

World leaders congratulate Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey ...on her election as C'wealth Sec. Gen.

BY JONATHAN DONKOR

CONGRATULATIONS are pouring in from around the world for the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, following her historic election as Secretary-General of the Commonwealth by its 56 member states.

Well-wishers include President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, Vice President Dr Mahamudu Bawumia, AU High Representative for Silencing the Guns in Africa, Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Nigeria's President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, and outgoing Secretary-General, Baroness Patricia Scotland.

Ms Botchwey's colleague foreign ministers have also posted congratulatory messages on social media on behalf of their countries.

The historic election took place during the 27th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Apia, Samoa, held from October 21 to 26, 2024 between Ms Botchwey, Joshua Setipa of Lesotho and Dr Mamadou Tangara of the Gambia.

Ms Botchwey becomes the first African woman and second African national to hold this prestigious position and would succeed Baroness Patricia Scotland of the United Kingdom on April 1, 2025, embarking on a five-year

term as Secretary-General.

President Akufo-Addo, in a Facebook post, praised Ms Botchwey's character and dedication to service. Ms Botchwey was her deputy when he served as foreign minister in the Kufour-led government.

"For years, I have watched her serve Ghana, Africa and the international community with unshakeable commitment and grace," he stated.

The President expressed confidence that her leadership would guide the Commonwealth toward "a future of hope and unity."

Vice President Bawumia took to social media to share his congratulations, writing: "Minister Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, I am happy with the news about your election as the new Secretary-General of the Commonwealth. Congratulations on making Ghana proud. Keep shining, and I know you will excel as always."

According to a Ghana News Agency (GNA) report, Dr Chambas described her election as "a victory for Ghanaian diplomacy."

Speaking from an AU Retreat in Abidjan, he emphasized that this achievement represents not just personal success but also recognition of African women's capabilities.

Having worked on Ms Botchwey's campaign in the Caribbean and Pacific Island countries, he expressed particu-

lar satisfaction with the outcome.

Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu, through his adviser on Information and Strategy, highlighted Ms Botchwey's extensive career in public administration and foreign affairs as perfect qualifications for the role.

He expressed optimism about working with her to advance the Commonwealth's vision and strengthen intra-Commonwealth trade, particularly emphasizing support for an African bid for permanent representation at the UN Security Council.

The outgoing Secretary-General, Baroness Patricia Scotland, warmly welcomed her successor in a social media post, stating: "It is my honour to pass the baton to my dear sister... She will be uniquely blessed, as I have been, to hold this office and serve our precious Commonwealth."

Ms Botchwey brings to the role an impressive background as a lawyer, diplomat, and communications professional.

She has served as Ghana's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration for eight years, during which she led Ghana's notable two-year tenure on the UN Security Council. Her service includes chairing the ECOWAS Council of Ministers for two terms (2020-2022), four terms as a legislator (2004-2020), and membership in the ECOWAS Parliament

(2013-2017).

In her campaign for the position, Botchwey outlined six key areas for repositioning the Commonwealth: enhancing democracy, strengthening Commonwealth values, increasing trade and investment cooperation, promoting youth education and innovation, addressing climate change impacts, and ensuring effective resource management.

Shortly after her election, she posted on X: "I'm honoured and humbled by the trust of Commonwealth leaders. A lot of

work lies ahead. But together, we shall work for a new Commonwealth that works for all its citizens."

The Commonwealth, headed by King Charles III, is a diverse intergovernmental association that promotes democratic governance, trade cooperation, educational advancement, climate advocacy, and transparency in financial systems among its member states.



• Ms Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey