allowed this soul to wither.

On this International Museum Day, we reaffirm our commitment to Ghana's cultural heritage. To our museum workers: *Congratulations once, again*. Let us reset and rebuild our museums, rekindle our pride, and reclaim our place as Africa's cultural beacon.

### Signed:

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