

# Engaging our political stakeholders in the mission to support lottery and serve society

## Samuel Awuku

*Member of the Ghanaian Parliament  
Formerly Director General of the National Lottery Authority (NLA) of Ghana*



**PGRI INTRODUCTION:** Samuel Awuku was appointed Director General of Ghana's National Lottery Authority (NLA) in August 2021. He resigned from the NLA in January 2025 after being recently elected to the Ghanaian Parliament. Samuel met with Paul Jason at the EL/WLA Marketing Seminar in Barcelona to discuss the importance of political advocacy in defending the interests of lottery, society, and consumer protection.

During his tenure, Mr. Awuku's visionary leadership garnered the NLA significant regional and international recognition. He became the first-ever Anglophone Vice President of the African Lotteries Association (ALA) on 8th March 2024, positioning the NLA as a key partner for other African lottery bodies, such as those in Ivory Coast and Nigeria, where the NLA's games were exported, generating substantial revenue. Samuel is credited with transformational leadership in regulating consumer promotion through the NLA's Caritas Lottery Platform, contributing to communities and institutions via the NLA Good Causes Foundation, and significantly improving staff welfare.

Under his direction, and with support from the NLA Governing Board and Management, the Authority enhanced its business operations by remodelling its Draw Studio, acquiring state-of-the-art draw machines, attaining WLA Level 2 Certification in Responsible Gaming, and spearheading innovation and



digitalization across various operations. Samuel was awarded the prestigious Public Sector CEO of the Year Award at the 8th Ghana CEO Summit and Excellence Awards, marking his second consecutive win.

Samuel holds a Bachelor of Laws (LLB), an LPC/LLM in Professional Legal Practice, and a Graduate Diploma in Law from the University of Laws, United Kingdom. He was called to the Ghana Bar in October 2023 and is a Barrister at law.

Samuel also holds an Executive Education Certificate in Public Leadership from the Kennedy School of Government of Harvard University, USA, Postgraduate Certificates in Public Administration and Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations from the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) and the Ghana Institute of Journalism respectively, and a Master of Arts in International Relations from the Freie University, Berlin, Germany.

Samuel's journey is a masterclass in dedication and relentless drive. If you want to be inspired by an account of what one person can accomplish at the age of 41 years, visit the Sammi Awuku Foundation website at [SammiAwuku.org](http://SammiAwuku.org): "Our mission is not just to alleviate immediate challenges but to create lasting generational change. Your support will empower over 20,000 underprivileged students, struggling farmers, and underserved communities, ensuring they can access better opportunities and brighter futures."

**Paul Jason:** You recently relinquished your role as Director General of the National Lottery Authority (NLA) when you were elected to the Ghanaian Parliament. But are you still involved in shaping public and regulatory policy that relates to the lottery?

**Samuel Awuku:** Yes. After serving three and a half years as Director General of the NLA, I have become quite passionate about issues concerning the lottery. The lottery channels tremendous economic benefits to our country, funding programs that might not otherwise receive funding. The NLA

contributes to the consolidated fund that supports housing, health, and education. My current position puts me in an even stronger position to strategically advocate for reforms and influence the shape of public policy in ways that benefit the people of Ghana. For instance, one of the reforms

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I will champion as a member of parliament is for the government to prioritize and direct the NLA to support specific projects in critical sectors like health, education, and youth development. Funds can also be directed toward social interventions for people with disabilities, elderly citizens, and marginalized communities to improve livelihoods or, perhaps, added to the District Assemblies Common Fund to assist Members of Parliament in developing their constituencies with measurable financial targets.

If properly streamlined, we can do more with lottery proceeds in Ghana. So, although I am no longer the Director General of NLA, I am in a better position to help influence public policy.

**It is interesting to think about how the insights gained while directing the operations of the lottery combine with the position to now influence the public and regulatory policies that have such a profound impact on the success of the lottery.**

**S. Awuku:** It's true. I have lived it. I have seen the tremendous good that comes from the lottery; I understand the way the lottery operates, the effects of inadequate regulation of unlicensed operators, and the importance of preserving integrity and stability in the lottery sector. I appreciate what it takes for the lottery to produce the economic benefits essential to good causes and public service needs. Now, I can leverage the knowledge gained by service to the lottery and enter more informed policy positions. As I get to know and become friends with others in parliament and positions of political influence, I share these perspectives and insights gained from my lottery service with the hope that the lottery may gain an even broader base of understanding, appreciation, and political support. I am learning how lottery fits into the broad context of government services and how to empathize with the incredible diversity of government functions and political interest groups.

Of course, lottery generates funds that contribute to the budget. However, the mission of working for the benefit of society is too general. Everyone may know that, but they are not necessarily inspired to action because the notion of 'benefits to society' is too abstract. We want to make it

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come alive with more meaning and tangible impact and illuminate what the lottery does for real people with pressing needs.

During my tenure as Director-General of NLA, we launched the Good Causes Foundation, which assisted several brilliant but needy students with scholarships, provided educational and health institutions with equipment, and supported communities with skills and vocational training, recreational centres, sanitary facilities, and invested in the arts and culture of the Ghanaian people. Internally, the Foundation supported about 100 Staff across various departments with educational and medical funding.

I look forward to a day when people from even the smallest towns throughout our country will experience and appreciate the role of the lottery in providing potable water, educational facilities, and housing for the homeless. If people do not genuinely connect with the material things that the lottery does, then political leaders are less likely to take an interest in it. We need everyone to appreciate the tangible product of the lottery.

**Are you finding your colleagues in parliament responsive to your expressions of support for the lottery?**

**S. Awuku:** There is a wide diversity of issues and interest groups that vie for the attention of legislators. At this point, my goal is to create awareness among my colleagues and help them understand the role of the lottery in our economic development. It is essential to achieve that first, as pushing for political action will not be productive when there is a knowledge gap. This understanding will likely lead people to buy into our mission. Insofar as we want to harness support for the lottery, we need people to appreciate that the lottery provides a safe and secure outlet for playing games-of-chance, protects players from unscrupulous operators, protects society from money laundering, helps to minimize problem

gambling, and ultimately exists to serve society. All that and more will further the outcome of channeling economic benefit to good causes. The key to getting support is to raise understanding and awareness.

We also need to enforce responsible gaming practices by particularly giving more attention to protecting players from addiction. The mobile phone, for instance, represents a significant challenge because everyone is already addicted to checking theirs every other minute. When we don't have messages to respond to, we look for diversions like playing games. This addiction to personal technology devices is combined with AI and data science to provide new pathways for operators to deliver the right messages, games and promotional offers at just the right time and in the right way to get one to play and get to play often.

We need to protect players by pushing for higher standards from operators in the gaming and lottery industry. The community of lottery operators and trade associations needs to forge relationships with the players and build systems that protect them against problem gambling. Political stakeholders should also be involved in the importance of player protection. For me, this is an even higher priority than maximizing revenues from the lottery.

**It seems very hard to get legislators to defend the interests of lotteries.**

**S. Awuku:** We need to find a way because holding lotteries to a higher standard than other gaming sectors like casinos, sports betting, and online gambling creates an imbalance in the marketplace. If commercial operators are allowed use overly aggressive player acquisition, addictive bonusing, and manipulative engagement tactics to increase revenues, lotteries will be at a competitive disadvantage. Players will migrate to the commercial sector, where player protection is a lower priority, and problem gambling will just get worse. We cannot tackle addiction and protect

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Vegas casinos, MGM Resorts International says it has stepped up its efforts to prevent further violations.

## **Bally's Chicago Casino Halted Over Vendor Once Linked to Mob by FBI**

## **Hard Rock has Applied for Ontario iGaming License, Fuelling PointsBet Canada Sale Rumours**

## **Sales of the Taiwan Sports Lottery grew by 22 per cent to NT\$18.05 billion (€495.6 million) in the first quarter of 2025.**

## **Executives from Nevada-based Caesars, MGM, and Boyd Gaming dismissed concerns that a feared economic downturn might them financially.**

## **National Court determines that city of Prague can enforce its own local gambling regulations**

## **New York Posts \$2.14 Billion in Revenue from \$23.94 Billion Handle over 24/25 Fiscal Year**

For the full fiscal year, New York's sports betting handle rose 21.9% from the previous year's \$19.64 billion, setting a new record for the largest annual handle by any U.S. state. Total state GGR also increased, reaching \$2.14 billion—up 15.4% year-over-year. DraftKings led the monthly GGR charts, generating \$62.6 million from \$912.1 million in wagers. FanDuel followed closely with \$59.45 million in GGR from an \$862.2 million handle. Compared to March last year, FanDuel's GGR dipped from \$82.9 million, while DraftKings' grew by 18.9%, signaling a shift in momentum between the two top operators.

## **NOVOMATIC to acquire Ainsworth in \$216M deal**

## **Sweden to end land-based casino gambling by 2026**

Sweden's parliament has voted to abolish land-based casino gambling, a decision that will lead to the closure of the country's last remaining casino and mark a significant shift toward digital gambling. Svenska Spel, which holds Sweden's monopoly on land-based casinos, expressed support for the government's decision and will begin preparations to shut down Casino Cosmopol's Stockholm location, the last operational casino in the country.

## **Brazil's Central Bank says it lacks power to block illegal betting transactions**

The President of Brazil's Central Bank, Gabriel Galípolo, told lawmakers this week that the institution does not have the legal authority to block illegal betting operations or penalize those involved in facilitating such transactions. Galípolo added that enforcement is only possible when financial crimes are

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minors without having the standards apply equally to all gaming sectors. I am working hard to promote an understanding of these issues in Parliament and among all political stakeholders. This is because when people play the lottery, society is enriched instead of private shareholders. Lottery proceeds build another school or maternity ward instead of paying for another private jet for the executives of commercial operators.

The activity of illegal lottery operators is a high-priority concern to all legally authorized gaming operators. The illegals erode the perception of the integrity of the entire lottery sector. They do not pay taxes or support good causes, so they are, in effect, stealing from our people. And they do not respect the laws that protect the consumer. We need the support of our governments to fight illegal operators. We also need international cooperation to succeed in stopping illegal operators. For instance, a company should not operate illegally in some countries and be licensed to operate legally in others. If a company operates illegally in any country, it should be denied the license to operate in every country. To enforce the laws, we need to share data on the rogue companies in Europe and North America with our African counterparts. Sharing these ideas, data, and information enables the African Lotteries Association

(ALA) and its member bodies to know and separate the good guys from the bad guys. Secondly, the punishment needs to be more stringent than a fine. These illegals make a lot of money, so the penalties are usually considered just another cost of doing business.

One aspect of the fight against illegals and the mission to smooth the path towards progress in Africa is to promote that esprit de corps between the African Lotteries Association (ALA), the European Lotteries (EL) and the World Lotteries Association (WLA). We need to share ideas and learn from our neighbours in more mature markets. This is especially true in regulatory policy, as it can be challenging to enlist political support for the regulatory framework that protects the interests of society. I transitioned to the political space to be better positioned to fight for the policies that serve the people's interests.

**You pointed out that the EL is becoming a more effective agent for political advocacy, engaging political stakeholders to protect the interests of lotteries and consumers alike. Is the ALA developing a voice to advocate for enlightened regulatory policy that protects the consumers and the interests of good causes supported by government lotteries?**

**S. Awuku:** I am impressed with the strides made by the EL. We live in a global village, so European commercial gambling environment trends will eventually reach Africa. Thus, we must adopt progressive trends and actions in the regulatory environment in Africa. We have the benefit of seeing how things have unfolded in Europe and can take the more innovative and faster route to the most effective regulatory and gaming policies. We can see how important it is to keep up with a dynamic marketplace and evolve regulatory policy to align with new technologies, distribution channels, and business processes. We need to enforce laws against illegal operators and prevent them from building a customer base that makes it more difficult to combat.

We need advanced technology partners that support lotteries in Europe and the U.S. to be a part of Africa's journey towards a thriving industry in Africa. Security, integrity, and sustainability are as important as prosperity. The protection of the consumer is the highest priority. We appreciate the leadership of the EL President, Romana Girandon and the willingness of the EL team and the President of WLA, Andreas Kötter, to support and share best practices and insights that are so helpful to the development of the African lottery sector. ■