



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

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Correction of errors of substance may be made only on the floor of the House with the permission of the Speaker. However, correction of typographical or grammatical errors which Members suggest for the Bound Volumes which will be compiled at the end of the Meeting may be clearly marked in the Daily Report, and the copy containing the corrections submitted at the Editor's Office, Parliament House, not later than four clear days after the publication of the Daily Report.

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THE
PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC
OF GHANA

FIRST MEETING, 2025

Thursday, 13th February, 2025

The House met at 11.01 a.m.

[MR FIRST DEPUTY SPEAKER IN
THE CHAIR]

[PRAYERS]

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, there being no communication from the President and no Formal Communication by the Speaker, may we move to the item numbered 5 — Correction of *Votes and Proceedings* and the *Official Report*.

**VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS
AND THE OFFICIAL REPORT**

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, the *Votes and Proceedings* of Wednesday, 12th March, 2025, is under consideration.

Page 1...7—

Mrs Gizella Akushika Tetteh-Agbotui: Mr Speaker, at page 7, the item numbered 4(24), I was present in the Chamber yesterday, but I have been marked as absent.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Table, kindly take note.

Page 8...9—

Ms Jean-Marie Formadi: Mr Speaker, please, I was present yesterday, but my name has been captured as absent at page 7.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Table, kindly take note. Page 7?

Ms Formadi: Yes, Mr Speaker, the item numbered 4(10).

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Page 9...10—

Ms Comfort Doyoe Cudjoe: Mr Speaker, at page 7, the Minister for Finance was marked absent and even on the day he read the Budget Statement and Economic Policy of Government, he was marked absent. So, we have to look at it.

Thank you.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Table, please, take note.

Page 11—

Yes, Hon Member for Effia, you have the floor.

Mr Isaac Boamah-Nyarko: Mr Speaker, at page 11, the first sentence flowing from page 10 reads:

“...to ask the Minister for Energy and Green Transition the measures being taking...”

The “taking” should be t-a-k-e-n.

Also, the item numbered *49, the name of the Hon Member for Suaman is Frederick “Addy”. The “Addy” is spelt with a ‘y’ and not an ‘i’.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Table, kindly take note.

Any more correction at page 11?

Mr Frank Annoh-Dompreh: Mr Speaker, with respect, this is not at page 11, but it is just to inquire more into what my respected First Deputy Majority Whip said. This is the *Votes and Proceedings* for Wednesday and today is Thursday, so we are correcting for Wednesday, but the First Deputy Majority Whip was referring to Tuesday when the Minister for Finance was in the House. So, it is not entirely correct when she said the Minister for Finance—Yes, he was in the House on Tuesday, but not on Wednesday.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: The issue therefore is, was the Minister for Finance in the House on Wednesday?

Mr George Kweku Ricketts-Hagan: Mr Speaker, I think the point the Hon First Deputy Majority Whip was trying to make was that from Tuesday, it looks as if consistently, the Minister for Finance has been marked absent. She thought that it should be done as “absent with permission”, especially during this period when the Minister is working on the Budget. So, she was not only specifically referring to Tuesday, which we all know he was

in the Chamber, but she is just generally making a statement—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Deputy Majority Leader, for you to be absent from the House, the rules are clear as to what you should do to be recognised as such. In the absence of that, I think the record would mark you absent, particularly if you have not filled the leave of absence form and gone through the requirement of being permitted to be absent.

Mr Ricketts-Hagan: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I think we would have to get the Minister for Finance to do the needful.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Very well. The record then stands regarding the absence of the Minister for Finance.

Page 12...13—

Prof Kingsley Nyarko: Mr Speaker, at page 12, the item numbered *28, the fourth line, “...District Assembly Common Fund...”; it is not “Assembly”, but “Assemblies”.

11.11 a.m.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Table, take note.

Page 13—

Hon Members, the *Vote and Proceedings* of the 31st Sitting of Wednesday, 12th March, 2025, as corrected, is hereby adopted as the true record of proceedings.

Hon Members, we have the *Official Report* of Thursday, 27th February, 2025 for correction.

Any corrections?

Yes, Hon Prof Kingsley Nyarko?

Prof Kingsley Nyarko: Mr Speaker, on column 8, the first paragraph, the last word, “Kufuor” has been misspelled: K-u-f-u-o-r, not ...f-o-u-r.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Table Office, kindly take note.

Prof Nyarko: Then when we come to the last paragraph of column 8, the third line, “Mr Fifi Fiavi Kwetey”, “Fifi” should be double “i”.

Then when we come to the fifth line, “Mr Justine Kodua Frimpong”, is Justin without the “e”, and it is not “Frimpong Kodua” but Kodua Frimpong.

Mr Speaker, thanks for your patience.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Most grateful.

Table Office, kindly take note.

Any further corrections?

Yes, Hon Member?

Mr Abdul-Fatawu Alhassan: Mr Speaker, respectfully, column 7, last paragraph, “Hon Members, before I invite the His Excellency”, the “the”

should be taken out so that we have, “...before I invite His Excellency”. It is on the last paragraph of column 7 of the *Official Report*.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon Member?

Mr Alhassan: Column 7

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, column 7.

Mr Alhassan: Last paragraph

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Last paragraph

Mr Alhassan: The beginning of the paragraph, “Hon Member, before I invite the His Excellency”.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Table Office, take note.

Mr Alhassan: And then, with reference to the paragraph Prof Nyarko spoke about, column 8, there is the Chief of Staff, Hon Julius Debrah, and “a number of our Lordships”. I think it should be “Lordships”, not “Lordship”.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Very well. Take note, Table Office.

Hon Frank Afriyie?

Mr Frank Afriyie: Mr Speaker, thank you. I think that Prof Nyarko sought to correct at column 8, the very last paragraph. That is the third line, rather. Our General Secretary’s version of the “Fifi” is the Ewe version, not the Fante version. So, this is the right

spelling. I think that should be properly captured.

Thank you.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Well, Hon Members, being a former Member of Parliament, Table Office, you can get the correct spelling of his name, whether it is the Fante or the Ewe version and capture same.

Hon Members, any further corrections? Hon Members, the *Official Report* of Thursday, 27th February, 2025, as corrected, represents the true record of proceedings.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, the next item is the item numbered 6.

Deputy Majority Leader, any indication?

Yes, Deputy Majority Whip?

Second Deputy Majority Whip (Mr Richard Acheampong): Mr Speaker, we tried reaching the Minister, but we could not get him on phone. So, I think we could skip the Questions for now. In case he comes in, we could revisit the issue. And then the Minister for Foreign Affairs is also not around. So, I would plead with my Colleagues so that we could skip it and take a Statement.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, then make the application to vary the order of Business.

Mr Acheampong: It is Question time, but the two Ministers are not around so we would plead with our Colleague so that when they come—
[Laughter]

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Deputy Majority Whip, are you making an application to vary the order of Business?

Mr Acheampong: Mr Speaker, very well—So that we can vary the order of Business and then we would keep contacting the Ministers so when they come—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Minority Chief Whip, the application is for us to vary the order of Business and take item numbered 7.

Minority Chief Whip (Mr Frank Annoh-Dompreh): You see, I keep telling you, Government Side, please, be up and doing.

Mr Speaker, we had extensive Conclave engagement. You have to call your Ministers ahead of time. They must not come this morning—knee-jerk reaction—and be calling their Minister and come and tell us the Minister is not responding to their calls. Mr Speaker, his application is not tenable. We insist. We want the Minister in the Chamber.

Mr Speaker, the Minister needs to be called. It cannot be the case. There is a defined process by which Ministers are invited to appear and attend upon this House. Mr Speaker, as at my last

check, the process has been exhausted. The Clerks-at-the-Table have done their work. What is the case? And if the Minister cannot come, the Minister knows what to do. He is a Member of Parliament. He cannot take Parliament for granted. He should write officially. And I see—I almost said that the Hon Member is the Deputy Minister. Then I had to correct myself; he is not.

Mr Speaker, we on this Side would not accept that. The people of this country want to see the Ministers attending upon the House, doing the Business of the House and answering the Questions. These Questions were advertised in the Business Statement and even they were earlier advertised in the Order Paper. And today it is finding expression in the Order Paper and the Deputy Majority Whip is telling us he cannot reach the Minister on phone. What is that? — *[Interruption]*—The Minister does not need to be called on phone before he comes to the House.

[The Minister for Lands and Natural Resources walked into the Chamber]

I see him walking in. Yes, let him come and do the needful — *[Interruption]*—Mr Speaker, the Minister walked in early. He walked into the Chamber very early. But I will not litigate further. Mr Speaker, since he is here, we should proceed, and he should be called to take the appropriate chair and do justice to the Questions.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Chief Whip, you know, we have been in this House for some time. This is not the first time that Leaders will be making an application to vary the order of Business so that we give some time for the Ministers to get to our midst. So, the application from the Deputy Majority Whip was to vary the order of Business while the Ministers walk in. So, it is for me to take Statements while the Ministers walk in.

11.21 a.m.

And it is a just application, but in view of the fact that the Minister responsible for Lands and Natural Resources is in our midst, then Hon Second Deputy Majority Whip, do we stick to the item numbered 6?

Mr Patrick Yaw Boamah: Mr Speaker, when that application was made, you did not rule on it.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr Boamah: And you are asking the Second Deputy Majority Whip to come in again and tell us what? We need to hear your ruling on the matter, because the Minister walked in when that argument was being made.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes. Hon Patrick Yaw Boamah, application was made to the Chair for leave to vary the order of Business in view of the fact that the Minister at that particular moment was not in the Chamber. Before granting that application, the Minister walked in. Therefore, the

issue is, is the application still worthy of being granted? That is why I am asking the maker of the application to the effect that in view of the fact that the Minister walked in, do we still consider his application or stick to the order of Business by taking the item numbered 6? —[Pause]—

Let us exhaust the issue under consideration, then I can open the floor for any comment. So let me hear from the maker of the application.

Mr Acheampong: Mr Speaker, thank you very much. Now that the Minister is in, I think I am in a better place to withdraw the application put forward, and the attack the Minority Chief Whip wanted to—the presence of the Minister has rendered his attack moot. So, Mr Speaker, the application is duly withdrawn. Thank you very much.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much.

Hon Majority Chief Whip.

Mr Rockson-Nelson Etse Kwami Dafeamekpor: Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity.

Mr Speaker, we are grateful for the opportunity for the prayer that the Business be varied for Statements to be taken, abiding the coming of the Minister to respond to Questions. Mr Speaker, we thank you. But, let the point be made that this Side, we are serious. The comment from the Minority Chief Whip that the

Government Side must be up and doing is very unfortunate. We had a long Conclave today and we discussed a lot of things. He knows that we are in the Budget mood. The Ministers are chasing their estimates to make them ready so that the Committees can get to work, and he knows that this morning I went chasing estimates; I went to meet the Ministers to get them. The issue is that; it is not as if the Ministers do not want to come; it is the timing. But he took us to the cleaners; he should not do that. We are managing this House together. We helped the Majority Side to manage the House when we were on the Minority Side. We helped them. We assisted them. So, they should help us. We are settling in.

Mr Speaker, without further ado, we pray that the Hon Minister responsible for Lands and Natural Resources takes his seat so that —

Thank you very much.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Chief Whip?

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Mr Speaker, not to litigate further on this matter. We have always agreed to disagree, and I am in support. So, the matter has been settled now. The maker of the application has decided to withdraw same. So, there is no need in going to any other litigation. Just to remind my Colleagues, today is 13th March. It is just a reminder; it is a harmless reminder. Today is 13th March. We cannot go beyond 31st March in passing the Appropriation Bill. We all know the practice as has been in this House. Mr Speaker, the availability of the

Annual Estimates has always posed some challenges. I want to appeal to my Leaders, they should try—and the Majority Chief Whip had said that he was running around for the Annual Estimates. Let the Annual Estimates come in time so that the Committees can programme their sitting. There is also going to be a debate on the Budget.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Chief Whip, I would want to direct that the Hon Minority Chief Whip and the Majority Chief Whip engage in that regard to make the Annual Estimates available for Members.

Thank you very much.

Hon Members, we have pupils from some educational institutions visiting the House. They are from Mary Nyarkoah Memorial Academy, led by Emmanuel Koranteng, headmaster. They are from Agona East Constituency, and are 130 in number.

[Pupils of Mary Nyarkoah Memorial Academy were acknowledged]

Mr First Deputy Speaker: We also have Gaku Basic School, led by Eugene Gogo, a teacher.

They are from La Dadekotopon, and they are 73 in number.

[Pupils of Gaku Basic School were acknowledged]

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, on behalf of the House and on my own behalf, I wish our children

a fruitful visit to the House. They are welcome.

Hon Members, we move to the item numbered 6, Questions time. The Hon Minister for Lands and Natural Resources is scheduled to respond to some Questions. Hon Minister, may you kindly take your seat.

Hon Members, let us proceed to take the Question numbered 50 on today's Order Paper in the name of Hon Anthony Mmieh, the Member of Parliament for Odotobri.

You have the floor.

ORALS ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MINISTRY FOR LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Introduction of a Legislative Instrument to Regulate the Operation of the Lands Act, 2020 (Act 1036)

Mr Anthony Mmieh (NPP — Odotobri): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and Good morning, Hon Minister.

Mr Speaker, I beg to ask the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources when the Ministry intends to introduce a Legislative Instrument to regulate the operation of the Lands Act, 2020 (Act 1036) to ensure uniformity in land administration throughout the country.

Thank you.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minister, you may answer the Question.

Minister for Lands and Natural Resources (Mr Emmanuel Armah-Kofi Buah) (MP): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Respectfully, let me take the liberty to inform this honourable House that I was here at exactly 10 o'clock. As a former Deputy Leader of this House, I respect this House and the rules of this House very much. Unfortunately, the House was not ready, and I had to rush to give a speech at the 56th Anniversary of the Ghana Institution of Surveyors. As soon as I finished, I rushed back to perform this very important duty, and I will continue to respond to the call of this House with the urgency and importance it deserves. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Now, having said that, I will go ahead and answer the Hon Member's Question.

Mr Speaker, following the passage of the Land Act 2020 (Act 1036), the Lands Commission engaged the services of two consultants to assist in the preparation of the required regulations to operationalise the Act.

11.31 a.m.

The Commission, in collaboration with the Office of Attorney-General, constituted an in-house team of staff to work with the two consultants.

After extensive stakeholder engagements across the country, a draft

Legislative Instrument (L. I.) was forwarded to the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources for onward submission to the Office of the Attorney-General (AG). The draft was thus submitted to the Office of the Attorney-General in July 2024.

Subsequently, the Office of the Attorney-General, upon review, provided some comments to be addressed by the Ministry through its agencies, the Lands Commission and the Office of the Administrator of Stool Lands (OASL).

Responses to the comments and the final draft of the L. I. have been submitted to the Office of the Attorney-General by the Lands Commission and the Office of the Administrator of Stool Lands, through my office on 28th February, 2025. Once finalised by the Office of the Attorney-General, the Legislative Instrument will be laid before Parliament for consideration and passage.

I thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, any follow-up question?

Mr Mmieh: Mr Speaker, I think I am satisfied with this Answer. The follow-up would be to the Office of the Attorney General.

I am very grateful.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Any supplementary?

Yes, Hon Assafuah?

Mr Vincent Ekow Assafuah:
Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

I would want to ask the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources because the stakeholder engagement started somewhere in 2020 and the lapse of time if would he consider engaging, or if he likes, have another stakeholder engagement before it is laid before Parliament.

Mr Buah: Mr Speaker, extensive stakeholder engagement was done and is on record. We believe that those engagements have been very extensive enough. We believe that once the review from the Office of the Attorney-General is done, it will be brought to this House. This House has the liberty to always engage the public once it is here, but I believe, on the part of the Ministry, we have done a very exhaustive work.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much.

Hon Members, in the absence of any further supplementary questions, can we move to the Question numbered 51, which also stands in the name of Hon Anthony Mmieh, Hon Member for Otodobri.

ORALS ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MINISTRY FOR LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Digitalising Services Rendered by the Lands Commission

Mr Anthony Mmieh (NPP — Odotobri): Mr Speaker, I beg to ask the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources what the Ministry intends to do in digitalising the services being rendered by the Lands Commission across the country to ensure easy accessibility.

Mr Emmanuel Kofi-Armah Buah: Mr Speaker, there has been some modification to this Answer on the second paragraph and then the very last paragraph, and so I want the record to note that and it will reflect in the Answer I give.

Mr Speaker, efforts to modernise the operations of the Lands Commission have been ongoing for quite some time, since the introduction of the Land Administration Projects Lab 1 and Lab 2, funded by the World Bank and other donor partners with investments over US\$92 million. These projects covered other sectors like the Judiciary, Land Use and Spatial Authority (LUSPA), formerly the Town and Country Planning Department, and culminated in the merger of the four land sector agencies into the current Lands Commission.

The passage of the Lands Act 2020 also introduced the Client Services Assets Unit of the Lands Commission, which set the stage for the digitalisation of the operations of the Commission. The World Bank agreed to extend the Lab 2 project to support the digitalisation of the operations of the Lands Commission and offered preparative funds of about US\$3 million. Unfortunately, these funds did not materialise.

I think this is the area that the modification and the correction are. The Lands Commission over the years has leveraged on 33 per cent retention of its internally generated funds (IGF) to undertake some limited digitalisation of about 15 per cent of its manual records and introduced that digital platform to support its operations and the general services to the public. These are, however, not enough to transform the Lands Commission to the land service delivery agency we all desire.

The Land Commission has designed a project that seeks to completely digitalise the operations of the Commission by implementing several interventions that will see the land service delivery space providing:

- National Digital Map Data for all purposes available for use by multiple agencies and private sector—National Spatial Data Infrastructure.

- Well demarcated and registered boundaries of “Allodial” Landowners.
- Decentralised Lands Commission, at the district level as well as fully operational online services (Clients accessing more services from the comfort of their home or office).
- Easy access to cost-effective and quick acquisition of site plans for registration, possibly eliminate the need to survey and prepare cadastral plan for every parcel for registration.
- Real-time online access to credible up-to-date Land Records reflecting the Ground Situation (searches).
- Quick Transparent Stamp Duty Assessment and electronic stamping of documents, Convenient Payment, Receipting and Reporting Platform.
- Less cumbersome and Fast Services by the Lands Commission.
- Gradual introduction of Systematic Titling in other regions.
- Well-strengthened lands sector institutions, including the customary land secretariat with professionally competent and motivated staff.

Mr Speaker, it is estimated that an amount of US\$165 million will be required to implement the various interventions that will help to achieve these outcomes.

Working with the Hon Minister for Finance and other private sector sources, we are going to pursue all the various options to provide funding for this important project, including going back to the donor community who continue to express interest in supporting this very important initiative.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon Minister.

Mr Assafuah — *rose* —

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Assafuah, please, allow the maker to exhaust the supplementary questions before.

Any supplementary question?

Mr Mmieh: Mr Speaker, yes, respectfully

I would like to know if the Minister reconsider amending the formula for distribution of or apportioning of IGF from the Lands Commission. I understand 33 per cent is retained by the Commission, which means that 67—That is right.

My question is, would the Hon Minister reconsider the formula for distributing or apportioning of the IGF from the Lands Commission, where the

Lands Commission gets only 33 per cent and 67 per cent, I believe, goes into the Consolidated Fund.

The Ministry finds itself in a situation where it is struggling to raise funds to ensure that digitalisation is completed. Would he consider reversing the formula to enable the Lands Commission to utilise the 67 per cent in promoting digitalisation?

Mr Buah: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The issue of capping has really been a very challenging one for institutions like the Lands Commission. I am very happy that in the recently read Budget, the Government of President Mahama has begun this journey to de-cap and liberate some of these institutions like the National Health Insurance Authority and others.

I am believing that this journey to de-cap will continue. It will not stop at the National Health Insurance Authority and Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund) but will get to the Lands Commission.

I thank you.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Any further supplementary questions? Hon Assafuah, you have the floor.

11.41 a.m.

Mr Vincent Ekow Assafuah (NDC — Old Tafo): Mr Speaker, considering the Government's

commitment to digitalisation which reflects the fact that our President appointed a Minister for Communication, Digital Technology and Innovation, I never heard the Minister mention if he had any plans to collaborate with the Ministry of Communication, Digital Technology and Innovation in realising this ambitious programme at the Lands Commission. If there is, please, he should let the Ghanaian people know.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: So, Hon Member, what is your question?

Mr Assafuah: My question is that does the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources have any plans to collaborate with the Ministry of Communications, Digital Technology and Innovation in addressing this problem?

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minister, you have the floor.

Mr Buah: Mr Speaker, at the tail end of my Answer, I had said that we are going to continue to collaborate with the Ministry of Finance and other agencies, including the private sector and the Ministry of Communications, Digital Technology and Innovation, and that is exactly what we will do.

Mr Speaker, this collaboration is very critical, but as you know, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) does not believe too much in the jargons and sloganeering. We believe in results and we will do exactly that.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon Minister.

Yes, Prof Kingsley Nyarko?

Prof Kingsley Nyarko: Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity.

The Hon Minister, very hardworking Minister, in providing his responses, was giving futuristic answers. In the last paragraph, he said,

“Working with the Hon Minister of Finance, we are going to pursue all the various options to provide funding for this important project, including going back to the Donor Community, who continue to express interest in supporting this initiative.”

Brilliant. However, I would like to know from him that considering the significant role digitalisation plays in our daily lives, when is it going to be done? We need some time frame for this to be done. For me, this is a brilliant response, but he should kindly tell the House exactly when this important intervention is going to be implemented?

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minister, you have the floor.

Mr Buah: Mr Speaker, this is a very important question, and this is to assure the Hon Member that engagement with other sector agencies and other sources where we can get funding is a top priority of mine. I am very happy to inform him that barely

three months in office, I have already had engagements with the representatives of the World Bank on the possibility of going back to funding of a Lab 3, and these discussions have also continued with the Ministry of Finance. We will continue to engage to make sure that we can get the necessary funding for this very important work.

I thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much.

Hon Member for Effia, is that your seat?

Mr Isaac Boamah-Nyarko: Mr Speaker, that is not my seat.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, ask the question from your seat.

[Pause]

Hon Member, you have the floor.

Mr Isaac Boamah-Nyarko (NPP — Effia): Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

Mr Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister whether the Ministry has an intention to take advantage of local Ghanaian companies in the area of the digitalisation process because normally, when these projects are donor funded, we get to realise that the support comes from their side. So, I

want to know if they will want to take advantage of local companies to assist them in the digitalisation drive.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Hon Member.

Hon Minister, you have the floor.

Mr Buah: Mr Speaker, our doors are very open to all companies, both local and international, who have the capacity to help us achieve this goal of digitalising our land records and making it more efficient. I will use this opportunity to say again, that Ghanaian companies that have the capacity and can provide the efficiency required to achieve these goals are all welcome.

I thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much.

Yes, Hon Sosu?

Mr Francis-Xavier Kojo Sosu (NDC — Madina): Mr Speaker, from the Answers of the Hon Minister, he indicated that the World Bank agreed to extend the Lab 2 project; however, the then Government refused. Yes, the then Government—*[Interruption]*—You modified that one? Very well.

So, I wanted to know whether the Ministry came across the reasons the previous Government did not take advantage of the World Bank facility.

Mr Buah: Mr Speaker, it is important to say that the records at the Ministry is that those funds never materialised.

Mr Worlase Kpeli (NDC — Kwahu Afram Plains North): Mr Speaker, I want to ask the Hon Minister if the challenges in digitalisation have been the cause of the partial halt in registration at the Lands Commission as we speak—*[Interruption]*—All right, I will come again.

There is a partial halt in registration at the Lands Commission. Activities of the Land Commission have been halted partially; is it as a result of the digitalisation challenges or it is an operational directive, and when will it be restored?

Mr Buah: Mr Speaker, there are two things going on. We are working overtime to try to ensure the boards at the regional levels are also constituted. We are also working to ensure that we deal with the issues of refreeze as quickly as possible to make sure that these operations can go forward.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, having regard to Standing Order 773, can we limit the supplementary questions and move to the Question numbered 52 which stands in the name of Mr Anthony Mmieh.

ORALS ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MINISTRY FOR LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Policies to Curb Corruption within the Lands Sector

Mr Anthony Mmieh (NPP — Odotobri): Mr Speaker, this is my last Question for the day. I beg to ask the Hon Minister for Lands and Natural Resources what Government policies the Ministry intends to undertake to curb corruption within the lands sector.

Mr Buah: Mr Speaker, to curb corruption in the lands sector, we must tackle the issues of efficiency and transparency. These will be tackled both at the level of the land-owning groups, who are responsible for the sale and allocation of land, and the administrators of the land, that is public and stool/family land.

11.51 a.m.

Mr Speaker, fortunately, the Land Act, 2020 (Act 1036) has quite a number of clauses that seeks to address corruption in the land sector and criminalises some of these, like land guards, forgery of documents, impersonation, multiple sale of lands among others.

The policy of Government towards the strict implementation of the provisions of the Land Act, 2020 (Act 1036) will be reflected in the Legislative Instrument that will regulate the operationalisation of the

Act. Government intends to strictly enforce these clauses.

The digitalisation efforts already described is also expected to introduce several interventions that will ensure transparency in land administration both at the customary and state levels. The improved level of transparency is expected to significantly reduce the opportunities for corruption.

Mr Speaker, another area to address corruption in land administration, especially with respect to state public land, is to introduce a clear policy on the management of public lands. The Lands Commission has prepared a draft policy on public land management, which has been submitted to my office. I intend to subject the draft policy to a larger stakeholder consultation for inputs, and to implement same to guide the allocation and management of public lands. This is intended to be undertaken as part of a larger review of the 1999 National Land Policy. Recognising that the existing National Land Policy of 1999 is outdated and does not fully address current challenges, the Ministry has initiated steps to review and update that policy.

One of the recommendations of the National Land Conference held in 2022, was the review of the 1999 National Land Policy under the guidance and leadership of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources. In collaboration with the Office of the Administrator of Stool Lands, the Ghana Land Sector Multi-

Stakeholder Platform, and other partners have developed a roadmap for the review and preparation of a new National Land Policy. A technical committee comprising the various land sector agencies have been put together to address this issue.

Mr Speaker, the revised policy, once in place, will address the following: The Land Act, 2020 (Act 1036)—Ensuring coherence with recent legislative reforms, current socio-economic and technological realities, addressing emerging land-related challenges such as urbanisation, climate change, and digitalisation. International Best Practices—That is incorporating globally accepted land principles to enhance efficiency and transparency, and also serve as the foundation framework for land management in the country.

The policy is expected to address issues such as land encroachments, multiple land sales, unapproved development schemes, aiming to harmonise laws and practices to facilitate equitable access to land and enhance tenure security.

I thank you, Mr Speaker.

Prof Kingsley Nyarko — *rose* —

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Prof Kingsley Nyarko, do you have a right to tell the Hon Member not to follow up?

Prof Nyarko: No, I did not say that. He was sitting down so I asked

him if he had a follow-up question. I was just asking him.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Well, that is for me to ask.

Hon Member, do you have a supplementary question?

Mr Mmieh: No, I am grateful.

Thank you very much.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Prof Nyarko, you may now have the floor.

Prof Kingsley Nyarko: Hon Bernard Ahiafor, the Speaker in the Chair, and my very good Friend, thank you for the opportunity.

Mr Speaker, before the policy is done and implemented, what are the concrete steps that the Hon Minister's outfit is taking now to deal with corruption within the land sector?

Thank you.

Mr Buah: Mr Speaker, I laid it out clearly.

We must strictly enforce the Act that has been passed to address issues such as the land guard issues, forgery of documents, impersonation and multiple sales; these are all clearly laid out, and the punitive steps have all been laid out. We must strictly enforce them by working with law enforcement agencies. I think that is what we should start doing.

Thank you.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Lukutor?

Ing Surv Maxwell Kwame Lukutor: Is the Hon Minister mindful of the fact that there are a lot of issues relating to the incompetence of some staff, usually because of "family and friends" dealings within the Lands Commission, and that people are there by virtue of the fact that they have their parents working with the Lands Commission? For most of these workers, there is no strict policy on transfers, so you see some of them being there for about 15 to 20 years and they are never transferred anywhere. So they know the ins and outs of the whole Lands Commission, and these are the ones that are able to forge and clean some records and replace them for the sake of their personal benefits. Are you mindful of this fact, and what do you intend to do about these transfer policies, especially regarding people who have stayed in the Lands Commission for about 15 to 20 years?

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Lukutor, do you have any evidence to the effect that those who stay for a longer period are likely to be those who will be involved in the corruption?

Ing Surv Lukutor: Mr Speaker, if you may know, I am a licensed surveyor so I have practiced in the field of Lands Commission for over 20 years, and so these are facts. I know what I am talking about.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Well, Hon Members, I would advise that we are guided in making certain statements, particularly on the floor of the House, but I will give you the benefit of doubt.

Ing Surv Lukutor: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon Minister?

Mr Buah: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The issues raised are very important issues, and I am happy that the Hon Member has brought them to my attention. We would aggressively look into these matters.

I thank you.

Mr Kwabena Okyere Darko-Mensah — *rose* —

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon former Minister?

Mr Kwabena Okyere Darko-Mensah: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Hon Minister made mention of the need to raise US\$165 million to fix the problems at the Lands Commission. I would like to know from the Minister whether he is considering PPP to raise and implement this project.

Also, how far is he looking at the issue of making the Lands Commission the sole sales agent for all lands in

Ghana, so the issue of boundary disputes, land guards and double sale do not arise anymore?

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minister, you have the floor.

Mr Buah: Hon Speaker, I think in my answer I had said that all the options were on the table, including engaging the Ministry of Finance and other sectors, including Ministry of Communication, Digital Technology and Innovations, and the private sector, and in that area, I was thinking more of those PPP proposals. We already have some of them we are reviewing, and so we will continue to do that. I think he meant land transactions—Those are matters that we can review at the Ministry.

I thank you.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Chief Whip?

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Mr Speaker, let me thank the Hon Minister for his answers.

Mr Speaker, if you may, let us reference the Hon Minister's answers; paragraphs five and six. He basically talked about stakeholder consultation and then the need to have a review of the 1999 National Land Policy. Will he be kind enough to let this House know — I am asking this question because often times we are—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Is that in respect of the Question numbered 52?

12.01 p.m.

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Mr Speaker, yes, it is in respect of the Question numbered 52.

We tend to be in a hurry to amend policies, to amend our laws.

Would he share with us the trust of the success story of the National Land Policy of 1999? What is it about the National Land Policy of 1999 that he wants to review? What specifically needs to be reviewed? Can he give us timelines on his consultations? This is not new; I am within the—*[Inaudible]* Can he give us some timelines on the consultations that he intends to engage in as seen at the fifth paragraph?

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minister, you have the floor.

Mr Buah: Mr Speaker, thank you.

I think the Question was related to policies we intend to undertake to curb corruption at the Lands Commission, and I had laid out various steps. As part of that Answer, I talked about the need to look at the National Land Policy of 1999. If the Hon Member wants us to comprehensively address the achievements of the National Land Policy of 1999, I would be happy to bring that in a comprehensive Answer, once he asks that Question.

Thank you.

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: I know he is the sector Minister. I am not seeking for a comprehensive answer. I am asking this because oftentimes, we tend

to be in a hurry to change policy and to amend laws. I am asking what its success has been. He can give us a gist of it. Why do we want to amend that Policy? What is the motivation? He does not need to give me a three-paged answer. He can just give me a one-paragraph answer and that should be enough.

Mr Buah: I think in my Answer, this was what I stated:

“Recognising that the existing National Land Policy of 1999 is outdated and does not fully address current challenges...”

These challenges include the issues of digitalisation and all these modern tools that, quite frankly, are not included in the National Land Policy of 1999. On the recommendation of the National Land Conference, which was held in 2022, a review was recommended. I have said it is important because of these reasons, that we undertake that review and bring a new policy. They should join us to do that work.

Thank you

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, we have three more Questions and given that the Question time is being regulated by Standing Order 77, I intend not to take any supplementary questions, but to thank the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources for attending upon the House and providing answers to all the three Questions posed to him.

We would have to move the other Questions on today's Order Paper. Hon Minister, you are discharged.

Hon Members, I have been informed that the Answers to the Questions numbered 40, 63, and 64 are going to be programmed and given to us by the Order Paper *Addendum*. So, in the meantime, let me vary the order of Business and then we would move to—

Hon Members, I understand the Answers have been loaded on the console. So, if you are comfortable, we would proceed to take the Question numbered 40. Hon Members, the Question numbered 40, is in the name of Hon Vincent Ekow Assafuah, the Member of Parliament for Old Tafo.

Mr Assafuah: Mr Speaker—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minister for Foreign Affairs, you may take your seat. What is the pleasure of the House?

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Mr Speaker, if my Colleague would agree with me, may we rather go on to the Statement. Because I am getting a signal that Colleagues are finding a bit of a challenge in reading the Answers. So, may we proceed to Statements. I am sure after a while, we would get the Order Paper *Addendum* with the Answers advertised, then we can revert.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Majority Chief Whip?

Mr Rockson-Nelson Etse Kwami Dafeamekpor: Mr Speaker, indeed, that was the original suggestion as we

were informed that the Answers have been given. So, we have no objection to it.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, the sense of the House is to move to Statements. Accordingly, I vary the order of Business to take the item numbered 7.

Hon Members, the Minister for Foreign Affairs is invited to apprise the House on the deportation of Ghanaian citizens in the United States of America (USA) and related matters. Hon Members, the Minister is here. I proceed to give the floor to the Minister.

STATEMENT

Deportation of Ghanaians from the United States of America

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Mr Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa) (MP): Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to make this Statement on the deportation of Ghanaians from the United States of America (USA).

Background:

Mr Speaker, by way of background, upon assuming office as President of the United States of America (USA), His Excellency Donald Trump instituted several executive actions, including Executive Order on deportation. Central to President Trump's immigration agenda was his firm commitment to carrying out mass deportations of individuals living in the USA without legal status. This

initiative primarily targeted those who either entered the country illegally or overstayed their visas.

As of 23rd February, 2025, the United States has implemented significant changes to its immigration policies, leading to profound consequences for migrant communities. These changes have resulted in mass deportations of undocumented migrants and heightened enforcement measures along the southern border with Mexico.

Initially, the deportation efforts under the Trump Administration prioritised undocumented immigrants and non-citizen residents with serious criminal records. However, reports indicate that individuals without criminal histories, those with final deportation orders, individuals with expired visas, and even recipients of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) have also been subject to deportation.

According to data from the USA Immigration and Customs Enforcement, approximately 37,660 individuals were deported in January, 2025. No Ghanaians were included in that number. However, 94 Ghanaians were deported from the USA in 2024. The ongoing raids by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement and reports of mass deportations have fostered a climate of fear and uncertainty within migrant communities.

Actions taken by the USA Authorities:

To further bolster deportation efforts, President Trump signed a memorandum on 29th January, 2025,

directing the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security to expand the Migrant Operations Center at Guantanamo Bay. This expansion will facilitate the temporary housing of up to 30,000 undocumented immigrants. Following this directive, 178 Venezuelan migrants were transferred to the facility and subsequently deported to Honduras, from where they were repatriated to Venezuela. As of now, no Ghanaian national is reportedly detained at this facility.

Increased border security:

The Trump Administration's strengthened border enforcement has led to a notable reduction in illegal migrant crossings, particularly along the southern border.

12.11 p.m.

According to data from US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), daily arrests in the El Paso sector of the border fell dramatically from 1,800 in 2023 to fewer than 100 in January 2025. This decline in illegal crossings is largely attributed to a comprehensive government strategy that involved collaboration across multiple federal agencies. The Departments of State, Defence and Justice, alongside Homeland Security and ICE, worked together to enhance border security and tighten enforcement measures.

These efforts included increased border patrols, the construction of additional barriers, and the deployment

of advanced surveillance technologies to monitor and prevent illegal crossings. The concerted strategy appears to have significantly disrupted migration patterns in the region, contributing to the reduction in arrests and crossings.

However, Mr Speaker, while the administration views this as a success in border control, it has also led to ongoing debates about the broader impacts of migrant communities and the human rights concerns associated with such stringent enforcement measures.

In partnership with Panama and Costa Rica, the USA has established agreements to temporarily detain deportees in these countries before they are returned to their home countries. Under these arrangements, migrants who are deported from the USA are often held in detention camps in Panama or Costa Rica as part of the deportation process.

However, reports from detainees have highlighted concerning conditions in these camps. Migrants held in Panama, for example, have complained about harsh living conditions, limited freedoms, and restricted access to legal assistance. These complaints have raised concerns about the treatment of individuals awaiting deportation in these temporary detention facilities.

Mr Speaker, the Ghana Mission in Washington has reported that two Ghanaian nationals were recently deported to Costa Rica by ICE. The

Mission is working with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), for eventual transfer to Ghana. The involvement of these third-party countries in the deportation process reflects a broader USA strategy to manage its deportation efforts and control migration flows.

Targeting of Unaccompanied Migrant Children: A recent directive has instructed US Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents to locate and deport unaccompanied migrant children who enter the USA without parental guardianship. This initiative targets over 600,000 unaccompanied minors who have entered the USA since 2019. The measures being implemented as part of this initiative include the use of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) testing to verify familial relationships, to ensure that children are returned to their families or home countries safely.

However, the initiative has raised concerns regarding the potential removal of children who have been living in the USA for extended periods, particularly those residing in state shelters or with non-relative sponsors. Among those potentially affected are Ghanaian children. As of now, there are four children who are known to the Ghana Mission who fall under this category. These children, like many others, may face the possibility of deportation if they are unable to prove familial connections or guardianship under the new ICE directive.

The move has raised alarm within advocacy groups who have expressed concerns about the impact it may have on the safety and well-being of these vulnerable minors.

While checks indicate that there have been no large-scale deportations of Ghanaian nationals; the immigration enforcement measures implemented by the Trump Administration are having a significant impact on the Ghanaian community. One of the sources of confusion and concern has been reports that suggest that USA immigration officers are closely scrutinising individuals with dual citizenship, particularly those who travel abroad using both their USA and Ghanaian passports. This has further heightened uncertainty within the Ghanaian community, as many individuals fear that their travel may lead to complications with immigration authorities.

Mr Speaker, currently, the mood within the Ghanaian community is one of fear and anxiety. Several leaders from various Ghanaian associations have expressed concerns about the growing apprehension among community members. There has been a noticeable decline in attendance at events, with many individuals opting to avoid public gatherings to reduce their risk of encountering immigration enforcement.

Similarly, some Ghanaian churches have reported a significant drop in participation, which they attribute to the strict immigration measures

enforced by the Trump Administration. Many community members are reportedly hesitant to engage in social or religious activities due to the ongoing fears surrounding their immigration status.

This trend, Mr Speaker, is expected to continue unless the Trump Administration eases its hard stance on immigration, offering reassurance to immigrant communities. As long as these measures remain in place, the climate of fear and uncertainty is likely to persist, affecting not only the community but also other immigrant populations across the USA.

These are the measures the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has taken so far. In response to the ongoing concerns about potential deportations, the Ministry has begun engaging with all relevant stakeholders to prepare for the possible deportation of Ghanaian nationals from the USA

A key step in this process was a stakeholder meeting held on the 17th February, 2025. The meeting aimed to develop comprehensive preparatory measures in anticipation of potential deportations, evaluate vulnerabilities within the Ghanaian community, and establish necessary support mechanisms.

One of the key outcomes of the meeting was the identification of resources needed to provide assistance to deported nationals, including transportation to their final destinations and any available reintegration

programmes. Additionally, the stakeholders discussed the importance of coordinating efforts between the Ministry, local organisations, and our international partners to ensure that Ghanaian nationals who are deported are adequately supported upon their return to Ghana.

The meeting also focused on the need to secure budgetary allocation to address these challenges and ensure that the Ministry can provide the necessary resources for deportees, as well as address the broader humanitarian aspect of the deportation process. The Ministry's proactive engagement with stakeholders reflects a commitment to minimising the impact on affected individuals and ensuring that proper support systems are put in place for those who eventually return to Ghana.

Institutions represented at the meeting were the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, the National Security Secretariat, Research Department, the Ghana Immigration Service, the National Investigations Bureau (NIB), the National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO), the National Ambulance Service, the Department of Social Welfare, and Port Health.

Now, Mr Speaker, on the 21st February, 2025, I held a very constructive meeting with the USA Ambassador to Ghana, H. E. Virginia E. Palmer. The meeting sought broader cooperation and understanding of

exactly what USA authorities were engaged in, and we also sought to ensure that the deportations are carried out in a very humane manner.

It will be recalled that there have been times in recent years where nationals have been deported in conditions which were most appalling, for example, deporting people in chains, handcuffs, chaining them to their seats as they are flown into our country. We have stated that we will want these matters to be an incident occurring in the past and that we do not want them to recur. These deportations must be carried out in a humane manner.

12.21 p.m.

During the meeting, it was also emphasised that the affected Ghanaians do not have criminal records and that any Ghanaian currently serving a jail term will not be deported until their sentence has been fully served. we have received full assurances from the U.S. Ambassador in Accra on these matters. Updates from the Washington mission indicates as follows:

Currently, there are 150 Ghanaians in detention across various centres in the U.S. who are awaiting deportation for crimes such as rape, internet fraud, and illegal entry. None of the affected Ghanaians are in detention as we speak. 50 out of the 150 individuals have received final deportation orders

from the courts. Their deportation is expected to take place by mid-year, mid-2025. The remaining 100 cases are either under appeal or have been dismissed. Representations have been made to U.S. authorities on behalf of one Ghanaian on the grounds of ill health, and he has been released to seek medical care.

On the 20th December, 2024, our embassy in Washington was informed of another one Ghanaian with a medical condition who requested expedited removal as his condition was not improving with the treatment he was receiving in detention. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was promptly notified, and the individual was processed for removal, departing the U.S. on the 30th January, 2025. So that individual is now within our jurisdiction.

Three Ghanaians have also been processed and are scheduled to depart from the United States on commercial flights on the 19th March, 2025, the 28th March, 2025, and 1st April, 2025, respectively. Ten Ghanaians have also been interviewed by the Embassy to verify their nationalities and ensure that they have received a fair hearing. They are now awaiting the Department of Homeland Security to purchase their flight tickets before their travel documents for their deportation can be issued.

The Ghana Embassy in Washington, in collaboration with Ghanaian immigration attorneys in the U.S.A

have been organising virtual town hall meetings to offer legal guidance and support to nationals facing immigration challenges. Upon the issuance of final removal orders, the individual's names will be forwarded to the Ministry for further processing.

It should be noted that the aforementioned cases existed prior to President Trump's assumption of office, with the exception of two Ghanaians who were deported to Costa Rica, as outlined in the actions taken by the U.S. authorities. In line with the Ministry's established practises and in collaboration with the relevant authorities, arrangements will be made to ensure the reception of our compatriots upon their arrival in Ghana. This will include health screening, psychological support, assistance with specific needs, and transportation to their final destination, reintegration. The Ministry is in discussion with National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO) and other partners, including the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), to extend support in reintegration and providing additional sources of livelihood to our compatriots upon arrival. Options include arranging skills training, micro-financing opportunities, and psychological support to help individuals reintegrate into the society and rebuild their livelihoods.

Additionally, we will work with local authorities and communities to ensure that those returning are supported in their re-admission into the

society to enable them contribute to their communities.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, the Ministry continues to closely monitor developments related to the potential deportation of Ghanaian nationals from the U.S. A to inform further actions. This ongoing monitoring will allow the Ministry to stay updated on any changes in immigration policies, enforcement practices, or shifts in the situation that may affect the Ghanaian community. The operationalisation of the Consular Fund, as approved by Cabinet, will be critical in supporting our affected compatriots returning home. It is anticipated that the Ministry's budget, which is before this august House and awaiting approval, will receive your kind approval of the US\$2 million we have allocated to operationalise the Consular Fund.

Mr Speaker, based on these developments, the Ministry will assess the need for additional measures, resources, or interventions to support affected individuals. By staying proactive and responsive, the Ministry aims to ensure that Ghanaian nationals are well supported throughout this process, whether through legal assistance, re-integration programmes, or other necessary forms of aid. Further actions will be determined in coordination with all stakeholders. But the message we want to send to our compatriots very clearly is that they are not alone in these difficult times. Their Government and the people in Parliament will make sure that their consular needs, are supported.

Mr Speaker, we will continue to do all we can to make sure that we are with them throughout these processes until they arrive and they are fully re-integrated in our communities. This is the update on the situation involving the potential deportation, of some 150 Ghanaians from the United States of America.

Mr Speaker, I thank you very much.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, that is the Statement from the Minister for Foreign Affairs. I will therefore open the floor for comments. I recognise Hon Patrick Yaw Boamah.

Mr Patrick Yaw Boamah (NPP — Okaikwei Central): Mr Speaker, thank you very much. Mr Speaker, I would want to catch the Minister's attention.

Mr Speaker, if you go to the website of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, (ICE), Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO), November 2024, one would realise that there is a table that ICE or the U.S. agencies put out, which has listed all the countries and the persons to be deported. On that table, Ghana has about 3,228 of our nationals listed to be repatriated or deported. In the Minister's Statement, he mentioned about 150 or so, 50 of whom have gotten final deportation orders from the U.S. institution. So, I would want to seek further clarification from him on this one.

Secondly, I listed the budget, and the Hon Minister came at the end of his Statement to talk about a US\$2 million consular support fund for its operationalisation. I would not belabour that. But with his stakeholder engagement, I also realise he left out the engagement with the IOM. He listed a host of institutions, RD, the Ministry itself, and other institutions, but I realise he did not engage the IOM, which is very important in this matter, and his engagement with the U.S. Ambassador is also very important.

Thirdly, he mentioned that three people are to buy their own tickets and fly down as per the U.S. requirements, and also ten are being interviewed. The person or those who have already been deported, what has been the Ministry's engagement? Because at the tail end of the Minister's presentation, he spoke about reintegration. What has been some of the follow-ups? Has the Ministry gotten any response from this person ever since he or she got back into the country? Those are some of the preliminary matters I would want him to address. Thank you.

First Deputy Speaker: Hon Xavier Sosu.

Mr Francis-Xavier Kojo Sosu (NDC — Madina): Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

12.31 p.m.

Mr Speaker, I want to commend the Minister for Foreign Affairs for this very detailed briefing of the House, and

to also commend the Ministry for the proactive measures that the Ministry is taking in respect of these our compatriots.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, going through the process of deportation obviously would be a very traumatising situation. The least we can do as a country and as Leaders of this country is to be available and provide assistance to these compatriots who, unfortunately, find themselves in this space. I am really excited, particularly about the preparedness to receive these people who have already received their deportation orders.

I would want to urge this House that when that time comes, I think the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration and the Leadership of this House should also be very interested in how we receive these people and how we assist them to integrate. We all know that immigration and migration is a fact of life, and many of these compatriots who find themselves on the other side went with really good intentions, sometimes just to find greener pastures and so on and so forth. So, if they find themselves in this unfortunate situation, then the state must, indeed, protect and support them.

I just want to commend the Ministry and their various agencies for what they are doing: getting in touch with them and ensuring that when they come back, we are even preparing to get them counsellors who can counsel them and properly integrate them into

the society. I believe that this is a caring Ministry, and we need to commend the Minister for that.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Let me give the floor to the lady.

Mrs Laurette Korkor Asante (NPP — Atiwa West): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity.

Mr Speaker, I just want to make a comment and ask a couple of questions. We know that the United States of America (USA) has long been a beacon of hope to a lot of people across the world, Ghana included; so, we do have a lot of Ghanaians over there. Some may have overstayed their visa, or gone through other means, which is why they have been deported.

But one thing for sure is, and I am sure the Minister who probably has done the research will agree, if we do a profile of the Ghanaians who are being deported, probably they do not have criminal records. If we have maybe one or two, it may be because of traffic tickets or something, but we will find that a large number of them do not have criminal records. They are there and are living responsibly; they work and are basically law-abiding people over there, but for their visa overstay and their immigration problem.

So, I am glad to hear that the Minister said he has basically negotiated with the

United States of America to not have them brought over in handcuffs because they are not prisoners, and they are not prisoners of war, and they are certainly not slaves to be brought back in shackles. So, I am really glad to hear that.

Another important thing that I would like some clarification on is reintegration. This is because reintegration is extremely important and critical for the Ghanaian deportees coming back. Most of them have left Ghana for years, probably decades, and they may not even know their way around Accra. Accra has changed. If they have not been here, which they have not, because there is no way since they did not have their papers over there; they would not have been able to travel back to Ghana for years. So, they will even be lost in Accra, let alone find their way to their villages or their hometowns.

Secondly, this is very traumatic. It is a devastating experience for each one of them and I cannot even imagine what it is like for the children who are involved. So, we really must have a reintegration action. Aside from the long term—We must have a long-term reintegration strategy because it is not just going to be 150, trust me. With the way Trump is going, it would not be just 150 people who would be deported. There are probably going to be thousands of people who would be deported. So, I would urge the Minister for Foreign Affairs to have a long-term reintegration strategy.

I also heard him mention, I think, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), that normally supports reintegration. However, with a string of orders that President Trump signed right after he got into office, which was one of the mass deportations in the history of America—There was funding cuts. The IOM has been cut deeply because I know that they are actually laying off about 5,000 workers, and there will be more. So, I know that the IOM funding in Ghana has probably been hit as well; we need to find out. This is because normally, I believe that they would have supported the reintegration.

So, my question is, will the Government of Ghana provide funding for reintegration of these deportees because it is critical in terms of the economic hardship? They would face economic hardship. They will come; they will not have jobs, and they will not have any money on them because when they are picked up by the US Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE), they are not allowed to go home or go to their bank accounts to withdraw any money that they have saved from the work that they are doing. They are coming with nothing, with no clothes on. The only clothes on their back are what they are probably coming with.

So, we really have to make sure that we help them with the economic challenges they are going to face and the stigma because unfortunately, in Ghana, there is a stigma when people are deported. It is like they failed over

there, but it is not about failure for these people. This is because if we go into their profile, which I hope the Ministry will do, we will find that they were responsible people over there. Some of them probably even have mortgages over there where they bought property, have kids in school, and some of them even pay taxes. We would be surprised, all right? So, they are not criminals, and there is no failure about this. The only thing is that they went over there in search of whatever hope they were seeking over there, and unfortunately, they were not able to get their papers back, so they are being deported.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, conclude.

Mrs Asante: So, my question is in terms of the long-term strategy for the reintegration, and if IOM would be depended on. We really need to take a look at that and review that because there have been serious deep cuts in IOM all over the world, where they are actually laying off 5,000 people and their programmes are also being withdrawn. It has not even been suspended; it is being withdrawn, so we really have to look at that. Then there are unaccompanied migrant children too. I would like some more information on that because they are unaccompanied; who are they coming to? We have to really focus on the reintegration. Otherwise, we probably would have some homeless deportees when they get here, especially for those who may not have connections with their family—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, I think your time is up.

[Uproar]

Order!

Hon Member, please, conclude.

Ms Asante: Thank you, Mr Speaker. So, I would like to hear more about the reintegration strategy.

[Pause]

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, Leaders? Do you want to yield, because the guidance is that we are taking two from each Side?

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Speaker, I am sorry; I am not yielding. I want to speak.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Very well, speak. You have the floor.

Minority Chief Whip (Mr Annoh-Dompreh): Mr Speaker, I think this House must pat its shoulder for what it has done and show more responsibility and response to the need of our people. Mr Speaker, I must commend the Speakership for inviting the Minister to apprise the House.

Mr Speaker, I listened to our Colleague and the Minister, giving details on the statistics, the engagements that have gone on so far, and what his outfit seeks to do in the future. I cannot agree more with him

when he says the action has fostered uncertainty and fear, and it is something we cannot gloss over. We cannot play it down. It is a grave matter, and we have to be up and doing. The statistics and the figures he put out, the 150, and he reflected on a certain 50 to whom the Minister spoke to have received their final deportation orders. He went ahead to talk about the 100 where the Minister says it is either on appeal or dismissal, and for me, there was no conclusion on that.

12.41 p.m.

At this point, I expected the Minister to give us some conclusive statement that out of the 100 outstanding, 50 are on appeal or some numbers are also being dismissed. But he is telling us the truth, and I have no reason to worry or to have a problem with him.

But I am just saying that at this point, we as a country should be able to be on top of the situation, and tell with certainty the number that has been dismissed and the number that is still on appeal.

Mr Speaker, the Minister spoke on reintegration, and he mentioned the Consular Fund. It is something we have all been—I recall in our other world, when he was Ranking Member and I was Chair, it had been a matter that we had been passionate about. Thankfully, it has seen the light of day. But I am afraid to say the Consular Fund is not enough. We cannot rely on the

Consular Fund at this time; this is a case of emergency. We are yet to even pass the Budget, and because it is an emergency, I want to implore the Minister that we have to work around the clock and find some oxygen to support our compatriots.

Fortunately, Mr Speaker, the Hon Minister put out some solutions. I was expecting that he would define these solutions in the short-term, medium-term, and long-term, so we would know that in the next one month, this is what the Minister will be doing to deal with the challenge at hand. When the Hon Minister was a Ranking Member in the Eighth Parliament, we worked together. Very typical of him; I am sure if he was the Ranking Member, by now, he would have been visiting some of the centres of detention. Up to this time, he has not told us if he has been to Costa Rica or not. Would he go or not? And I see my Chair, Hon Vanderpuije, he should be advising the Minister or get the Ranking Member, the Chair, and the Minister to be on their way to Costa Rica. He has to visit the detention centres . I know he will do it, but the Minister has to do that—it is in the pipeline [*Pause*]

So let me plead with my Minister. In fact, he has given a detailed report, which is good enough. That one, I would not take it away from him. But the extent to which there are reports on human rights abuses, we must go there and see for ourselves. I commend him for also engaging the U.S. Ambassador to Ghana. He cannot put out all details

of the engagement; I understand the diplomatic parlance and the language. But the Minister, the Chair, and the Ranking Member must be on the next available flight on their way to the centres. Yes, that is important.

Hon Minister, and I am sure the Speaker is in support. I see the Speaker nodding; the Speaker fully supports me. So, the Hon Minister must revise his mind.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Well, I take it as a recommendation coming from you, except the force imperative in your language.

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Well, Mr Speaker, I will steer clear of the mandatory aspect, just to make a suggestion to the Minister. And I saw him nodding. He knows it is a very popular call. This has been his *modus operandi*; he is very good at that. Mr Speaker, allow him to use his talent.

So, I commend the House, and our compatriots over there, hearing the Parliament of Ghana taking some actions on these matters, will be very happy about it. So let me conclude on the note that his short-term, medium-term intervention should be defined. And he should not overly rely on the Consular Fund. He should work around it, find some support which will be an interim intervention before the passage of the Appropriation. I think if we are able to do this, it will go a long way to help our compatriots.

Also, Committee on Foreign Affairs, this cannot be a one-off

intervention. It has to be a sustained, well-regulated and monitored effort. Mr Speaker, in the next one month, the Committee on Foreign Affairs should be briefing this House as a result of a briefing they have received from the sector Minister on interventions, fall-out, and what has become of the effort of the Ministry. I think if we do that, it will not be one-off efforts, which will not be good enough.

Having said this, I want to commend our Colleague for a detailed report, and for him to note that we are also going to monitor in the coming days. Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, Deputy Majority Leader?

Deputy Majority Leader (Mr George Kweku Ricketts-Hagan): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, and to the House for inviting the Minister here to come and update us on the situation going on in the United States.

And Mr Speaker, I thank the Hon Minister very much for a very comprehensive Statement that he has made here today which should be comforting to Ghanaians that we have a Minister and a Ministry who are being responsible in trying to deal with this situation.

From what he has said, I am absolutely clear in my mind that he has plans in place in dealing with this; whether short-term, medium-term or

long-term, as the Hon Member indicated. We cannot, as a country, blame President Trump for doing what he is doing. We may not like what he is doing, but he is doing it for America, for his country. We have to do what we have to do. First and foremost, we have to be law-abiding citizens, as we are in our country, and wherever we go. The people who have gone there are not criminals, but they are being brought home for a reason of not having the right documentation and all that.

So, we have to also advise our brothers and sisters that when they do travel, they should make sure that they do what they have to do to live in that country as legally as they can be. Just as Ghanaians, we want people to come and live here legally. But when such a situation arises, we have to be able to help our brothers and sisters. We cannot just leave them because we think they have made a mistake. So I am very happy with what the Minister has said today and all the people that he has managed to meet, including the American ambassador here.

It is important that we take our case to where we should take it. And the closest he can get to Donald Trump is actually to go to the Ambassador. So, I am very happy with all the things that the Minister has put in place. I wish the Minister well and I hope that his team, that is in the States and around here, are able to help the Minister. I am sure the necessary travels will be done to make sure that our people are fine.

Mr Speaker, I thank the Hon Minister very much for coming to brief us, and I thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minister, you may respond to the questions and make your concluding remarks.

Mr Ablakwa: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, let me thank Hon Members for their very useful insights and comments that have been made in response to this Statement.

Mr Speaker, I must also salute Members for the empathy and solidarity that they have demonstrated in contributing to this Statement. There are a few matters that require clarification and I want to do that very quickly.

12.51 p.m.

The apparent contradiction in figures—the 3,228 on the ICE website, that has been there for more than two years. We have probed those numbers, and what our Mission tells us when they enquired is that a lot of people contained in that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) database have gone through appeals and they have been successful with the appeals and so the ICE will have to amend that data. They have not done that and that is why you have that figure on their website since that period, since it was first put out there. But what we are dealing with now are the confirmed

cases for deportation, the 150. We have been given names and we are going through the processes identifying their nationality, confirming that they are truly Ghanaians. So, we are working with 150. So officially what U.S. authorities have communicated to us is 150 and we will urge the Ghanaian people not to panic because of those figures put out on various websites earlier.

Mr Speaker, I can also confirm that we have engaged the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Mr Patrick Boamah said that we did not include that in the list. Yes, we did not include IOM in the list for the 15th February meeting because they were not at that meeting. We were just reporting on what happened at the stakeholders meeting. As for the IOM, when we pay regard to page 7 of my presentation, we will see that we engaged them separately on another day. So I said at paragraph 22 that we are continuing discussions with IOM, NADMO and other partners on their reintegration and supporting them with other livelihood interventions. So I can assure Hon Members that we continue to engage with IOM. But there is a matter that we also have to be concerned about.

Mr Speaker, we cannot expect much from the IOM because they themselves have become victims of the executive orders by President Trump and so they do not have a lot of funding these days for what they have traditionally been doing, which means that we have to look within. We have

to be more resilient and come up with our own resources to take care of our people. We cannot rely on international partners. We do not really have much support coming from our international partners. We must look within and that is what the government has been doing so far. There is another issue I must quickly speak to which has to do with the tickets for the returnees. Let me place on record that the U.S. authorities are bearing the cost. They are paying the ticket fares for the deportation of our nationals and all of these deportations they are doing; they are taking care of the cost. We are only to facilitate providing the travel certificate and making sure that as receiving countries we are ready to receive them when they arrive. But we are not paying for the tickets. The U.S. authorities are handling that.

Mr Speaker, then in terms of the profile, so far, I can confirm that the profiling we have done, these are indeed Ghanaians, but they are Ghanaians who did not commit any crimes. They are not hardened criminals. They are decent people. They were just in search of greener pastures, did not regularise their stay as quickly as they should and have been caught up in this. But I can confirm that these are hard-working, decent Ghanaians, very harmless, and so there should not be concern in Ghana that when we accept these people and reintegrate them, they may attack anybody or undermine the safety of our nationals. They are not hardened criminals. They are not dangerous. What they need is our empathy and our

care, and we should really look out for them and show them compassion. That is what they need. I do agree that the consular fund will have to be supported, and we are hoping that when it comes to the approval of the estimates, Hon Colleagues will help us in that regard so that we will get the fund which has been allocated for in the budget. We hope that you will join us to approve them.

In terms of the children, we can confirm, as I said in the Statement, that there are four Ghanaian children affected so far, but we are putting in place measures to make sure that they receive all the care that they deserve when they arrive in Ghana. A matter to do with stigma has been raised, which is a very important point. We need not stigmatise these 150 Ghanaians facing deportation. We must recognise that this can happen to anybody, and any of us could have been in their shoes. That is why in today's presentation we have kept their names out. We are not mentioning who they are, and indeed when we welcome them at the airport, we also do that off camera. We do not go with media, and we do not disclose their identities. It is particularly because of the issue of stigmatisation. We do not want them to be stigmatised, and so we are protecting their identity, and we will continue on that path.

Mr Speaker, now on Panama and Costa Rica and why I have not visited yet, I can confirm to you that under this arrangement, the persons who are held in Panama and Costa Rica have the opportunity to opt for integration in

these countries, that is if they do not want to be moved to their final destination and the checks I have done, I did make efforts, I wanted to explore the possibility of visiting, but the information that we have received at the Ministry is that there are only two Ghanaians in this category, this Panama situation, and they have opted to be integrated and to go about their normal activities in Panama. So, if I go to the camp now, I would not find any Ghanaian there, and if any of us go to the camps in Panama or Costa Rica, we will not find Ghanaians there, because of that opportunity they have. If they want to be hosted and to integrate in those transit countries, they can do that and they have opted for that. So let me be clear, for the record, there are no Ghanaians currently in these detention camps in Panama and Costa Rica, the only two who made it there have opted to be integrated in those countries, and so we are fine on that score, we do not have anybody to visit in those detention camps.

Mr Speaker, I believe that I have adequately responded to all the matters that have been raised.

In conclusion, I want to emphasise that we are keeping an eye on their arrival and on their reintegration. We are following up. We are working with NADMO very closely, so we have their records. We call to check up on them regularly, and those who have arrived are doing fine, and as I said, we are looking at the budgetary allocations that have been made, when we get your approval, we will look at skills

training, how to support them, those who may want to start up, because the way they were arrested, they could not even have access to their savings, they could not have access to their valuables, it was all done in a very rushed manner, and so we will need to extend support services to them, and I can give you that firm assurance that we will do that. We will continue to look out for them, we will not abandon them, they are fellow compatriots and we are here to serve them, and that is the philosophy guiding the whole attitude towards their return and reintegration.

Mr Speaker, thank you very much,

1.01p.m.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Hon Minister. On behalf of the House, I express our gratitude to you for attending upon the House and making this valuable Statement in apprising the House on the deportation of Ghanaian citizens in the United States of America and related matters.

Thank you, Hon Minister.

Hon Members, Questions numbered 40, 63 and 64 are directed at the Minister for Foreign Affairs and, once the Order Paper Addendum is ready and has been loaded on the for some time, can we proceed to take that Question by coming back to item number 6 on today's Order Paper?

Yes, Hon Minority Chief Whip?

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Mr Speaker, with respect, as you do recall, we are engaged at Conclave.

I recognise the Hon Minister is here, and as he is delivered the Statement, ordinarily, we should allow him to proceed to take the Question.

Mr Speaker, we stand in breach of Order 208. I had apprised you of the need for us to make some amendments to the composed Committees. So, if it finds favour with you, I think we can quickly do that. I would like to make this application to you if we can quickly do that before we proceed. This is because the Annual Estimates are going to be considered by the various Committees, and we have instances where some Hon Members belong to only a Committee, which is in breach of Order 208. So, if you may permit me, let us do those amendments before we proceed to take the Questions.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon Deputy Majority Leader?

Mr Ricketts-Hagan: Mr Speaker, this was actually discussed at Conclave, and I think the agreement was that it cannot be done with the current *Votes and Proceedings*. So, it will have to come as a Motion, and that will be done tomorrow after putting the Reports and laid tomorrow. So, I think the suggestion is that we will do that tomorrow.

Thank you.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Very well

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Mr Speaker, with respect to my Hon Colleague, he may appeal—No, that was not a decision.

Mr Speaker, the day the Speaker presided—Check the records. When we were correcting the *Votes and Proceedings*, the Speaker intentionally left out those pages, which contained the Committees, and the advice was that he has spoken into the two Hon Whips, and we have reached an agreement that we will find an appropriate day. We were supposed to take it yesterday, and the Hon Majority Chief Whip pleaded with me, and I acceded that we should make it today. So, he should not tell me I should come by a Motion. No, Hon Leader, with respect to you, if it is by a Motion, the Speaker would have advised. Is it by a Motion? We can correct it here. Because we have given prior notification to the Speaker, and the Hon Speaker himself had directed. Where from this Motion?

Mr Ricketts-Hagan: The *Votes and Proceedings* for today, and even yesterday, have both been approved, so we cannot do it through the *Votes and Proceedings*. Mr Speaker, that is the whole idea that we think the Reports should be put together, and they do your amendment and then tomorrow—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, I guess the pages containing the composition of the Committees

have been left out because of certain irregularities that needed to be addressed by the Hon Leaders. I sense that the real composition is not ready that is why they are seeking to do that tomorrow.

So, Hon Minority Chief Whip, just bear with them, so that, tomorrow, we effectively deal with the issue. I urge the Hon Majority Chief Whip to also timeously work on whatever corrections that need to be done, so that, wholistically, we can take both Sides tomorrow.

Yes, Hon Minority Chief Whip?

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Mr Speaker, we are amenable, so there is no problem. But *Hansard* would bear me out that you said tomorrow. Let us stick to tomorrow. We do not want that tomorrow come and then he says next week. I hope he will not do that.

Mr Speaker, we are in agreement.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Well, I would also urge Hon Leaders to work on the delegations, so that we can also take that tomorrow.

Hon Minority Chief Whip, please, let us quickly work on the delegations and the groups, so that we can, as well, take that tomorrow.

Hon Members, we will now come back to item numbered 6 on today's Order Paper and go to the Question numbered 40, standing in the name of Hon Vincent Ekow Assafuah.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Plans of the Government to Ensure Accessibility of Chip-Embedded Passport

Mr Vincent Ekow Assafuah (NPP — Old Tafo): Mr Speaker, I beg to ask the Minister for Foreign Affairs the plans of the Government to ensure the accessibility of the chip-embedded passport launched by the previous Government on 2nd December, 2024.

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Mr Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa) (MP): I am most grateful, Mr Speaker. It is an honour to appear before this House to respond to parliamentary Questions.

Mr Speaker, Ghana's journey with chip-embedded passport began in 2010, where biometric passports were introduced, which should have featured a microchip embedded with the holder's biometric data, including fingerprint and facial recognition. But the chip aspect was left out during the production. The plan to include chip was reactivated in 2016 but could not take place.

Mr Speaker, since it was a laudable idea to introduce chip in our passports, the previous Administration in 2018 established Passport Chip-embedded Implementation Committee to ensure that the new passport is birthed. So, they farmed out a portion to a private

partner under a public-private partnership (PPP) arrangement.

The introduction of the chip-embedded passport aligns with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards, specifically ICAO Document 9303, which provides guidelines for implementing Machine-Readable Travel Documents (MRTDs) and e-passports. This modernisation effort is designed to enhance border security, reduce identity fraud, and streamline international travel for our citizens.

Mr Speaker, to ensure accessibility for all eligible citizens, the Government has developed a comprehensive implementation strategy inspired by best practices from other African nations that have successfully rolled out chip-embedded passports, including Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria.

The strategies include the following key measures:

1. Decentralisation of Passport Enrolment and Issuance

Nine out of the 16 regions currently have passport offices. The office of the Upper East Region, that is Bolgatanga, is expected to become operational later this year. The Government intends to expand passport application centres to the remaining six outstanding regions. Those are the newly created regions, ensuring that citizens do not have to travel long distances to apply for their passports.

For our citizens outside Ghana, all Ghanaian Embassies and Consulates are equipped to provide similar services to our compatriots abroad. Mobile passport application centres are also utilised to provide door-to-door passport services to Ghanaian communities abroad.

Additionally, mobile biometric registration units can be deployed to remote locations to facilitate enrolment for those who may face challenges accessing passport offices. As Hon Members may attest, my Ministry recently established a studio here in Parliament to process diplomatic passports for Members of Parliament

2. Enhanced Digital Services for Convenience.

Mr Speaker, we are currently, as part of our ongoing passport reforms, integrating an online passport application system, payment, and appointment to allow for citizens to initiate their applications from anywhere, reducing congestion at our passport offices. A passport application tracking system will also be introduced to keep applicants informed about the process of their applications. The system will be linked to the National Identification Authority database, so that all personal information of applicants is transferred automatically, directly onto the NIA system to the Passport Office system via the confirmation of the Ghana card number and biometric verification. Any changes to personal information, such as name, date of birth, or place of birth,

will be done at the NIA through an update of records with appropriate documents.

Mr Speaker, a nationwide sensitisation campaign will be launched this month to educate the public on the benefits, security features, and application processes for the new passport. Special focus will be placed on engaging communities in rural areas and vulnerable groups to ensure that they are not left behind.

3. Public Awareness and Citizen Engagement

Mr Speaker, a nationwide sensitisation campaign will be launched this month to educate the public on the benefits, security features, and application process of the new passport.

Special focus will be placed on engaging communities in rural areas and vulnerable groups to ensure they are not left behind.

4. Affordability and Phased Implementation

Mr Speaker, the Government recognises concerns about the affordability of the new passport and is committed to ensuring that the cost remains reasonable while maintaining high security standards. In our efforts to make passports more accessible to all Ghanaians and per instructions I have received from H. E. President John Dramani Mahama, we are pleased to announce a reduction in the cost of

the ordinary passport booklet that is the 32-page booklet from the GH¢500 to GH¢350.

1.11 p.m.

We will, in the coming days, be presenting an amendment to the fees and charges (Miscellaneous Provision) Act, 2018, to ensure that this reduction is approved by the House, from GH¢500 to GH¢350. That is the new policy position of the Mahama Administration.

Mr Speaker, I am sure you might have read that a passport reform committee has been set up to study and review the contract which we inherited. That review is underway, and indeed, all the partners are meeting tomorrow to conclude the exercise on the review. When the review of the contract is done, we would move into a phase-out rollout of the chip-embedded passports; we expect a smooth transition from the current biometric passports to the chip-embedded passports.

Mr Speaker, it is useful to add that we are also introducing a 24-hour passport service—*[Hear! Hear!]*—The 24-hour passport service would also come with a door-to-door delivery, ensuring greater convenience, efficiency, and customer satisfaction. Applicants can now apply at any time during the day, including outside the regular working hours and have their passports delivered securely to their doorstep, eliminating the need for in-person collection.

We think that in the 21st century, when one applies for their passport and indicates that they want it delivered to them, courier services should be able to deliver to them. One does not have to go through the stress of going back to the passport application center. Ghanaians are going to have their passports delivered to them at locations of their choice once they indicate during the application where they want their passports delivered.

Mr Speaker, applicants must provide accurate addresses and contact details to facilitate a seamless delivery. In partnership with reputable courier providers, the Ministry guarantees secure and reliable passport distribution. The Ministry remains committed to enhancing accessibility and efficiency in passport services for all citizens.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, through these measures, the Government remains committed to ensuring that the chip-embedded passport is accessible, efficient and beneficial to all citizens, in line with international best practices and our national development agenda. So, by or within the month of April, which is next month, the good people of Ghana can expect a seamless transition from the current passports to chip-embedded passports within the month of April. That is the full assurance I can give to Hon Members.

I thank you very much.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon Minister.

Are there any supplementary questions?

Mr Assafuah: Mr Speaker, let me thank the Minister for a well-researched Answer, except to add another question to it.

Mr Speaker, I hold in my hands the Report of the Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration Committee on the 2024 Budget Estimates of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration. In that Report, there was a proposal for the review of the passport fees, which indicated that the cost of producing a passport is GH¢400. The cost of producing a 32-paged passport is GH¢400.

On this Floor, the Minister has indicated that the amount, or the price of the GH¢500 that is paid for a passport is to be reduced to GH¢350. How would he make up for the loss of the GH¢50? Per my indication, I do not see Budget lines to take up that GH¢50 that he is reducing it to. Can he let this House know how he would deal with the GH¢50 difference?

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minister?

Mr Ablakwa: I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to the Hon Assafuah's supplementary question.

As a Ranking Member on the Foreign Affairs Committee at the time—I recall that we asked for details and evidence of the supposed government subsidy at the time. We did not receive it. Having gone to the Ministry, I still have not seen evidence that we were subsidising passports. Some figures were put out, but there was no supporting evidence.

The work we have done with our colleagues at the Ministry, we are confident that the GH¢350 would not put us in any indebtedness. There will be no loss to the state. We would not be causing financial loss and we would not require subsidies. We will not have to subsidise. They should not forget that this GH¢350 is still an increment from the previous GH¢100 at a time that this Public Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement was negotiated. We have seen a jump from GH¢100 to GH¢500, the last time the increment occurred. If he may recall, my position at the time as a Ranking Member is that having one increment of such a quantum leap from GH¢100 to GH¢500 was just unconscionable and too draconian. One could tell that the Ghanaian had not received this well. There has been a lot of considerable agitation across the length and breadth of our country.

As Members of Parliament (MPs), we can all confirm that our constituents are complaining about the high increment from GH¢100 to GH¢500. That is why the new Mahama Administration says that we have listened to Ghanaians and we want to

make our passports more affordable. When we make it affordable, we believe that Ghanaians will even access it more and there would be an eventual benefit, a win-win situation for all.

Mr Speaker, Hon Members, should be assured that there will be no indebtedness, no need for subsidies and no shortfall requiring an allocation in the Budget. The GH¢350 is a good reduction that the good people of Ghana deserve.

Mr Speaker, thank you.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Any further supplementary questions?

Mr Assafuah: Mr Speaker, I am quite surprised to hear from the Minister that there is no basis or no documentation to support the GH¢400 that have been stated in a Committee Report—a Committee that he was the Ranking Member to? But I will not litigate it. The impression I get here is that the GH¢400 that was given to us by the House—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Assafuah, you are to ask a supplementary question—

Mr Assafuah: But the impression I get here is that the GH¢400 that was given to us by the House, by the Passport Office, is not something that has a basis and that is the indication we are getting in this House. But I will go on with my second question.

My second question to the Hon Minister has its basis from his Answer. If he checks paragraph nine, he said:

“Additionally, mobile biometric registration units can be deployed to remote locations to facilitate enrollment for those who may face challenges accessing Passport Offices.”

As Hon Members may attest, his Ministry recently established a studio here in Parliament to process passports for MPs. My question to him is, with respect to persons who are in urgent need of passports who may be found in our various hospitals, what are his plans to deal with such requests? Is he going to collaborate with the Ministry of Health and the Ghana Health Service (GHS), so that it would not be an issue of whom you know? I hear we have had some persons who would be in need of passports at a time and may not be able to get any support from the Passport Office. Because the Passport Office will tell them that even with the mobile facilities, they may have to go to certain points. How will he deal with the Ministry of Health, to ensure that such persons can be supported or assisted to be able to get their passports, even at the hospitals?

Mr Ablakwa: I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to Mr Assafuah’s second supplementary question. It is a very important question on the mobile services that the passport office is currently rendering.

Mr Speaker, I am sure that he would be happy to hear that apart from the deployment we did recently for MPs, as we speak, there is currently ongoing, a special deployment at the Hajj Village. So, our Muslim brothers and sisters who have to perform that important pillar of Islam, do not have to stress to go to the passport application centers. We have set up an application center for them at the Hajj Village. So, it is another evidence of the reforms and the dynamism that we are introducing.

For people who need urgent passports on medical grounds, as Hon Assafuah has raised, I want to draw attention to the fact that as part of the services that the Passport Office carries out is a service known as expedited service. So, for those with emergencies as medical emergency, business emergency, students who have to meet a timeline—We have in the structure of the services that the passport office renders what is known as expedited service. You pay a little more and then you can have your passport within the same week. So, that expedited service is available. We will urge—I think that sometimes it is probably lack of public education, public awareness.

1.21 p.m.

So, we are intensifying that, so that Ghanaians who know nurses and doctors who are attending to these patients who may have to fly them out can make themselves available for this service. So, we have the expedited service which takes care of

emergencies and that is available in those circumstances.

In terms of whether we can create an avenue where these expedited services can be made mobile and relocated to hospitals, because we are not too sure where the emergency call will come from, I think that it is better for us to maintain the expedited arrangement, so that once the person calls and there is evidence it is a medical emergency, then our people will respond promptly.

I can tell the House that the Passport Office is doing very well. Our staff there are very responsive. There was an expedited case this week where one of our Colleagues needed a passport done the same day, within 24 hours. Our Colleague can confirm that we were able to do that. Our Passport Office is really delivering and they are very efficient. I think that for the emergencies that our people will require in those times, they can rely on the expedited service to solve those problems.

I am grateful, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Assafuah, this is your last supplementary question.

Mr Assafuah: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, I must commend the Minister; this is a huge relief for

persons who sometimes, on medical grounds, suffer to attain passports. Except to add that when such requests come, we have to find a way where the Ghana Health Service will have a role to play. This is so that even if one does not know anybody in a political office, he or she would be attended to.

Mr Speaker, my last question to the Minister stems from the Report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs on the 2022 Annual Budget Estimates of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration. The item numbered 14.2, “CHIP-Embedded Passports”; I will read the second paragraph.

The Committee was informed that the project will be executed in partnership with a private company within a 10-year period and the total cost of rolling out the project for the first year is US\$23 million. The profit-sharing structure for the first four years is 30 per cent for Government and 70 per cent for the private entity. For the subsequent six years, it is expected to be 35 per cent for Government and 65 per cent for the private entity. The weighted average cost of the capital is rated at 9.75 per cent.

My question to the Minister is that, at least, these are the terms of the contract that is existing, so in the event that he finally rolls out the CHIP-embedded passport, maybe somewhere around this year, is he going to maintain these terms of the contract between the Government and the private sector?

Mr Ablakwa: Mr Speaker, I did say in my response to an earlier Question that the contract is currently under review and we have a crucial meeting tomorrow. I am very transparent and have indicated that I think we can do something about those terms, and the Government of Ghana can be in a better position than what has been earlier negotiated.

We have not concluded the review, but we are pushing towards better terms for Government. As it is now, it is skewed, 70:30, 60:40 in favour of the private investors, but we are reviewing and pushing for better terms. Since we have not concluded, I do not want to pre-empt the negotiations, but just to say that we are fighting hard in the national interest for some better terms for the Government and the people of Ghana.

I am grateful, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Patrick Yaw Boamah, you have the floor.

Mr Patrick Yaw Boamah: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, in the Hon Minister's Answer, he spoke about the principles of reasonability and affordability as the driving force to his quest to reduce the passports from GHC500 to GHC350, subject to an amendment to the Fees and Charges (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2022, that the Minister for Finance will be presenting to this House.

Mr Speaker, firstly, the Minister cannot review a contract without the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice's involvement. Secondly, what I know is that a transaction advisor has been requested by his Ministry to provide scenarios for the extension of the contracts which is being operated from 10 to 12 years to give him an indication on whether he can take care of their losses or their profitability levels.

One, because he has not seen the scenarios, and two, he is going to be looking at the operating cost, maintenance cost, the software, staff and other resource that the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement has put in place. So, my question to him is that not having gone through the scenarios nor a review, how sure is he that he is telling the good people of this country the truth that he wants to reduce the passport price from GHC500 to GHC350?

Mr Ablakwa: Mr Speaker, there are a number of issues that Hon Patrick Boamah raised. With the review of the contract, I can assure Hon Patrick Boamah that certainly, the opinion of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice will be sought. At this point, we are negotiating and certainly, the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice—*[Interruption]*—I have told the Hon Member that it is under review; we have not concluded. I made that point clear that we have not concluded the review. Once we conclude, it will be sent to the

Attorney-General and Minister for Justice for his final advice.

On pricing, I can assure him that we have spoken with the transaction advisor and we have looked at all the modelling. So, when the House works on the fees, it will have some possible impact on the duration of the PPP arrangement. We have analysed all of that, but the firm assurance I can give him is that what we will be presenting to this House, the Fees and Charges (Miscellaneous Provisions) Amendment, he would see a reduction from GH¢500 to GH¢350. That, we have agreed; we are not compromising on that. It is a *fait accompli*; nothing is going to change about the fees.

What may change in the review process is the duration. Do we do 10, 11, 12 or 13 years? But as for the pricing, because there are two factors; once we hold one constant, the price, that is the GH¢350, we have the flexibility to deal with the other factor. So, the Hon Member can be well assured, as for the GH¢350, we are not compromising on that aspect. We are here for the Ghanaian people and we must ameliorate their plight.

Thank you very much.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member for Kumbungu?

Prof Hamza Adam: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity. Let me commend the Minister for tackling the challenges of the passport industry head on.

My quick Question is, what plans does the Minister have to decentralise the passport services at the district level?

Mr Ablakwa: Mr Speaker, the plan now is to regionalise and make sure we have passport application centres in all the 16 regions of Ghana. We do not currently have plans to have district offices.

1.31 p.m.

We take the view that the reforms we are carrying out, the delivery, the 24-hour operations, reducing the waiting period and all of that, should suffice. Once you have regional offices, the courier service would make sure that your passport is delivered to you wherever you are in the Region. So we do not think that it would be good use of taxpayer resources to say we are going to be building district offices. We think that the regional offices should be enough; it should suffice, so that the courier services would then carry out the remaining legwork and make sure that one gets their passport in good time. So for now, we do not think that it is prudent use of taxpayer funds to say we are going to build district offices across our 276 districts or constituencies in Ghana. We just want to build the regional passport application centres and then do the mobile delivery through courier service.

Mr Speaker, I am grateful.

Mr Kwabena Okyere Darko-Mensah: Thank you very much.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon former Minister.

Mr Darko-Mensah: I would like to know from the Minister when they would start printing the booklets in the regions instead of only in Accra.

Mr Ablakwa: Mr Speaker, I am grateful.

Mr Speaker, this is a very important question. The contract I have seen so far, the printing is centralised. Even for those outside the country, our missions abroad, they have to rely on Accra, the headquarters, for the printing. Because it is a security document and because it is chip-embedded, it is sensitive. I have been told by the experts that it is advisable that it remains centralised. But what we should do is to strengthen the delivery network so that once it is printed, it can be delivered across the country and then to our compatriots abroad using our embassies in an efficient manner. So, since the experts have advised that we should keep the printing centralised, I want to go with that. I think that what we should now focus on is to make sure that the delivery is done in good time so that particularly those who may need expedited service do not have challenges so that they can get their passports in good time when they require them.

Mr Speaker, I am grateful.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you. I would give the floor to Hon Francis-Xavier Sosu.

Mr Francis-Xavier Kojo Sosu: Mr Speaker, thank you very much. Mr Speaker, in the answers of the Hon Minister, he has justified the major policy shift from GHC500 cost of passports to GHC350. Mr Speaker, I would want the Minister to elaborate what factors really justified this major policy shift because changing the price of passports from GHC500 to GHC350 is a major one. Would we lose revenue by doing that or are we going to get more revenues by doing that? If the Minister could elaborate the factors that led to this major shift in the change of prices.

Thank you.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon Minister.

Mr Ablakwa: Mr Speaker, the overarching factor is affordability. We have received numerous complaints from the good people of this country about the high fees and you recall there was quite an uproar and an outrage when the new fees came into effect and so we are responding to the concerns of the people as a listening government. The analysis we have done in terms of the cost to the country, we believe that with this reduction many more people are going to apply for passports now and renew their passports and ultimately looking at the figures, it would rather bring in more revenue so we are not going to have revenue losses

at all. On the contrary, because it is going to lead to an uptick, many more Ghanaians are now staying away and so we were not getting the numbers as anticipated. We now are going to have higher volumes and with these higher volumes we would rather rake in more revenue for our country. So we have done the analysis and it is a win-win situation. We would benefit in terms of the national coffers and then the affordability concerns of Ghanaians would also have been addressed. So, I do not see any loser in this equation. Even for the private partners, they would also eventually find this beneficial because it would also increase their profit margins.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, Minority Chief Whip?

Minority Chief Whip, you have the floor. Leadership should wind up. We have two more questions.

Minority Chief Whip (Mr Frank Annoh-Dompreh): Mr Speaker, let me take the Minister back to parts of his own answers. I think paragraph five, as answers to Question 45—Introducing 24-hour passport services with door-to-door delivery. Mr Speaker, the Minister does know that the Government is yet to bring a policy on the 24-hour economy to Parliament. I am also aware that up to this stage we do not have a definite explanation what the 24-hour economy is all about. In fact, then candidate John Mahama says the 24-hour economy is not compulsory. My question to the Minister is, now that we do not have a

definite policy, what are you anchoring your 24-hour passport delivery on; because we do not have a definite policy yet. We are told they are yet to bring it to Parliament. So what are you anchoring this on?

He also mentioned expedited action or services and he says the reason for the reduction is affordability. But he also says the expedited service would have to be paid for. Why would government not be absolute in terms of bearing costs, if you are reducing from GHC500 to GHC300 plus or GHC300 and then on the expedited service delivery, you are saying that people have to bear the cost. Is it a question of you picking and choosing or not sure of what to do?

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon Minister.

Mr Ablakwa: Mr Speaker, the Minority Chief Whip would agree with me when I say that there is a recent example that they have demonstrated in this country. They implemented free Senior High School successfully without a policy and a law. And after many years, a few weeks ago before the elections of 2024, they came to this House saying that they want us to support them with a law, long after they have implemented. So that scenario teaches us that it is very possible to implement government programmes without a policy blueprint or without a law. It is very possible. So there is no need to say that you have not seen a policy or a blueprint so we cannot go ahead with our 24-hour

services. Your own example teaches us that.

Having said that, Mr Speaker, I can assure the Hon Minority Chief Whip that very soon he is going to see the 24-hour blueprint. It is a very, very exciting policy. The Trades' Union Congress (TUC) has called it a game-changer. Association of Ghanaian Industries (AGI) is excited about 24-hour.

1.41 p.m.

And we do not know what is complex about 24-hours. It means Ghanaians would work three shifts, increase productivity, and create more jobs for our people. It is as simple as that.

Mr Speaker, I can assure the House that the passport office will implement the 24-hour operation very successfully.

The second aspect of the Hon Member's question has to do with expedited service. Expedited service is really a service that is in the fees and charges arrangement already for those who want to pay more. Normally, it is for entrepreneurs, business moguls, and even those who want a fatter booklet, probably the 48 pages. They normally utilise that service. Once one is paying more, one is getting more pages and one is getting their passports in less than three days. I believe that it is good if one pays a little more for the premium service. So, we are not discriminating at all. It is those in the elite category who feel that they have

the means to pay for more, who are using that service. But, under the 24-hour service, once we roll it out, one can get their passport within a week, within five days. I am sure that there would not even be any difference between getting an ordinary passport and then going for expedited service. So, this is a clear confirmation that the 24-hour policy is a game changer. It works and it is in the benefit of the people.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Deputy Majority Leader?

Deputy Majority Leader (Mr George Kweku Ricketts-Hagan): Mr Speaker, no question at all.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, we proceed to ask Question number 63, standing in the name of Hon Frank Asiedu Bekoe, the Member of Parliament for Suhum.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

How Ghana intends to Reconcile the New Alliances of Sahel States with ECOWAS

Mr Frank Asiedu Bekoe (NPP — Suhum): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity. I beg to ask the Minister for Foreign Affairs how Ghana intends to reconcile the new Alliance of Sahel States (AES) with ECOWAS taking into cognisance of the foreign policy of Ghana:

i. Pan Africanism

ii. Good neighbourliness

iii. Non-Alignment and Multilateralism.

Thank you.

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Mr Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa) (MP):
Mr Speaker, I want to commend the Hon Member for this very important Question.

Mr Speaker, we are the pioneers of a united Africa and a cardinal principle of our foreign policy is African unity without prejudice to any member state. It is incumbent on us to pursue the unity of Africa, particularly ECOWAS. As we know, we are also founding members of ECOWAS, which is why this year, the heads of states have decided that the 50th anniversary of ECOWAS will be taking place in Accra. It would be launched next month to herald the ECOWAS at @ 50 celebrations.

We may wish to refer to Article 40 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, which outlines the foreign policy of Ghana.

Article 40 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana enjoins the State to, in the pursuit of our international relations:

- Promote and protect the interests of Ghana;
- Promote respect for international law and treaty obligations;

- Promote the peaceful settlement of international disputes;
- To adhere to the principles of the organisation of African Charter.

These are the foundation and principles that guides our foreign policy.

Mr Speaker, we also wish to highlight ancestral linkages and ethnic groups that were divided through artificial boundaries and porous borders. Therefore, we cannot do away with our border community families.

Mr Speaker, the three AES member states were also represented during the recent investiture ceremony of President John Dramani Mahama, which show the spirit of good neighbourliness, and it is only appropriate that Ghana reciprocates same in the state of friendly inter-state relations. Ghana will continue to engage these countries in a very constructive manner to ensure the achievement of the desired aspirations of all sides.

The evolving relationship between the ECOWAS and the newly formed AES, is a matter of great significance to the sub-region. Ghana remains firmly committed to the ideals of regional unity, peace, security, and economic cooperation. Ghana recognises the need for diplomatic engagement to bridge the current

divide and prevent further fragmentation within West Africa.

Mr Speaker, despite the AES countries' formal withdrawal from ECOWAS, which was finalised at the end of January, 2025, free movement of people, goods, and services remains intact, as confirmed by both ECOWAS and AES member states. Trade under the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS) continues, and AES passports remain recognised. Additionally, ECOWAS-funded development projects in AES countries will not be disrupted, ensuring continued economic and infrastructural support.

Security cooperation remains a shared priority, particularly in the fight against terrorism, violent extremism and money laundering. The Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA), of which Ghana is a member, will maintain its collaboration with AES nations. AES countries have already applied for a six-month extension to formalise their GIABA membership processes. ECOWAS has also granted AES nations a six-month grace period until July, 2025 to reconsider their decision to leave, with the ECOWAS Commissioner for Peace and Security urging them to explore the possibility of rejoining as a bloc. Diplomatic engagements between ECOWAS and AES are ongoing to facilitate cooperation and potential reintegration.

Mr Speaker, we may recall that Ghana's foreign policy has always been guided by the principles of Pan-Africanism, good neighbourliness, non-alignment, and multilateralism. These values continue to shape the country's approach as we work to restore trust, foster reconciliation, and promote a common vision for regional development and stability.

Mr Speaker, I have outlined in great detail, the building blocks for these ideals and for the sake of time, I would ask that *Hansard* captures all of these principles and how they have been further expatiated on.

Pan-Africanism – A Call for Unity and Cooperation

Mr Speaker, Ghana has always been a strong advocate for African unity and believes that the political differences that have emerged in the sub-region should not overshadow the historical and cultural bonds that unite us.

As part of Ghana's commitment to regional cohesion, President John Dramani Mahama over the past couple of days embarked on working visits to Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, the first in a series of engagements with the AES nations. His discussions with the leadership of these brotherly countries focused on:

- Strengthening bilateral relations;
- Addressing regional security challenges;

- Enhancing security cooperation in the Sahel and West Africa to combat the growing threat of terrorism;
- Ensuring unimpeded trade and economic collaboration between Ghana and the three AES countries; and
- Exploring avenues for greater engagement between ECOWAS and the AES, particularly through mutual recognition and structured dialogue.

Mr Speaker, His Excellency reaffirmed Ghana's commitment to fighting terrorism, which poses an existential threat not only to the Sahel region but also to the entire coastal West African region. This shared security concern underscores the urgent need for cooperation between ECOWAS and AES to ensure the safety and prosperity of all West African citizens.

Good neighbourliness – Strengthening Security and Economic Ties

As a West African nation, Ghana recognises that our security and economic stability are directly linked to those of our neighbors. The growing threats of terrorism, insurgency, and violent extremism demand a coordinated regional response, rather than a fragmented approach.

Mr Speaker, in that regard, Ghana will remain committed to engaging all regional partners, including AES

nations, to strengthen security cooperation. To that end, His Excellency the President has appointed Lt. Colonel Larry Gbevlo-Lartey (Rtd.) as Special Envoy to the Sahel States, with a mandate to facilitate high-level diplomatic dialogue and security coordination.

Beyond security, Ghana is also committed to:

- Maintaining open trade corridors to prevent economic isolation and hardship for any West African nation, which could engender humanitarian crisis thereby escalating cross-border crimes;
- Investing in infrastructure projects to strengthen cross-border economic cooperation; and
- Encouraging continuous dialogue between ECOWAS and AES to address economic and political concerns.

Non-Alignment – A Neutral and Pragmatic Approach

Mr Speaker, Ghana has long upheld a non-aligned foreign policy, ensuring that our diplomatic engagements remain independent, pragmatic, and focused on Africa's collective interests. Ghana therefore does not view the current situation as a division between ECOWAS and AES, but rather as an opportunity for

constructive engagement and reconciliation.

Ghana is strongly of the view that the sovereignty of AES nations must be respected, while also recognising that ECOWAS should provide an important framework for regional economic integration and collective security. Ghana will therefore serve as a bridge, advocating for dialogue, cooperation, and the reintegration of all West African nations into a common security and economic framework.

Multilateralism – Engaging Regional and International Partners for Stability

Ghana will remain committed to multilateral diplomacy as the best approach to resolving regional tensions and advancing collective security. The country will therefore work through ECOWAS, the African Union (AU), the United Nations (UN), and other international bodies to ensure that the AES and ECOWAS co-exist and collaborate in addressing shared regional challenges.

To this end, Ghana will propose the following:

- Establishment of an ECOWAS-AES Dialogue Platform to facilitate continuous diplomatic engagement;
- Creation of a Special Mediation Committee within ECOWAS, with Ghana playing a leading role in bridging communication between both entities; and

- Strengthening the ECOWAS Peace and Security Architecture to better accommodate evolving political and security realities, while ensuring that no nation is left behind.

Ghana's Role as a Bridge for Regional Unity

Mr Speaker, Ghana remains fully committed to peace, security, and economic prosperity in West Africa. His Excellency President John Dramani Mahama's diplomatic outreach to the Sahel states and engagements with key leaders in Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali reflect Ghana's dedication to fostering dialogue, rebuilding trust, and preventing further division within the sub-region.

Ghana will therefore continue to champion dialogue, economic cooperation, and security collaboration among all West African nations. The sub-region's future must be built on partnership, not division; cooperation, not conflict. Ghana will therefore work closely with our brothers in the AES to rebuild trust, restore good neighbourliness, and reaffirm our commitment to a stronger, united West Africa.

Mr Speaker, Ghana stands ready to serve as a bridge for reconciliation and cooperation. Given Ghana's diplomatic influence, it is well-positioned to support renewed dialogue and encourage collaboration between

ECOWAS and AES nations. As a nation committed to Pan-Africanism, good neighbourliness, regional integration and multilateralism, Ghana will continue to champion constructive engagement, economic cooperation, and security collaboration, ensuring a stable and prosperous future for all West African nations.

I thank you very much Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, any supplementary?

Mr Bekoe: I would like to know from the Minister, the previous Administration instituted the Accra Initiative and this Initiative aims to prevent the spillover of terrorism from these Sahel States and to address transnational organised crimes and violent extremism.

With the appointment of a new envoy to AES from Ghana, what is the fate of the Accra Initiative?

1.51 p.m.

Mr Ablakwa: I am grateful, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, the Hon Member is right that the Accra Initiative is a very strategic intervention that was carried out by the former Administration. Ghana spearheaded it, but got seven other countries to come on board, largely as a security and intelligence gathering platform to fight violent extremism, and to also carry out counter-terrorism because of the threat

of insecurity coming down south from the Sahel, particularly after the overthrow of Muammar al-Gaddafi in Libya.

The challenge with the Accra Initiative now has been funding and the commitment of member countries to fully support this. There are some countries that are quite hesitant in welcoming the platform and working with the Accra Initiative, but I can assure you that we remain open to any intervention which will be a multilateral intervention, bringing all our international partners on board because the threat of terrorism, extremism, and money laundering is not a threat that only one country can handle. We need all our international partners to come on board, to work with us to combat that and defeat that. If we go in isolation, we will not succeed. We need a concerted multilateral approach. So, we remain open to that initiative and that approach. That really is how to fight these global threats.

Having said that, the appointment of the Special Envoy, Lieutenant-Colonel (Rtd) Larry Gbevlo-Lartey is not to undermine the work of the Accra Initiative. Rather, that will help to enhance the prospects. It is to create a channel of dialogue, so that we can pay particular attention to these AES countries: Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso because we are the closest neighbour, and we need to make sure that we are not overtaken by events, the extremism going on there, the terrorism that is taking large parts of that country.

The President, in his wisdom, thought that we should have a Special Envoy, so that we can have a dedicated effort at bridging the gap, making sure that we keep talking. Remember that even ECOWAS has a Special Envoy dealing with these AES countries, trying to negotiate with them, dialogue with them to get them back into the fold. So as a closest neighbour with all the historical ties, same ethnic groups and trade, our truck drivers daily are travelling to and fro, and there is free movement of people. We need to keep engaging, and that is why the Special Envoy has been appointed. But have our fullest assurances that his work will not undermine the Accra Initiative.

It will also not undermine efforts of the Government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to make sure that we keep engaging with these countries. To suffice, it will rather enhance all of these objectives, so that we can work together to achieve continental African unity, which remains the dream of all of us right from our founding fathers.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Any further supplementary question?

Mr Bekoe: Yes, Mr Speaker.

Last week I saw the Hon Minister and the President in these three Sahelian states. I would like to know from the Minister what really the President has done to assure Ghana and ECOWAS that these trio will come back to ECOWAS in the shortest possible time.

Mr Ablakwa: Well, thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, the matter the Hon Bekoe has raised is a matter that requires a lot of circumspection, a lot of tact, and a lot of diplomacy. These three member countries are entitled to their self-determination. They are sovereign countries. Another president cannot come from another country and dictate to them what to do. So, we have to be very careful.

I think that the approach of the President really is to keep the dialogue channels open, to keep engaging, and as the engagements continue and we all see that it is better to work together instead of going alone, and that there is much more we can achieve when we are together and unite, I am sure that a roadmap will evolve towards the hopes and aspirations that we are all seeking. That, ultimately, I think, will help us to achieve the democratic ethos that we all want to see within these countries. But because of the principles of sovereignty and of self-determination, I think that we shall accord those three countries that.

The ECOWAS should continue to engage the good relations of the President right from when they attended his investiture, he going back there this week to thank them, and to continue to engage at the bilateral level. I think now ECOWAS has an opportunity in President Mahama because they said it when he visited that he is the first non-AES President to come visit and receive such a reception. So, I think ECOWAS and

the AU can now leverage on that opportunity that President Mahama has provided to keep the dialogue channels open, even as we all concede that they have their sovereignty and they have their rights to respect and we must respect their right to self-determination and all of that.

But I think that the prospects are good; they are looking positive, and it is good that Ghana is giving the continent that hope and channel of dialogue, and I think that it gives us that great advantage that we need to move forward with the dialogue.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, the last supplementary question.

Mr Bekoe: Last but not least – thank you, Mr Speaker.

In all this enterprise, where did Ghana and ECOWAS go wrong? As far as the moving away by the AES from the ECOWAS is concerned, where did Ghana and ECOWAS go wrong? Did we do anything bad that spoiled the relationship between ECOWAS and these three countries? Did ECOWAS and Ghana do anything bad?

Mr Ablakwa: Well, thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, as I said, these are sovereign countries taking their own decisions, their right to self-determination, and their right to chart whatever path that they consider to be

in their national interest. So, I do not think it is a matter of who may have done a wrong thing or who may have not carried out any misstep.

At this point, I think that we should not pursue a path of blame games. Let us open a fresh page and commit to dialoguing, working together, and being guided that when we come together—I mean when ECOWAS come together, we are talking about a market of about 400 million, and if we decide to trade amongst ourselves, if we decide to really go back to the ECOWAS protocols and create opportunities for our young people, the potential is enormous and is really boundless.

So, at this point, I would not want us to engage in any blame game. Let us rather open fresh pages and get everybody to the negotiating table.

And let us see what the future will be for ECOWAS and the AES...

2.01 p.m.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Mr Nitiwul?

Mr Nitiwul: Mr Speaker, thank you very much. I want to ask the Hon Minister a supplementary question, but I am quoting from his answer. The Hon Minister said “that despite the AES countries’ formal withdrawal from ECOWAS, which was formalised at the end of January, 2025, free movement” and please emphasis on “free movement of people, goods and

services remain intact, as confirmed by ECOWAS and the AES member states.” As the Hon Minister may be aware, the only protocol allowing ECOWAS members to stay in Ghana was signed in 2014 in Abuja, by President John Mahama, and that means that if one is an ECOWAS passport holder, the person can stay in Ghana without looking for the normal three-month visas and renewing among others. In fact, the Hon Minister is also aware that ECOWAS released the statement saying that member states should recognise the passports that the AES member countries are holding.

That means that it applies to the 2014 protocol. Is the Minister saying that if an individual is holding an AES passport, that person is allowed to stay in Ghana and enjoy the rights that an ECOWAS member enjoys, even though he or she is not holding the ECOWAS passport? Is that what he is saying?

Mr Ablakwa: Mr Speaker, well, thank you very much. Mr Nitiwul has raised a matter about passports. That is why I said at the beginning of my response that we have always been pioneers for a united Africa, for full integration. We want a borderless region where all these artificial borders from the Berlin Conference will be removed so that we can move freely. We espoused this in 1975 and even earlier. In 1975, ECOWAS was formed. Even much earlier, Kwame Nkrumah’s vision, Africa must unite. So, we take the view that it is consistent with those ideals to just respect all of

these passports and consider the fact that these are fundamentally our brothers and sisters. They are already here with us; we belong to the same ethnic group, and even without the AES passport, if they are to use ECOWAS passports, they are allowed free movement to come into Ghana and to be here as long as they want to be here. So we are in a period of transition, of talking to each other and dialoguing. There is even a suggestion recently by ECOWAS to even get the AES to join ECOWAS as a bloc, not as individual member countries. That is the latest offer that has been made to AES, which they are considering and that is a strong possibility. From what we are gathering, they would even prefer that, to rejoin ECOWAS as a bloc, than as individual separate countries. So, I think that, consistent with our ideals and our status as founding fathers of regional integration, I think we should be open to them and that is our approach now. But let us keep negotiating; let us keep talking, and let us unite. There is more that we stand to gain as united countries than dividing our ranks.

Mr Nitiwul: Mr Speaker, the Hon Minister is communicating to the Immigration Officers.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, how many supplementary questions are you entitled to? You know the rules.

Mr Nitiwul: But Mr Speaker, it is the same question.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, you know the rules.

Mr Nitiwul: But Mr Speaker, he is communicating to Immigration Officers. This is a serious matter.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Mr Nitiwul, you know the rules, so let us go by the rules.

Mr Nitiwul: Thank you. I would give it to somebody to answer.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon Member?

Mr Michael Kwasi Aidoo: Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity. To the Hon Minister, considering the position taken by the Government, I want to know how Ghana intends to advocate for good governance and democratic principles within the AES while maintaining our commitment to ECOWAS, considering the recent coup in the Sahel Region. Thank you very much.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon Minister?

Mr Ablakwa: I am most grateful Mr Speaker. To respond clearly to the Hon Colleague, Ghana remains committed to good governance, to the ideals of the rule of law, the rule-based order, and all of these democratic values which are time-tested which we should not compromise on. In opening dialogue and serving as a bridge for unity, we are not, in our considered opinion, undermining these principles.

Rather, we are taking advantage of these principles to have a united Africa and to have a road map towards full democratisation which should evolve with time. So, we take the view that it is in our strategic national interest to keep engaging. We should not, because of these democratic values, say that we will not engage them. We must keep engaging and with our model, with the example that they see in us, it will help with their own transition onto a democratic path. So, that is the strategy we have adopted. We think that this, ultimately, will help in the restoration of the democratic order in those three countries.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, Mr John Darko? Then I would come to Leadership.

Mr John Darko: Mr Speaker, following up on that, I would like to find out, first of all, whether we have that clear road map to democratisation. In his earlier submission, he mentioned that the engagement with these AES member states, he has seen that the prospects are very good. Clearly, I want to understand, when he says the prospects are good, does he mean that they have now agreed to lay down their arms and now take the path of democratisation?

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minister?

Mr Ablakwa: Mr Speaker, the Hon Colleague has asked a very important question. When I talk about the prospects being good, let us remember where we have come from. We have come from a point where nobody could engage, no leader could be given access, none of the neighbours of these AES countries could even be entertained, be allowed to come speak with them and all of that. To where we are now, where President Mahama has been given access, he has been granted audience, and dialogue has opened, engagements are going on. So, one can see a marked departure from where we are. Those are signs that the prospects are good. As the dialogue channels remain open, then we can begin discussions about how we trade better, how we lift some of the initial blockades that they imposed towards also eventually a democratic transition and all of that. That is what I mean by the prospects are good. If one takes into cognisance where we have come from, what the situation was, this is the first time that they are opening up to a president outside the AES bloc. That is what I mean by the prospects being good. I am quite confident that

2.11 p.m.

As these negotiations go on, next week President Mahama will be in Nigeria to discuss—President Tinubu has asked for a report on how things have gone. They are all quite excited about the dialogue channels that have been opened. He will be presenting a report to the ECOWAS leader and then ECOWAS will be acting on that so I

think that is better. You remember what happened? There was a time that even an ECOWAS emissary was returned; He was asked to go back that they were not going to talk to him. So, I think that we are making progress no matter how small, but in diplomacy it can take a long time but, at least, we can count a few successes and I think it gives a good opening towards a full democratisation of the sub-region.

I am grateful Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much.

Yes, Hon Member?

Mr Yaw Frimpong Addo: Mr Speaker, I would like to find out from the Hon Minister, if what he is telling us that these citizens from these Sahelian countries, holding the passports of that organisation, can come and stay in Ghana without going through the ECOWAS protocols, is he telling us that he has the authority of the President to say this to us in Parliament? Is that the official position? That is what I want to find out.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minister?

Mr Ablakwa: Thank you very much Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, let me be clear. I have said that there is already a lot of free

movement. I have said that ECOWAS has not placed any ban on any national; whether ECOWAS or if you are from the AES bloc, you are allowed to travel. One can travel into Ghana, travel to Nigeria, and that is already going on. We have heard about the prospects of an AES passport but that has not yet been done; they have not yet outdoored that AES passport. But for now, our immigration officials know that they can admit people from Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger; they can come into Ghana. They are free to travel whether they have ECOWAS passport, Niger or Mali passport, but the AES passport has not yet been outdoored. That is not existing so that question does not arise. But you cannot stop a fellow ECOWAS national from Burkina Faso, Mali or Niger. They are allowed to enter into our country. They are also allowed to travel anywhere within ECOWAS. The ECOWAS has not stopped them from travelling and from taking advantage of the free movement protocols. That is the clarity that I want to provide.

Mr Yaw Frimpong Addo — *rose* —

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, you also know the rule. So, can you resume your seat.

Yes, Leadership?

Thank you.

The Hon Leader has yielded to you.

Mr Addo: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

To avoid confusion on our borders is the reason I am probing into this matter seriously because if somebody is coming from any of these countries holding their passports, what does our immigration officers do when they show that passport? To avoid that confusion, Hon Minister, this matter should not have been raised at all here in Parliament. Because if you mix it up with the ECOWAS passport—They are ECOWAS nationals, we agree, free movement and everything else but let us tread cautiously when we are dealing with this issue because of the nature of the situation we are dealing with. And mind you, these countries are seriously under threat from rebel activities, insurgencies, and all that so we need to be very, very careful as a country

Thank you.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: So, it is a suggestion that we should tread cautiously.

Yes, Hon Deputy Majority Leader?

Mr Ricketts-Hagan: Mr Speaker, I have not got any question for now.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Very well.

We move to the Question numbered 64 standing in the name of Hon Frank Asiedu Bekoe, Member of Parliament for Suhum.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Government subscription to Article 4(M) and 4(P) of the AU Constitutive Act considering Relationship between Government and Military Leader in Burkina Faso

**Mr Frank Asiedu Bekoe (NPP —
Suhum):** Thank you, Mr Speaker, for
the second opportunity.

Mr Speaker, I beg ask the Minister
for Foreign whether the current
government fully subscribes to Article
4(M) and 4(P) of the AU Constitutive
Act taking into account the relationship
between the government and the
current Military Leader in Burkina
Faso.

Mr Speaker, with your permission,
can I read the AU Constitutive Act.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon
Member, a Question has been admitted
and you are to ask the Question. So
please go ahead and ask the Question.

Mr Bekoe: I am done. Thank you.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon
Minister?

**Minister for Foreign Affairs (Mr
Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa) (MP):** I
am grateful, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, Article 4 on the
principles of the AU Constitutive Act
states:

“The union shall function in
accordance with the following
principles: (M) respect for
democratic principles, human
rights, the rule of law, and good
governance; (P) condemnation and
rejection of unconstitutional
changes of governments.”

The AU position, as you may be
aware, the re-emergence of
unconstitutional rule of governments in
Africa has unfortunately been an
occurrence in recent years, with
military coups and takeovers gradually
making a comeback on the Continent.

Africa continues to face the
resurgence of political instability,
which has caused a major setback to
the efforts we have all made towards
the achievement of Agenda 2063 the
Africa we want.

The African Union has been
working towards the management of
the incessant unconstitutional changes
of governments in Africa by adopting a
number of normative frameworks, such
as the Constitutive Act of the AU 2000,
the AU Protocol on Peace and Security,
the Lome Declaration of July 2000, and
the African Charter on Democracy,
Election, and Governance 2007,
amongst others.

The normative frameworks and
responses of the regional blocs and
international organisations towards

peace and stability in the continent continue to identify lapses, such as lack of conceptual clarity on the UCGs, varying application of sanctions and their outcomes, lack of a structured continental early warning mechanism for constitutional changes of governments, weak early response, insufficient human and financial resources, and weak coordination between the AU and the regional economic communities, amongst others, as contributing factors.

To this end, the Africa Union Commission, in collaboration with the Government of Ghana and the ECOWAS Commission, organised two sessions, the Accra Reflection Forum on Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Africa in Ghana. Deliberations explored issues in the Constitutive Act and critically assessed its relevance for the process of democratisation in Africa, taking into consideration the political atmosphere on the continent at the time.

2.21 p.m.

The forum, amongst others, re-sharpened the strategies to promote constitutionalism and the rule of law towards entrenching democracy and inclusive governance for the overall enhancement of peace, security, and stability in Africa. The Sessions also offered an opportunity to review the latest developments, deepen reflection on the structural root causes and impact of UCGs in Africa and further reviewed the continued relevance and effectiveness of various treaty-making

frameworks at regional and continental levels including the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance.

In connection with the above, it is worth noting that Article 4(e) on Principles of the Constitutive Act of the AU states that the Union shall function in accordance to the following principle:

“Peaceful resolution of conflicts among Member States of the Union through such appropriate means as may be decided upon by the Assembly”.

In this regard, Ghana will continue to play a leading role in collective efforts to promote peace, stability and economic development on the African continent.

Principles of Ghana's Foreign Policy

A principle of Ghana's Foreign Policy is to adhere to the principles of the Charters, Treaties and of international organisations such as the United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), ECOWAS, Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) of which Ghana is a member.

Ghana upholds the AU principles including opposition to unconstitutional changes in government. However, in Ghana's interactions with Burkina Faso, our national interest is amongst others, focused on enhancing security cooperation in the Sahel and West African region to combat terrorism,

cross border crimes such as illicit trafficking, smuggling, drug trafficking, as well as to improve trade and strengthen existing bilateral ties.

Bilateral Relations

Ghana continues to promote and protect the interest of Ghanaian nationals living in these three countries. It is worth noting that trade relations particularly in agricultural products continue to flourish between both nations. There exist further areas of cooperation in sectors such as energy. Ghana intends to increase export of electricity to Burkina Faso alongside, enhancing the transit corridor for petroleum products. Burkina Faso recently acquired a fuel storage terminal, as both countries are considering extending existing pipeline from Bolgatanga to Ouagadougou to streamline fuel and diesel supply.

The Volta River takes its source from the highlands of Bobo-Dioulassi in Burkina Faso. The river is crucial to both countries with regards to water supply, agriculture, irrigation, hydropower generation and remains essential to the livelihoods of our peoples.

Government is considering the introduction of a direct Accra-Ouagadougou flight with an airline in Ghana showing interest.

Security and Stability

On the security and stability front, as you may be aware, terrorism

threatens not only in the Sahel Region, but also countries further down the coast. Ghana having recognised this imminent threat, places priority on strengthening existing ties to find collaborative solutions to address this pressing regional menace. As such, there is the need to continue dialogue and reconciliation between ECOWAS, AU, and the Alliance of Sahelian States.

It should be noted that H. E. John Dramani Mahama appointed former National Security Coordinator, Lt Col Larry Gbevlo-Lartey as Special Envoy to the Alliance of Sahelian States in this endeavour. The appointment demonstrates the President's commitment to prioritising regional security and diplomacy. He will act as a liaison between the Government of Ghana and the Alliance for Sahelian States and formulate engagements with Member States of ECOWAS and the African Union.

Good Neighbourliness as a Cardinal Point of Ghana's Foreign Policy Orientation

Mr Speaker, upon assumption of Office, His Excellency the President of the Republic indicated his intention to engage in pragmatic ways with our neighbours, in this case, Burkina Faso. This is a cardinal foreign policy objective of the Republic. Good neighbourliness remains essential to sustaining the climate of peace and stability in the sub-region and maintaining cordial relations between Ghana and her neighbours as a means

to address common challenges to development across national frontiers.

Dialogue and Rebuild of Trust

Mr Speaker, during the recent Official visit of President John Dramani Mahama to Burkina Faso on 10th March, 2025, His Excellency the President stressed the need to rebuild trust and foster dialogue to ease diplomatic strains between ECOWAS and the Alliance of Sahelian States. This initiative aims to enhance trade, connectivity, and people-to-people relations between Ghana and Burkina Faso, for the mutual benefit of its peoples.

Mr Speaker, I thank you very much.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, do you have any supplementary question?

Mr Bekoe: With the coming into office of this current administration through a democratic means, would the current Government condemn the coup d'état in these Alliance of Sahel States (AES) that overthrew democratic governments?

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minister let us hear you

Mr Ablakwa: Mr Speaker, as I have emphasised all afternoon, we are in a very strategic period of dialogue and engagements. We want to serve as a bridge and when one serves as a bridge—And already ECOWAS is

looking up to Ghana, many of our nationals who are already traveling, moving and trading together would want to see a united ECOWAS. We do not want to engage in blame game or want to single out anybody for what may be perceived wrongly, which will undermine our efforts at dialogues and negotiations towards the aims and the objectives that we all want as a people and as a House.

I will recommend a different strategy. I do not think that what he is suggesting at this point will be helpful to the ongoing *rapprochement*, the engagements and the dialogue that is ongoing. I think that we should remain on this path. This is a path which is in our national interest and would ultimately help our sub-region.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Any further supplementary questions?

Mr Bekoe: I submit that as a democratic country, we should not be seen to be encouraging coups in the sub-region.

My next supplementary question is that, is there any cooperation between the AES, Russia, and the current Government?

Mr Ablakwa: I am grateful. Mr Speaker, because the Hon Member preceded his question with a remark, and as this is a House of records, let me state without any equivocation that the John Dramani Mahama Administration will at no point be seen either overtly or covertly engaging in any effort that

will undermine democracy. We remain committed to democracy, to the principles of rule of law, of good governance and we want to state that for the record. We will continue to be apostles and champions of democracy, particularly in the African region.

Having said that, his substantive question about the role of Russia in AES and in Ghana, I can speak for Ghana. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana, we are a non-aligned country. As we speak, we have diplomatic relations with Russia, Ukraine, the EU, the USA and many other countries; there are some 73 and counting diplomatic missions here in Ghana. We also have diplomatic missions open in all of these countries, including Moscow, Kiev and others. We remain very cordial. What we have said is that we espouse the principles of self-determination, protection of sovereignty, and the rule-based order.

2.31 p.m.

So when our allies or friends violate this, we will be bold enough to criticise and be principled in our position that we will be unwavering. We will remain committed to the principles that we have always stood for.

But remember that even under the previous administration, the Akufo-Addo Government did not cut ties with Russia. There is still a Russian Embassy here; they are operating and we have good relations with them. Our non-aligned posture, which allows

us to be friends of all and enemies to none, will continue; I can confirm that.

So, in terms of the role of other countries, what I know is that we are pursuing a strategic national interest. No other sovereign would determine for us or dictate to us, what our national interest is. What we are pursuing is our national interest, and that I can confirm strongly.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member for Suhum, your last supplementary question.

Mr Bekoe: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Bekoe, hold it.

First Deputy Minority Whip (Alhaji Habib Iddrisu): Mr Speaker, before his last supplementary question, this is just an observation. Mr Speaker, with utmost respect to you, if you look at the Chamber at the moment, on their Side, they are 40, which is about 21 per cent of their number. We are 26, which is 30 per cent of our number. Mr Speaker, I just want to urge you so that you talk to the Majority Side.

The Minister for Finance is here to present the First Reading of eight important Bills, and it is just about 21 per cent of them that are in the Chamber. It does not speak well of us, and we need to take Government Business seriously—[Uproar]—Mr Speaker, tell them not to shout because I am not raising quorum, I am drawing—

So, I just want to urge the Frontbench to bring their numbers in so that we will take Business seriously, then we can proceed on what we are doing. Other than that, it does not—*[Interruption]*—Mr Speaker, as I rightly said, the Majority Side is 187 but at the moment, they are 40, which is 21 per cent of their number. We are 88, I have counted and we are 26 now, which is 30 per cent of our number and it does not make sense. For that matter, they should try and come in so that the presentation and First Reading of the Minister for Finance's important Bills can be done.

Mr Speaker, it does not speak well of this House. And we do not take our Business—It does not speak well of the Majority Side. They have 187 Members and they are less than 40 in the Chamber. Mr Speaker, with respect, I think you should direct the Majority Side to bring their numbers in, then we can continue with the Business. That is my prayer to you, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Well, Hon Bekoe, your last supplementary question.

Mr Bekoe: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I rise to ask the Minister, what informed the invitation of Burkina Faso's military ruler to the President's inauguration?

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, what is your question? Minister, hold on.

Mr Bekoe: I am asking the Minister, what informed the invitation of Burkina Faso's military ruler to the President's investiture?

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minister, the question is accordingly overruled.

Hon Members, the attention has been drawn to an absence of a quorum. I would urge the Majority Frontbench to do the needful.

Yes, Hon Minority Leader?

Osahen Alexander Kwamena Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, thank you for giving some directives to the Majority Frontbench. The Minority Leadership is concerned, and those concerns were earlier raised by the First Deputy Minority Whip.

A Parliament with a Majority of 187 cannot only be Majority on ceremonial days. Mr Speaker, yesterday I watched the swearing-in of the Deputy Ministers of state. A lot of the Members of Parliament (MPs) on the Majority Frontbench were at the Jubilee House, and it was all over on the television (TV). Their Business is in this Chamber, not Jubilee House. Mr Speaker, it is important. I saw a lot of them when I watched the TV, and I can produce evidence and show you the video evidence.

Mr Speaker, they being in Majority is not only by works but by their action, and their own attitude towards their own Government Business, yet, when

we talk, they would be shouting behind. Hon Members of the Majority, even now their 40 Members have reduced. Mr Speaker, it is a very serious matter, and I want to tell them that until they bring their numbers in, the Minister for Finance is not going to lay any Paper; it is not going to happen. They are less than 40 Members. They are not going to lay any Paper because they do not have the quorum. So, this is the time for them to bring their numbers—*[Interruption]*—They do need quorum—*[Interruption]*—All right. They are now talking law and want to go to procedure.

Where do they want me to show them? We need quorum to start Business. All right, very well. They should go to the Constitution.

Mr Speaker, the President has four more nominees to present for us to deal with. If that four is causing anxiety, then the Majority's duty is to prevail on the President to bring the four. It is delaying. It is this anxiety that is even causing them to be absent in this Chamber? It is left with four nominees; the President mentioned 60 Ministers. The Minister for Finance was here applauding the Government that they promised 60 ministers and they have delivered. Where are the four? Are they being indecisive?

The Majority promised Agriculture for Economic Transformation Agenda. The Hon Minister for Finance should go to page 152 of their Budget Statement and Economic Policy. He promised GH¢1.5billion only to

allocate GH¢924million. What is their seriousness on agriculture? They are rendering the Minister for Food and Agriculture redundant, and they do not come here to do Business. Well, the Minister for Finance—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Leader?

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, I would end, but we are not formally going to raise this quorum because we believe that the Minister for Finance, after presenting the Budget Statement, must go through the necessary protocols so that this House can function. Today is the last for the Deputy Majority Leader. His Side must show seriousness. The National Democratic Congress (NDC) must show seriousness. We will let the Minister for Finance lay his Papers so that he can go back to the Ministry.

2.41 p.m.

This House is not for ceremonial days. They come here only on the day of the Message on the State of the Nation. When it gets to Budget, then they dress and come here, and then when it is left with Government Business, they do not want to come. Then they are all at Jubilee House negotiating for Board, Deputy Minister and looking for appointments—*[Pause]*—Absent Majority—And they would not even keep quiet. Where are their numbers? We need their presence in this Chamber—*Okyna nso, tomorrow.*

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, any supplementary question for the Minister for Foreign Affairs? I think you have asked your supplementary question—Very well, you have the floor.

Mr John Darko: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr Minister, would you appreciate that the NDC or this Government—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, order!

Mr Darko: Hon Dafeamekpor, please, if I may put my question.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Dafeamekpor, I would listen to you after him.

Mr Darko: Hon Minister, with the approach that this administration finds it difficult to condemn *coup d'états*, do you not think that this would embolden would-be coupists to engage in coups in the sub-region, knowing that there are no consequences, especially when it comes to mere condemnation? If the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ghana cannot just condemn *coup d'états*, does he not think that that is going to embolden would-be coupists?

Mr Ablakwa: Mr Speaker, when these *coups* occurred more than a year ago, the position of ECOWAS and Ghana was made clear and well-articulated. As a Government, we have not departed from that position. We

remain committed to the principles of democracy. The 1992 Constitution of Ghana enjoins all of us to be committed to deepening democracy. And our political tradition is credited for bringing us this far in our democratic credentials. This is the longest dispensation of democracy under this Fourth Republic, since the 1992 Constitution was promulgated. And we are very proud of that: to have led those efforts, so our commitment to good governance, rule of law, democracy, and rule-based order is not in doubt and nobody can question that.

What is happening now is in pursuit of Article 40(a), our strategic national interests, making sure that we create a bridge or a dialogue. Here, we are faced with violent extremism and terrorism. We need to share intelligence. We need to have bilateral engagements that would protect our territorial integrity; we need to make sure that the peace and stability of our country is protected, so we are engaged in a strategic dialogue and positive engagements, that would lead towards the attainment of the goals and objectives that we all espouse.

That is what we are doing; it is in the strategic interests of our country and the people we serve, so this is not a period that requires, if you like, unguarded statements, bombastic statements, calling out people and attacking people. That would not help us. This is a period that requires diplomacy, tact, and sober reflection, and it requires a lot of wisdom and cautious rapprochement. That is what

President Mahama is pursuing, and he is being applauded all over.

Ultimately, this would lead us to deepening democracy in the region and making sure that our commitment—*[Interruption]*—If I can be protected, Mr Speaker—So, our commitment to democracy, good governance, the rule of law is enhanced by the new engagements and the new channels of dialogue that President Mahama has opened. And I think that we need to join the global community in applauding the President for his tact, leadership, and the vision that he has brought to bear, which has made him the lead mediator between ECOWAS and AES. It takes a lot of skill, tact, maturity, and vision to be able to achieve what President Mahama has achieved, and I think that we need to commend him for that.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Hon Minister.

Hon John Jinapor?

Mr John Abdulai Jinapor: Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

In answering the question, the Minister talked about strategic dialogue. He also re-emphasised positive engagement and capped it up with wisdom and a sense of tenacity and purpose, and ensuring that good governance permeates all facets of society.

Mr Speaker, having re-echoed these positive commitments, I wish to

find out from the Minister of Foreign Affairs whether H. E. President Mahama and this Government would consider extending these positive tenets beyond the West African sub-region and take across the world in the spirit of ensuring that there is good governance.

Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

Mr Ablakwa: Mr Speaker, I commend the Hon Minister for Energy and Green Transition for this very important question. I can confirm that President Mahama would continue to bring these attributes to bear in his engagements with the rest of the world, even beyond the sub-region. Because the world is looking for leaders like President Mahama.

There is a lot of uncertainty, and there is a lot of inward-looking leaders, isolationist leaders, leaders who are only looking within. But President Mahama is a leader who has demonstrated that multilateralism, positive engagement, reaching out, working together, working collectively are what the world needs. That is what guarantees global stability, and that is what guarantees global prosperity.

Mr Speaker, I can assure this House that this sterling quality and very admirable posture of President Mahama would be brought to bear on the global stage, not only in the sub-region.

I thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon Habib?

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, my question to the Minister for Foreign Affairs—Just before the Minister for Energy and Green Transition asked his question, in the answer of the Minister, he said that President Mahama has been applauded by many countries. This is a house of record. Is there any evidence to that that he has been applauded? Or he should name the countries that have applauded him or individuals who have applauded him for that.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Ablakwa: Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

Mr Speaker, if the Hon First Deputy Minority Whip was listening carefully, I had said that President Mahama is being applauded by many. I did not say countries. So, his question does not arise that I list countries. I said he is being applauded globally and all over. Mr Speaker, evidence abounds. Those who have been reading the international literature—If one reads the international media, one would see analysts, pundits, experts and contributors who are all saying that—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon John Darko, your voice is so loud.

Mr Ablakwa: They are all saying that President Mahama's approach is a very skilful and tactful approach—That is the way to go, and I have

already told you that he has received invitations from a number of leaders on the continent to come and have discussions on the recent tour that he has carried out within the AES bloc.

So, there is no doubt that President Mahama is being applauded. Here in Ghana, if one follows even media reportage, he is being applauded by many for the skill, tact, and maturity that he has brought to bear. And I know that deep down the hearts of my Colleagues, they are also in awe. They are very proud of President Mahama's diplomatic prowess. I know that if they were allowed to admit that publicly, I know that they would do that.

I am thankful, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, we will go to Leadership.

Osahen Alexander Kwamena Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, I have two questions. The respected Minister for Foreign Affairs, in an earlier answer, said that there are world leaders who are inward-looking and are isolationists, and these are not the attributes of President Mahama.

I want to know from him; this is a house of record. I want to know from him: who are these world leaders who are inward-looking and isolationists? Who are these world leaders who are in office now that he is referring to?

Thank you very much.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Leader, did he say the world leaders are in office now?

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, please, respectfully, context—He asked—Maybe I would give you a background again, though we are all in this Chamber. Hon John Jinapor talked about the attributes of the President and asked whether, beyond the sub-region, the President would extend his diplomacy beyond the borders of West Africa. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, in an answer, observed that there are current world leaders who are isolationists and inward-looking. And these are not the attributes that President Mahama has.

Those were his own words; maybe, we can pause and call for the transcripts. That was what he said. It is not a matter of he relating it to past leaders. Mr Speaker, he contextualised it to refer to current world leaders. That is why I want him to bring clarity and let us know, because he is a Minister for Foreign Affairs of our country. If there is any world leader who is an isolationist and an inward-looking leader, he is now dealing with world leaders, he should let us know, so that we would be guided. That is the question to him. He said it, not me.

Mr Ablakwa: Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

Mr Speaker, the Minority Leader is right that I used those words, and we are seeing a rise in isolationism and inward-looking leadership. But the Minority Leader knows that the good dictates of diplomacy do not permit me to mention names. It would not be in our strategic national interest to mention names. We all know; we are

describing the qualities of President Mahama. We are talking about his belief in multilateralism, collective approach, reaching out, and making sure that we all work together as a people, and that, once we are united and integrated, there is more we can achieve than being inward-looking and being isolationists.

So, I think the point has been made. It suffices for me to say that these are the two varying and contradictory qualities. We are blessed to have a leader who has qualities of multilateralism, positive engagement, reaching out and working together. So, I think that that should suffice. We should not invite conflict or war upon ourselves. And I know that the Minority Leader is experienced in diplomacy and international relations, and it would not be good for this House to be listing leaders and trying to, if one likes, pigeonhole them in a negative context, which would not be appropriate at this time.

2.51 p.m.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Your next question.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, I agree with my respected Colleague in part and disagree with him in part. Mr Speaker, the metaphor created by him in his submission is entirely his. And I am happy he says that we should not use the platform to mention names. However, I hold a view that he could have eloquently put out the attributes of President Mahama

without the approach he adopted. To the extent that when he had the opportunity for the second time, he re-echoed that there is a current trend of isolationist leadership across the world. Obviously, this is a House of record. To the extent that you have anchored a submission on a trend, you are a diplomat so if Mr Speaker would agree with this prayer, I would pray that that aspect of the submission be expunged. It is entirely your decision and then we are here to help each other, not to isolate one another and think that we can punch him. That is not my style in politics and he knows that I have been engaged in international politics for some time, you know, prior to he assuming office. I believe that you can still talk about the attributes of your Leader. You do not need to make that point.

So, I pray, Mr Speaker, that that portion, that there's a trend of isolationist leaders and inward-looking leaders across the group be expunged. If you do not want it to be expunged, that is entirely yours.

I will move to my next question, which is my final do. Mr Speaker, you may determine it before I proceed.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: You can proceed to the next question.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Very well. Mr Speaker, my final question to my respected Colleague. Mr Speaker, he says that the President as part of his

multilateral diplomacy, that posture, thus far. He has received applause and when he was pushed further, he said, well, the applause is coming from analysts, pundits, and contributors in the international tabloids, international media. Can the respected diplomats and member of this house give us these contributors by name, these pundits, which newspaper, which global newspaper, which tabloids, which dates, so that this house can fully apprise itself of these great attributes and join in celebrating our President and join him and others in celebrating the President? Mr Speaker, that is my question, please.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Very well, Hon Minister.

Mr Ablakwa: Well, thank you very much. Mr Speaker, just to address the first part of the Minority Leader's concern. The Minority Leader should be assured that the trends that I have spoken to are trends that have been openly discussed for which even international organisations like the UN and the AU have had sessions to discuss. So, there is nothing we stand to lose, even as a House. In the coming weeks, I will be bringing a Statement here on that threat and what we can do as a House to be more resilient because the requirement of what is going on now in the international arena is that African countries in particular, including Ghana, must fashion out new foreign policies that makes us more resilient, that makes us more self-reliant so that we do not have to depend because the global order has changed and the tapestry of global leaders now are not the same as it was and this is a fact that international organisations are

discussing. So, we should not play ostrich about this and we do not need to mention specific names, but these are facts.

Even in our Budget this year, new allocations have been made to take note of the current global order, the current global order, and that is a fact.

The second part of the Hon Minority Leader's submission—Can the Minority Leader—I am responding to you. The request by the Minority Leader is very much in order and I am willing to Table all the links. There is VOA, there's *Financial Times*, there's *Le Monde*, there is *New York Times*. I will Table all of that and make all those articles available. So, Mr Speaker, please be assured that is an exercise. I am very happy to produce.

But, Mr Speaker, on a lighter note, the Minority Leader and I like that. On a lighter note, I am wondering where the Minority Leader was when his Colleagues behind him were calling on me to condemn specific world leaders. They were calling on me to condemn them and I stayed away from that and he did not advise them, but he is now seeking to advise me. So, it is quite interesting. Sometimes there are—
[expunged by order of Mr Speaker] of the Minority Leader. But that is on a lighter note.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, let there be order.

Hon Minority Leader, you have the floor.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Thank you, Mr Speaker. In this House, we say that this is a House of records. So, when somebody says something and it is not for the records, the same cannot be relied upon to make a submission, whether seriously or on a lighter note. So, I would want my respective Colleague although on a lighter note, to withdraw the submission to the effect that I approach matters with—No, that is not me. I mean, the *Hansard*, 30 years from today, 20 years from today, our kids will come and read the *Hansard*. So, we have to deal with matters of record.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Leader, we know you are a man of single standard, not—
[Laughter]—So—should be expunged from the record.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: So, Mr Speaker, I just want that to be done.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, that is what I have done.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Very well. Mr Speaker, that said, let me plead with our respected Minister for Foreign Affairs. Although he says that he does not want to mention a name, which I agree with, but Mr Speaker, we are learning and we will continue to learn.

3.01 p.m.

Does he not think that it would not be too much for him to take away that phrase, “a trend in isolationist leaders” because, Mr Speaker—Well, we are

guiding ourselves as leaders. This is a serious matter and I do not want our Minister for Foreign Affairs to be cited in any tabloid to have said that yes, President Mahama has the attribute of reaching out beyond the borders of his country and even beyond the borders of West Africa, and he is not acting like the way other isolationist and inward-looking leaders are doing now.

I think it is a bit on the hard side, especially when this House is not being given the opportunity to know who these leaders are. Can that one go off? I think that it would be in the best interest of our Minister for Foreign Affairs to take that phrase out. It would not hurt, just for the good of his own diplomacy. That is all I want to say.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Leader, he even stated categorically that he may bring a Statement to that effect, and it is a matter being discussed at the international scene.

Hon Deputy Majority Leader, any questions for him?

Mr Ricketts-Hagan: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, I think we are done with all the questions to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: You do not have a question for him?

Mr Ricketts-Hagan: No, I do not have a question—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Very well.

Hon Members, let me thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs for attending upon the House and providing Answers to the substantive Questions and many supplementary questions.

Hon Minister, thank you very much. You are hereby discharged.

Yes, Hon Majority Chief Whip.

Mr Dafeamekpor: Mr Speaker, may we pray you to consider the items listed on the Order Paper *Addendum 2*—[*Interruption*—I am seeking leave of the Speaker. They are in disagreement, but I am leaving it in the hands of the Speaker. Yes, we are only laying. Yes, I am doing my job.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, the Minister for Finance has been with us for some time. May I plead with you, so that we vary the order of Business?

Mr Dafeamekpor: Mr Speaker, this attitude of—The First Deputy Minority Whip has to stop this. No, please. He cannot say the First Deputy Speaker is doing the Front Bench Business for them. He cannot do that, please.

So, Mr Speaker, that is why we are seeking your leave to vary the order of Business. Yes, so that we move to the Order Paper *Addendum 2*, so the instruments can be laid in agreement with the Leader on the other Side—[*Interruption*—We have already had the agreement.

Mr Speaker, thank you.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: The Minister for Finance has been with us for some time now. Application has been made to vary the order of Business to do Presentation of Papers.

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, the Majority Chief Whip must learn the rules very fast as he is just in Leadership. On which record did I say Mr Speaker is doing their bidding? Did I speak into the microphone? On which record did I say that? So, he cannot just be on his feet and allege that I have said so.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Habib Iddrisu, I heard you loud and clear that the Speaker is doing the work of the Front Bench.

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: He was speaking into the microphone, Mr Speaker—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Habib Iddrisu, though you did not speak into the microphone, I heard you loud and clear that the Speaker is doing the work of the Front Bench.

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, I have been on that Side as a Leader before and I have made several applications. So, what I was seeking to tell you, Mr Speaker, is to the effect that the Majority Chief Whip was not even in the Chamber when we started the discussion on this *Addendum* Paper. So, on which record? He was not here. Yes, the Minister for Finance has been here for some time and he has engaged us. The Deputy Majority

Leader had engaged us on the *Addendum*, which we do not have a problem, but the Majority Chief Whip was not here. So, he cannot speak to it when he was not here when we agreed on that.

On that note, Mr Speaker, we have no difficulty with the Minister for Finance to do *Addendum* 2. But after raising the issue, we can see that they are now here. For that matter, even though they are still not up to 91 and they still do not have the numbers, we do not have any difficulty on this.

Thank you.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, Order!

Leave is hereby granted. At the Commencement of Public Business, we will take the Order Paper *Addendum* 2 — Presentation and First Reading of Bills.

Hon Members, the item numbered (a) on the Order Paper *Addendum* 2, Electronic Transfer Levy (Repeal) Bill, 2025.

BILL — FIRST READING

Electronic Transfer Levy (Repeal), 2025

An ACT to repeal the Electronic Transfer Levy Act, 2022 (Act 1075) and the Electronic Transfer Levy (Amendment) Act, 2022, (Act 1089), and to provide for related matters.

Presented by the Minister for Finance (Dr Cassiel Ato Baah Forson). Read the First time; referred to the Finance Committee.

[Pause]

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, if it will please you, even though you have referred the matter to the Finance Committee, if the leadership or the entire Committee of the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs can be added to the Finance Committee, so that it could be a Joint Committee to look at this.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Dafeamekpor: Mr Speaker, I agree with the Hon First Deputy Minority Whip to the extent that we join the leadership of the Committee of Constitutional and Legal Affairs; not the entire Committee, but the Leadership of the Committee.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, these are purely financial Bills. I would not have a problem if the leadership of the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs wants to assist the Finance Committee, but it should not be a formal referral to a Joint Committee.

Hon Members, this is not the first time we are going through Bills of this nature, so the referral to the Finance Committee should suffice.

3.11 p.m.

Hon Members, let me also place on record that it is after the Presentation

and the First Reading of the Bill that copies of the Bill are distributed to Members.

Yes, Hon Minority Leader?

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, two issues arise on this. The practice has always been that even before the Minister brings such a major policy matter, he engages with the Leadership of the House. The Minister for Finance was a Minority Leader and also a Majority Leader of this House. I have not seen, and I do not even know whether he is bringing it under a certificate of urgency or he has gazetted—[Interruption]—No, I want to find out. I need to know. Yes, it does not matter. I need to know. So, at least I should know.

Mr Speaker, because if we look at his budget—because I am concerned, he proposed some GH¢1.5 billion to the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, and then if we look at the expenditure, the allocation, he gave them GH¢924 million. So, these engagements help.

Mr Speaker, when he was the Ranking Member, he could spot some issues and engage.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Leader, I believe strongly that next week the Budget is coming forward for debate.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, do not get me out of context, respectfully. We are not debating the Budget, but there are procedural

matters that we need to bring to his attention. You are a man of procedure. Practices of this House must be respected. How does a Minister bring a major policy issue and Leadership is not aware? He is only saying engaged. So, I have not seen it. The whole of yesterday, I was around. He has my number and I have been in the office. I have not seen it and I am seeing this the first time in this Chamber. That is unacceptable.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon Minister for Finance?

Dr Forson: Mr Speaker, today will not be the first time for a Minister for Finance to lay a Finance Bill; either to repeal a Bill or amend a Bill. I engaged the Deputy Minority Whip when I arrived in this House with the Finance Bills. At the time, the Hon Minority Leader was not in the Chamber and I asked the Deputy Minority Leader if I could lay the following Bills.

Mr Speaker, the Deputy Minority Whip is very much aware that we are laying the Bills today. I did the engagement even before the Order Paper was printed. Maybe my former Colleague and my former friend, now my brother, does not know the kind of engagement that we had.

Mr Speaker, I have now elevated him from a former friend to brother. So he should understand that I did engage the Caucus and he was not in the Chamber at the time. All I seek to do is to lay these Bills for the Finance

Committee to be able to consider the Bills. Nothing more, nothing less.

Mr Speaker, all what we are seeking to do is to relieve the burden on the ordinary Ghanaian. That is all what we are trying to do. So if you permit me, I will lay this Bill and you urge the Finance Committee to urgently consider this to relieve the burden on the ordinary Ghanaian.

Mr Speaker, thank you.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Leader, a few minutes ago we listened to the Deputy Minority Whip to the effect that at the time discussions were being held leading to the Order Paper Addendum 2, the Hon Majority Chief Whip, Rockson-Nelson Kwami Etse Dafeamekpor, was not even in the Chamber. This is a testimony of the fact that some engagement has been carried out. So I will plead with the House, let us make progress and lay these Papers to be referred to the Finance Committee.

Yes, Hon Minority Leader?

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, I want *Hansard* to always record the accurate facts. I am not saying that there was no engagement. I have not said that, and I would not be dishonest in saying that. What I am saying is that beyond the engagement, they should have given us copies and discussed the copies. When I entered the Chamber, the Deputy Whip informed me that they have had discussion with him, but he did not

have copies and he conceded on that, that indeed they did not share with us. When I asked, he said the Clerks-at-the-Table had copies. All my argument basically is on the fact that we did not get copies—*[Interruption]*—Now, we had to draw Mr Speaker's attention to his absence, for him to come, and when he comes too, he would not allow us to work. He should be quiet and allow us to work.

Mr Speaker, so we will proceed to cooperate with the Majority Side for these Bills to be laid. But for the Minister for Finance to say that he wants to do this to relieve the ordinary Ghanaian of the pain they are going through, what he is not telling the ordinary Ghanaian is that these taxes are what this Government is relying on to pay for fuel for Ministers, and to pay for expenses at the Presidency. Look at the amount they allocated to the Presidency. They have given in excess of 2 billion to the Presidency and they give only 15 million to the women in banking.

The 24-Hour Economy policy is not even ready and they say they want to relieve Ghanaians.

3.31 p.m.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, Order! Order!

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, I do not want the Minister for Finance to start his debates now. I do not want him to introduce any debates.

He is here to lay his Papers. He should lay them and go to the Ministry in peace. Because the jobs he promised the Ghanaian youth—He is telling us that this year there would be no employment. The youth who are in his party office, looking for jobs, what is he doing for them? *Wo adaadaa Ghanafoɔ papaapa.*

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, the item numbered A, has been presented and referred to the Finance Committee.

We now move to the item numbered B on the Order Paper *Addendum 2*—

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, please indulge me—*[Interruption]*—Mr Speaker, I know you said the referral is to the Finance Committee.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Order! Order!

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, the Majority Chief Whip also agreed to the fact that the Leadership of the Constitutional—Mr Speaker, these are laws that we are going to make and I know you are very passionate about that. But for us to make laws without including the Committee, that is for Constitutional—Minister for Finance, I do not think it will hurt, because these are laws that we are making. So, if the Leadership of this Committee is added to the Finance Committee, it would not be a problem.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Deputy Whip, I have been to several Committees as a Member of Parliament to help them make laws without those Bills being referred to us jointly. Hon Deputy Minority Leader, was I not at a meeting of the Committee on Gender, Children and Social Protection to help in the Affirmative Action Bill as a Ranking Member for Committee on Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs? It was not referred to the joint Committee. But I was there to help. There are instances where the Bill will not be referred to a joint Committee but myself and Hon Anyimadu-Antwi would be at that Committee level to be able to help the Committee.

In this House, by practice, Financial Bills are not jointly referred—

Mr Anyimadu-Antwi: — *rose* —

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon Anyimadu-Antwi.

Mr Kwame Anyimadu-Antwi: I think it is without prejudice that this application is made. I have the authority of the Chairman of the Committee on Constitutional and Legal, Hon Shaibu Mahama, that this application be made, that at least the Leadership of the Committee on Constitutional and Legal be added.

Mr Speaker, since you have the authority to make the referral to the Finance Committee as has always been done, and to add the Leadership of the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs, I think we are only formalising this. If we all agree— Because these are financial laws and I

agree. But I think the Leadership would assist the Finance Committee in coming out with good laws.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Anyimadu-Antwi, the point that I made is that by practice and convention, these Bills are not jointly referred. However, the Leadership of the Finance Committee is not prevented from joining the Finance Committee to work on this Bill. I have used you and I as an example. We have been to several Committees to help them without the Bill being jointly referred.

Mr Anyimadu-Antwi: But let me remind you that with the Affirmative Action, it was formally referred to the Committee on Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs. My style is not to join Committee meetings when formally I am not formally invited.

Mr Speaker, if you agree with me that what we are doing is to assist and make sure that the right things are done, I am only asking that this be made formal—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, let us not belabor this point. The Bill is referred to the Finance Committee for consideration and reports.

The Item numbered (b), on *Order Paper Addendum 2*.

BILL — FIRST READING

Ghana Infrastructure Investment Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2025

AN ACT to amend the Ghana Infrastructure Investment Fund Act 2014, (Act 877), to remove the Annual

Budget funding amount as a source of funding for the Fund.

Presented by the Minister for Finance (Dr Cassiel Ato Baah Forson). Read the First time; referred to the Finance Committee.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: The item numbered C, on the Order Paper Addendum 2.

BILL — FIRST READING

Revenue Administration (Amendment) Bill, 2025

AN ACT to amend the Revenue Administration Act 2016, (Act 915), to reduce the percentage of the total revenue that is set aside by the Minister in the Ghana Revenue Authority January Refund Account and provide for related matters.

Presented by the Minister for Finance (Dr Cassiel Ato Baah Forson). Read the First time; referred to the Finance Committee.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, we move to the item numbered (e).

BILL — FIRST READING

Emissions Levy (Repeal) Bill, 2025

AN ACT to repeal the Emissions Levy Act 2023, (Act 1112) and to provide for related matter.

Presented by the Minister for Finance (Dr Cassiel Ato Baah

Forson). Read the First time; referred to the Finance Committee.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, we move to the item numbered (f) on the Order Paper Addendum 2.

BILL — FIRST READING

Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2025

AN ACT to amend the Income Tax Act 2015, (Act 896), to remove the withholding on lottery winning, remove withholding tax on purchases of unprocessed gold and provide for other related matters.

Presented by the Minister for Finance (Dr Cassiel Ato Baah Forson). Read the First time; referred to the Finance Committee.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, we move to the item numbered (g) on the Order Paper Addendum 2.

BILL — FIRST READING

Growth and Sustainability Levy (Amendment) Bill, 2025

AN ACT to amend the Growth and Sustainability Act 2023, (Act 1095), to extend sunset Clause to 2028, increase the rates of levy from 1 per cent to 3 per cent and to provide for other related matters.

Presented by the Minister for Finance (Dr Cassiel Ato Baah Forson). Read the First time; referred to the Finance Committee.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, we move to the item numbered (h) on Order Paper *Addendum 2*.

BILL — FIRST READING

Earmarked Funds Capping and Realignment (Amendment) Bill, 2025

AN ACT to amend Earmarked Funds Capping and Realignment Act 2017, (Act 947) by expunging the National Health Insurance Fund, Ghana Education Trust Fund, Road Fund, transfers to Ghana National Corporation from petroleum revenue, Mineral Income Investment Fund, Ghana Infrastructure Investment Fund from the schedule and to provide for related matters

Presented by the Minister for Finance (Dr Cassiel Ato Baah Forson). Read the First time; referred to the Finance Committee.

3.41 p.m.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon First Deputy Minority Whip?

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, I rise under Standing Order 163 (3) and with your permission I read:

“After the presentation of a Bill, a Member may ask the Sponsor to offer a short explanatory statement on the Bill and the Sponsor shall comply.”

Mr Speaker, if you look at Order Paper *Addendum* item numbered f, “Income Tax Amendment Bill, 2025”, can the Hon Minister offer a bit of explanation or background to this? This is because when the Minister for Finance was reading the Budget Statement and I think in—I do not know whether it is paragraph 142, where he was talking about the Bills—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon First Deputy Minority Whip, are you requesting the Minister to make a brief statement about the Bill that is laid? Which particular one is it? Because the last one laid is Earmarked Funds Capping and Realignment (Amendment) Bill, 2025. Is that what you are seeking the Minister to give a brief on?

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, probably you did not get me right. After referring to the specific Order, I said item numbered F on Order Paper *Addendum*, that is the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2025. When the Clerk-at-Table was reading it loud, they talked about the 10 per cent withholding tax on winning of lotteries and other so I wanted you to—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: I would then proceed to give the floor to the Minister for Finance. Minister for Finance, just give a brief statement on the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

Dr Forson: Mr Speaker, the Amendment before us is seeking to remove the withholding tax on bet winnings. Mr Speaker, as part of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) Manifesto, we promised to remove 10 per cent withholding tax that was imposed by the previous administration and that collection began in August 2023.

What we are seeking to do is to remove the 10 per cent withholding tax on all bet winnings as promised as part of our Manifesto. Mr Speaker, aside that, the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2025 is seeking to remove the 1.5 per cent withholding tax on all unprocessed gold from small scale mining. That is what the Income Tax (Amendment) Bill is seeking to do. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, I just want to—Just the same Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2025. I want to refer the Minister to his Budget Statement. He stated that, and I quote “we will abolish the 10 per cent withholding tax on winnings from lottery, also known as the “Betting Tax”.”. Is it the same thing or is there any difference between that and the Electronic one, also known as betting tax?

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon First Deputy Minority Whip, you referred us to Standing Order 163. Is that not so? Read Standing Order 163 for us to know what is expected of the Minister, whether he should be

answering questions at this stage or he should make a brief statement.

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, as I referred you to the Order 163(3), it states that “After the presentation of a Bill, a Member may ask the Sponsor to offer a short explanatory statement on the Bill and the Sponsor shall comply.”. Therefore, I was asking him because in his Budget Statement he said he is abolishing 10 per cent withholding tax on lottery winnings, which has never been implemented in any way. So, is it different from the electronic betting tax?

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Habib Iddrisu, that is why I am engaging you to the effect that the Standing Order is giving the authority to a Member to ask the Minister, after the presentation to give an explanatory statement, which you did and the Minister has given you the explanatory statement. That ends it. Hon Members, I said several times that when a procedure is set down for a right to be exercised, it is that procedure that we will follow in exercising the right.

The very Order that you stood on was very clear to the effect that if a Member is desirous, he can ask the Minister upon presentation to give an explanatory statement. When that right has been exercised and the Minister has given the explanatory statement, it does not open it up for questions.

Yes, Hon Minority Leader?

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, we know you have a superior understanding of the law and I appreciate it. What I think the Member wanted to know was that the explanatory statement should have taken root from what the Minister himself said in his Budget Statement. Mr Speaker, yes, he has a right to give an explanatory statement, but that should not be something unbeknown to this House. All that the First Deputy Minority Whip is saying is that in the Minister's Budget Statement, he made some commitment and true to it, he has come under item numbered F, Income Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

So, in giving us an explanatory statement, the First Deputy Minority Whip's legitimate expectation is to the effect that what the Minister has said in the Budget Statement will be the basis for that explanation. He cannot come to this House and tell us something new.

Mr Speaker, you know Dr Forson was once a Leader in this House and he knows that when we were working together, there was no way I said anything outside of the records. He said he did not say so. Let me refer him to his Statement. Paragraph 141 - "Mr Speaker, we will abolish the 10 per cent withholding tax on winning from lottery, otherwise known as the "Betting Tax".". *[Interruption]*

Mr Speaker, this is a House of Debates.

3.51 p.m.

—*[Uproar]*—Mr Speaker, this is a House of debates, please.

Mr Speaker, this is a House of debates; a Member must patiently listen, so that if they are opposed to my views, they rise from their seat where they belong, then they oppose me.

Mr Speaker, so the First Deputy Minority Whip is not asking the Minister a question, neither is he demanding something from the Minister outside of what the Minister has said. When we are enacting a law, we bring a Bill; there is always this memorandum that gives a background to the Bill. Mr Speaker, what is the background to this item numbered (f)? The background to it is that there was a certain tax by the previous Government, which tax was implemented.

Mr Speaker, we can do the propaganda out there. I understand. As politicians, we can do what we want to do, but when it comes to the facts, we cannot depart from them. The question is, was this particular tax that the Hon Minister is seeking to amend ever implemented? The very tax that he put in his Budget Statement, I want to know. So, the First Deputy Minority Whip is only asking the Hon Minister to explain, and in explaining, the Minister cannot go outside of what he has already told this House. That is his contention.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Leader, I would plead with the House, particularly the senior Members of the House, that because of the attrition rate, we have a lot of new Members, and there is a need for us to carry them along procedurally. We know, as a fact, that upon presentation of a Bill or Paper, if the Member or the Minister presenting the Paper is desirous of giving a brief explanation, he can do so, or a Member may request that explanation in line with Standing Order 163.

The Hon First Deputy Minority Whip has exercised the option to request the Minister to give that brief explanation. Hon Members, there is a difference between that explanation and a debate of the Bill at Second Reading. When a Bill is introduced and referred to the Committee, just like what we have done, the Committee would look at the Bill, consider it, write a Report, and they would programme the Bill for Second Reading.

It is at the Second Reading stage that the memorandum accompanying the Bill, sets out the principle, the rationale behind the Bill, and the mischief that the Bill seeks to cure. It is at that stage that the Bill would be debated. It is not at the introduction of the Bill that we do what we are seeking to do. At that particular level, you can raise all the necessary issues, but this one is just on introduction.

So, whatever brief explanation that the Minister has given, I so rule that it

satisfies the requirement under Order 163 of our own Standing Orders.

Hon Members, let us make progress. [*Hear! Hear!*]

Hon Members, let us come back to the item numbered 7, Statements. We have admitted a Statement on the Ramadan fasting by Prof Hamza Adam, Member of Parliament for Kumbungu.

Hon Habib Iddrisu, you can go ahead and accuse me for doing the bidding of the Front Bench of the Majority.

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, you know I have utmost respect for you; I would never say that. I would not say that. Mr Speaker, I just—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member for Kumbungu, you have the floor.

Hon Members, the Second Deputy Speaker to take the Chair.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin — *rose*
—

Prof Hamza Adam: Thank you for the opportunity, Mr Speaker, to make this important—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member for Kumbungu, hold it.

Yes, Hon Minority Leader?

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, with respect, normally when you rule, a Member is supposed to rise to extend courtesy. The First Deputy Minority Whip was on his feet to extend courtesy. Mr Speaker, all you have are the five of us on both Sides. So, please, give a smile; let us exchange pleasantries. There is no way Hon Habib Iddrisu would undermine you. Mr Speaker, if you say that he should go ahead and accuse you—He got up to thank you that as the Chair pleases because you had ruled. He was not coming to attack you.

Mr Speaker, we are in this together, and if he is your Leader, and there are Backbenchers on both Sides and it is like, go ahead and accuse me, Mr Speaker, that one, I would plead with you.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much, Hon Minority Leader.

Hon Member for Kumbungu, you have the floor.

The Second Deputy Speaker to take the Chair.

3.58 p.m. — [MR SECOND DEPUTY SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR]

Prof Hamza Adam: Mr Speaker, thank you so much for the opportunity to read this important Statement. *A'uduh billahi min ash-shaytaan-ir-rajeeem*, in the name of Allah, the most gracious, the most merciful —[Pause]

Mr Speaker, it is with great pleasure—[Pause]

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, the practice has always been that the Member must share his Statement. The Speaker ruled on this matter that when a Statement is admitted, the Hon Member must share sufficient copies with Colleagues. Mr Speaker, let us not be departing from our practices and conventions. He is now sharing, and we do not have copies. How do we make meaningful comments on this?

Mr Speaker, secondly, if you count the Majority Side of this House now, all their seats are empty. Yes, this is a house of records. We want to constantly remind them that they are making this a ceremonial Chamber—[An Hon Member: Look at your back.]—It does not matter. They only come to this Chamber on ceremonial days. They are less than 30 in this Chamber.

Currently, they are less than 30. They cannot be using the Jubilee House as their office. This is the Chamber of Parliament. They are always moving to the Jubilee House. The time has come for them to respect their Whips—[Uproar]—

4.01 p.m.

No, Mr Speaker, they always want their Chief Whip to be chasing them

before they come to the Chamber. They always want their leaders to chase them. Why are they at the Jubilee House? They were first elected as Members of Parliament.

Mr Speaker, the Majority Side must come into this Chamber. We are going to raise quorum. They must come and work. — [*Uproar*] — Yes, because they want to go home. Look at all their empty seats — [*Uproar*] —

Mr Speaker, they do come here claiming that they are 187, yet, they enter this Chamber with 30 to 40 Members. On Tuesday, I observed something very disappointing; Hon Doyoe had to be chasing people to sign. Why do they make the work of their Leaders difficult? They do not come to work. Must they always be whipped before they enter the Chamber to do their Parliamentary work? Mr Speaker, they are currently 41. They are not even up to 50—[*Interruption*] — They are 41 out of 187— [*Uproar*] —.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Very well, Leader.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: This is a house of record. Our rules and the Constitution must be respected. Mr Speaker, they came into office promising jobs — [*Uproar*] — Yet, they are not giving jobs. Mr Speaker, there is a net freeze on employment. Mr Speaker, their own so-called 24-Hour Economy policy did not find space in the Budget.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Leader?

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: These are matters that must engage their attention —

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Leader, let me listen and come back to you.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Let me conclude so that he comes in.

Mr Speaker, besides, they do not come into this Chamber. They are chasing for board appointments. The board appointments are for non-MPs; those who did not get the opportunity to be MP. They want to be boards chairmen. They are chasing for boards — [*Uproar*]— Mr Speaker, no MP should be on a board — [*Uproar*] — Yes, that is NPP — [*Uproar*] —

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, please, we must at any point in time listen to one person. So, you let him talk and after that I will give you the opportunity.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: After that, their Chief Whip will also talk. Mr Speaker, when we were in Government, they criticised MPs who were serving on boards. Today, as Members of Parliament on the Majority Side, their job is to come to the Chamber and work, not to be at the Jubilee House chasing— Saying that if they did not get ministerial appointments, they should be considered for a board. They are not

going to serve on a board — [*Uproar*]

Mr Speaker, there are four more deputy ministerial nominees to be done. Meanwhile, we have prominent women in this Chamber who have been denied the opportunity to serve in Government — [*Uproar*] —

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Leader?

Osashen Afenyo-Markin: What has happened to the Affirmative Action?

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Leader, thank you.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, I am concluding. What has happened to the Affirmative Action? They only appointed 10 per cent women into Government. Mr Speaker, I can mention names of Hon Members who worked so hard and today they have been left dejected, depressed and frustrated.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Leader, thank you.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: I thank you, Mr Speaker. The Majority Chief Whip, if he so desires, can respond to me. If he responds to me and there is a right of reply, I will exercise that right.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Majority Chief Whip, can I beg you to— Well, I do not know, I am just saying, I want to beg him so that I can

listen to Prof Hamza. Other than that, I will give the floor to him.

Some Hon Members: No!

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Fine. Hon Dafeamekpor, the floor is yours.

Mr Dafeamekpor: Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity. Mr Speaker, this House, as Leaders, we assist you to manage the House and that management of the House also goes to the numbers. As we speak, Committees have just been established, subject to some one or two further amendments. The Leadership of the Committees are proactive. They are meeting to consider programmes for the Session and the Meeting. About six Committees met today. Some are still in session.

Secondly, I deny the allegation that our Side does not attend to proceedings. Indeed, we do. Mr Speaker, you would notice that the Minority Leader is also depleted — [*Uproar*] — Minority Leader, please, may you listen to me in some silence. Mr Speaker, because his *cliché* is that this House is a house of record, so he wants everything to be borne by the records. Let the records bear that today, as we speak, 63 of his Members have attended to proceedings today and have signed the attendance sheet. On our Side, 165 have attended to proceedings and have signed. Some Committees are as many as 25. Some are 17 on the average.

So, Mr Speaker, if we have five or six of those Committees meetings, then we are talking about 70 Members who may not be present on the Floor. So, it is important that as a Leader, he goes slow on some of these matters. This is about the third time that he has raised the matter since appearing on the Floor. He has been away for some time. For the greater part of today, he was not here, but as soon as he came, he started doing politics of the numbers. I can grant him that, but he has done enough, so he should leave it.

Mr Speaker, thirdly, we are not ceremonial attendants to the proceedings of Parliament. We attend to do Business. So, it is also not true that my Side, that my back, my Members are trooping to the Flagstaff House for appointments or board appointments. It is also not correct.

4.11 p.m.

It is also not true that the Members on my Side are trooping to the Flagstaff House for appointments or board appointments. It is also not correct. So let the record not reflect that my Members are not here because they are looking for appointments onto boards or an opportunity to chair boards. We deny that.

Mr Speaker, it is also not accurate that His Excellency John Dramani Mahama has appointed only 10 per cent of women under his Government. Finally, Mr Speaker, it is also not accurate that the four outstanding Ministers of State, who are supposed to be appointed, are suffering some delay

because of some other matter. It is not true. The power to appoint is inherent in His Excellency John Dramani Mahama. He may do so with alacrity and he will do it, Mr Speaker.

With these words, Mr Speaker, may I urge my Brother to allow us to take the two Statements that we have agreed to take. And, let the record also reflect that the current Minority Leader was a famous board chairman of two very important state institutions. So, we want to urge him that he should allow some of these matters to lie low. I thank you for the opportunity.

Prof Hamza Adam: Thank you so much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to make this important Statement—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, having yielded the floor to you. You can now take the floor.

STATEMENT

Ramadan (Fasting)

Prof Hamza Adam (NDC — Kumbungu): I am guided, Mr Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity.

In the name of Allah, the most gracious, the most merciful. Rt Hon Speaker, it is with great honour, gratitude and pleasure to be given this opportunity to make this important Statement on the sacred month of Ramadan, fasting.

Fasting is one of the five pillars of Islam and occurs in the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It entails abstaining from food, drink and sexual

relations from before the light of dawn until sunset. It is an obligation on all Muslims to fast during the fasting month, Ramadan, and those who are unable to fast due to ill health should give charity or fast to make up after Ramadan. Allah, the Most High, says in the Glorious Quran, "O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you that you may have God-consciousness". (Al-Baqarah)

Mr Speaker, fasting during the month of Ramadan is obligatory upon every Muslim, male or female, who fulfils the following conditions: To be mentally and physically fit. To have obtained the age of puberty and discretion, which is normally about 14. However, children under this age should be encouraged to practice. To be resident, (not to be travelling on a journey up to 50 miles or more. In the case of women, to be free from menses (hayd) or post-birth bleeding (nifas).

Mr Speaker, those who are exempted from fasting include the insane, children under the age of puberty, the elderly and chronically ill persons. For whom, fasting is unbearable. A person in this category is required to feed one poor person for every day he does not fast in Ramadan. Pregnant women and nursing mothers, who fear that fasting, may endanger the lives or health of their foetuses or babies. However, they are required to make up after Ramadan. People in the course of travelling, should make up for the days they do not fast later. Women during the period of

menstruation or post-childbirth confinement should make up for the days they do not fast later.

Mr Speaker, fasting is done in accordance with the practices of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessings be upon him) strongly recommended the following: to make the ninth meal (Suhur) close to the time of dawn prayer (Fajr) as possible. To break the fast as soon as one is sure that the sun has set. To say the prayer (du'aa') that the Prophet (may peace be upon him) used to say at the time of breaking his fast (Iftar). To avoid any act that is contradictory to fasting.

To do good deeds, especially observing special night prayers immediately after Isha' (tarawih), Qur'an recitation, remembering of Allah by his beautiful attributes and names (Zdikr), giving of charity among others. Abstaining from food, drink, smoking, and sexual intercourse with one's wife from dawn till sunset. Abstaining from evil tongue and actions. On the authority of Abu Huraira, the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said, "whoever does not give up forged speech and evil actions, Allah will not accept his fasting". (Bukhari, sawm 8, Edeb 51)

Mr Speaker, charity is one of the key things our beloved Prophet Muhammad (may peace be upon him) employed to create a balance between the able and the less privileged. Therefore, Muslims are encouraged to

intensify giving of charity during Ramadan. The Prophet says, “the best charity is given in Ramadan”. (Tirmidhi: Zakat, 28/663)

Mr Speaker, seeking blessings from the night of power (Laylatul-Qadr), in Ramadan is the most virtuous night in the year. Almighty Allah says in the Qur'an, “We have indeed revealed this message in the night of power and what will explain today what the night of power is. The night of power is better than a thousand months”. (Al-Qadr 97:1-3) It was narrated by Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “Whoever stays up and prays during Laylat Al-Qadr, with faith, and in the hope of reward in his previous sins, will be forgiven”.

To this end, every Muslim should strive and not miss the opportunity of obtaining multiple rewards in these days. It is highly recommended that all Muslims should draw nearer to Allah to get blessings of Laylat Al-Qadr in the last day of Ramadan.

Mr Speaker, I call on all Ghanaians to extend a supporting hand to our Muslims engaged in fasting by showing kindness, understanding, tolerance, and solidarity. May the Almighty Allah accept our Ramadan and grant all of us our heart's desires. I wish all Muslims a blessed Ramadan. May Allah bless us all.

I am most grateful, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Yes, let me go to the Hon Member for Ejura.

Alhaji Bawah Muhammed Braimah (NDC — Ejura Sekyeredumase): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, thank you for this opportunity and let me use this opportunity to wish all our Muslim brothers Ramadan Mubarak.

Ramadan or fasting is one of the pillars of Islam. Usually, it is always carried out in the ninth lunar month of every year, which is the Ramadan.

4.21 p.m.

As eloquently narrated by the maker of the Statement, Allah enjoins us in Surah Al-Baqarah chapter 2 verse 1, verse 18 to 3, verse 1 to 3 to fast in the month of Ramadan.

Ramadan has both spiritual and health benefits. Spiritual benefits in the sense that it is a time that one gets closer to Allah, and it is a time that, every day of the month, one is supposed to fast from dawn to night and also to be self-disciplined. Because if one set out and fast, there is nobody to check whether one is fasting or not, but the person himself has to be self-disciplined and ensure that, at least, he or she abides by the dictates of the religion.

There is no compulsion when one is not in a position to fast. There are avenues or ways that one can atone for not being able to fast. Like if one is on

a serious journey—But these days and modern age, I do not think those things still exist now. Because in this modern age, we travel in cars and in aeroplanes, and it was during the previous era that, if people are not able to journey on, let us say, automobiles, that they are exempted from fasting, but even with that, the person pays up immediately Ramadan finishes.

Also, lactating mothers and pregnant women are exempted from fasting. This is to ensure that, at least, it does not go against their health. Let me emphasise on the significance of the last 10 days of Ramadan. It is in the last 10 days that it is believed that we have the Night of Power, which is the *Laylat al-Qadr* where it is said that it is as more important than the rest of the nights in the year all around. And that is the day that it is found in the last 10 days.

Because no one knows the exact date, but, at least, it is between the odd dates: either the 21st, 23rd, 25th or 27th nights, so we are enjoined that, at least, in the last 10 days, we intensify our prayers and also ensure that, at least, we stay throughout the night and pray, so that we get the benefit of the Night of Power. It is also a month where every Muslim is enjoined to do a lot of good deeds and also give to charity. Islam is such that, at least, at the end of the fasting, which is when we have the *Eid al-Fitr*—Before the *Eid al-Fitr*, it is enjoined, at least, a day or at the dawn of *Eid al-Fitr*, we perform the *Zakat al-Fitr*, which is giving out of food to the needy, so that, at least, on

the day of the *Eid*, they can also have something to also feed on. So, if we look at—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Thank you.

Alhaji Braimah: Mr Speaker, in conclusion, I would like to say that Islam is not a religion of compulsion. It is a very flexible religion. It is as and when one is fit to do fasting that Allah enjoins you to do it. If one is not fit, there are prescriptions where one can atone for the days that he or she has not been able to fast.

Let me use this opportunity to, once again, wish our fellow Muslims the best of the season, which is Ramadan. May Allah accept our fasts, and may Allah forgive us our shortcomings.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, please, it is just indulgence I am craving from you. Let us keep the comments quite brief, so that we can indulge other Members. We equally have a lot of Statements here, so once I give you the floor, please, try and keep it brief.

Yes, Hon Member?

Alhaji Alhassan Kobina Ghansah (NDC — Asikuma/Odoben/Brakwa): Mr Speaker, thank you, for permitting me to contribute to the beautiful Statement by Prof Hamza Adam.

Mr Speaker, as Prof Adam rightly said, fasting in the month of Ramadan is observed by Muslims all over the

world, and it is compulsory to get involved. But Allah does not burden any soul beyond its capacity, and that was why Allah gave some exemptions to pregnant women, old age, and children under puberty age.

Mr Speaker, the significance of this fasting, as my Brother rightly said, has some spiritual and health benefits. The spiritual benefits include connecting to your Creator. All of us can observe that, during the month of Ramadan, we normally do away with the social vices that we engage in, only to do good deeds. It is gratifying to note that, in the month of Ramadan, Allah enjoins believers—That is why there is a word he used in the Holy Quran: *Yaa Ayuha Lazina Amanu*. Allah talks to believers to observe the fast.

The fast is observed for a fixed number of days: either 29 or 30, depending on the sighting of the moon and then ending it with a sighting of the moon in one's country. The health benefits are a lot, but if we read the Holy Quran, we come to a point that Allah says we should fast and if only we knew that there are benefits at the end of the fasting.

The health benefits include reduction in cholesterol, weight loss. It lowers your sugar level and a whole lot. It even takes off the risk of getting cancer, according to the Holy Quran and the commentary that goes with it. So, we enjoin every Muslim all over the world to try, as much as possible, to do some fasting and take part in the fasting in the month of Ramadan. So,

that we all enjoy the benefits that are accrued and highlighted by the Holy Quran.

Mr Speaker, it is also gratifying to note that as we exempt ourselves from food and drinks and sexual relations, we normally know the impact of exempting ourselves from food and drinks and, for that matter, it permits us to embark on charity, so that Allah gives us the blessings that goes with it.

4.31 p.m.

Mr Speaker, at the end of the entire fasting month, we attain righteousness. The underlying fact is that we fast to become righteous so we enjoin everyone to get involved to attain righteousness.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Once again, my appeal to you is that you should be very brief.

Mr Issah Attah (NDC — Sagnarigu): Mr Speaker, let me commend the maker of the Statement.

I would move away from the religious obligation that imposes on us to fast for a period of thirty days. Islam means total submission to the will of Allah. During the month of Ramadan one critical observation that is often observed across the globe, most especially Muslim-dominated communities or Islamic countries, is the respect for social norms, laws, and

reduction in crime rates because we tend to be holy for a period of one month. So, at that stage, you will not be seeing stealing, killings, and all other social vices. I think that it is a reflection we must observe as Muslims to know that this is the purpose of our creation; that is how God wants us to be. It should not just end when fasting is over.

We must redefine the notion out there or the perception about Muslim youth in terms of radicalism, in terms of most criminal activities. I think that Islam affords us the opportunity in periods like this to show the other side of ourselves.

It is also good in terms of economic welfare redistribution or income redistribution. That is the only time you see levels of inequality reducing because it is the best period for charity. Last year, I observed *Umrah* in Mecca, and what I observed was that on the way from Maghreb to one's hotel, one would see people sharing food, clothes and money. That is a period where income really flows from the rich to the poor in order to fulfill the Islamic Order.

And finally, I also want to join the call on every well-meaning Ghanaian, and not necessarily Muslims, to show love and solidarity, as we also do in periods of Easter, Christmas, and also the traditional religious performances.

On that note, I once again thank the maker of the Statement.

Dr Abdul-Khaliq Mohammed Sherif (NDC — Nanton): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I would want to thank the maker of the Statement and then also associate myself with the Statement made by Prof Hamza. I would say Ramadan Kareem to every Muslim around the globe.

Mr Speaker, we are blessed as a country. We have a country where Muslims and Christians live together in peace and harmony. We have a country where Muslims, Christians, and traditional believers believe that there is this one Ghana that we all belong to.

I remember my stay in Prempeh College as a first-year student. Prempeh College is a school that is being run by the Methodists and the Presbyterians, but in Prempeh College, I was amazed when it was time for fasting. Food was left behind for us as Muslims to fast at dawn and also to break our fast in the evening. In our diversity as a country lies our unity. And I must say that we continue to pray, even as we are in this month of Ramadan, that God will continue to bless this our homeland, Ghana, and make every Ghanaian—irrespective of religion, tribe or region where we are all coming from—understand that we are all human beings, we are all Ghanaians, and we must all work together for that better Ghana we are all looking for.

Again, Mr Speaker, I would also want to say that in Ramadan, even

though it is 30 days, it is usually divided into 10-10 days. So, for the first 10 days, we have always prayed for what? Blessings. We have prayed for the blessings of this very country of ours. Ghana is blessed. In this month of Ramadan, Ghana is blessed. The second 10 days is for forgiveness of sin. We pray all of us in here—We are humans; we are fallible. We pray to God for forgiveness of our sins. And the last 10 days is for us to pray against the hellfire. They tell us that this earth we are on, we are in transit. We are travelling; our final destination is somewhere else. And we pray that on the day that we start our final journey, we will all be found in heaven.

Mr Speaker, before I take my seat, I would want to remind all of us that fasting is not just about our spiritual well-being, but also the health aspect of it. I was amazed when I heard one Dr Suburu from the Tamale Teaching Hospital say that last year, 2024, we had about 100 cases of heart-related conditions reporting to the Tamale Teaching Hospital. Actually, worldwide, heart conditions claim about 19 million lives every year. What are the common conditions that predispose us to cardiovascular problems? Some of the common things have to do with our high levels of cholesterol; high levels of diabetes and hypertension. It is known by literature that once one is able to control their level of cholesterol, then it also controls one's risk of getting what we call the coronary heart disease. And fasting has been shown to decrease the

levels of those cholesterols and triglycerides.

There is an amazing thing that is coming up again, and it has been reported in the American College of Cancer, that in animals, they are noticing that intermittent fasting is increasing their susceptibility to the chemotherapy that is being given to these particular animals. So, in essence, what it means is that if we try this with humans in the future, it is possible that with intermittent fasting, if someone is a cancer patient, their risk or the toxicity that is related with them taking chemotherapy may come down.

Again, for those of us who want to lose weight, the literature is suggesting that if one has about 12 hours of intermittent fasting in about three months, one can lose about nine per cent of their weight.

So, I would say all in one, that Ramadan Kareem to everyone. Fasting is for the spiritual well-being of all of us. It is also for our health and well-being.

We wish all Muslims around the globe Ramadan Kareem. We also want to solidarise with our people in Palestine, that in fasting, we are with them.

May Allah be with us. *As-salamu alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh.*

Mr John Darko — *rose* —

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon John Darko you are not a Muslim, let me give it to Dr Kabiru Mahama.

Mr Darko: Mr Speaker, there are a lot of Muslims in my Constituency, the regional Imam resides in my Constituency.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Then almost everybody here will have something to say.

Dr Mahama, let us hear you.

Dr Abdul Kabiru Tiah Mahama: Thank you for the opportunity.

I was in a Committee meeting but I went to my office and I realised that this topic was being discussed and I decided to rush in.

I do it in solemn belief that fasting is prescribed by the religion. And if you read the Quran, chapter 2, verse 183, it clearly says that fasting is prescribed for you so that you may give thoughts and remember Allah.

4.41 p.m.

Mr Speaker, the previous contributors have highlighted the importance of fasting, which has been scientifically proven that irrespective of one's faith, once in a while, it is important that they fast for the health of their body, mind and soul. But the spirituality of fasting is not just to go hungry or starve one's self. One is also

required to starve themselves of their sight, hearing, and thoughts.

During Ramadan, there are restrictions as to what one can watch, hear, and as to what they can think of because it all goes into the quality of one's fasting. Those who do not fast, only think of fasting as though we go hungry for the whole day, but it is not just the hunger and the thirst, but what we see, hear, and watch all go into the quality of our fasting.

And I actually urge all of us that— In fact, it is a month of compassion. In other words, we learn to be tolerant and show empathy towards one another. It is a month that we are required to give more alms. Almsgiving is actually an important part of this month.

Mr Speaker, apart from that it shows sacrifice. Sacrifice is a virtue, not just for the individual, but for the nation. The value or virtue of being sacrificial in one's life. These are the virtues of fasting, and we can go on and on with the thesis of the spiritual, health and economic importance of fasting.

Mr Speaker, what is important that we need to know is that even if one does not fast or does not have the wherewithal or the strength to fast, or one's health conditions are not so good for them to fast, there are ways one can atone for it. I listened to my senior Brother mention some of those ways. But more importantly, those of us who have people who are not so well-to-do in our community, this is the month they need to extend a hand of support to people in those areas.

Mr Speaker, I join my Colleague to say, *Eid Mubarak!* Happy Ramadan to the people of Walewale, to the people of Ghana, and the world at large.

Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Thank you very much—

Dr Mahama: But one other thing is that, Mr Speaker, I have not been addressed by my title; I am also an Alhaji and I want— *[Interruption]* — Of course, it is a title and the *Hansard* has been capturing it. Mr Speaker, it is a title I would want to equally be alluded. Some of these people have not gone to Hajj, so they do not know what it means to sacrifice to go to Hajj. So, Alhaji Dr Kabiru is the right title to call me by.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.
[Hear! Hear!]

Mr Shaib — rose —

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Second Deputy Minority Whip, let me take the second Statement.

The Statement is in the name of Hon Collins Adomako-Mensah and it is on the celebration of the World Kidney Day. Today marks the day, so we should not allow this day to pass without talking about the kidney.

So, Hon Member, you have the floor now.

STATEMENT

Celebration of World Kidney Day, 2025

Mr Collins Adomako-Mensah (NPP — Afigya Kwabre North): Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity.

Before I make my Statement, let me congratulate Parliament. This morning, Parliament held a forum to mark the World Kidney Day. It brought together experts from the Ghana Kidney Association and other medical experts. Our Deputy Clerk was there to support the programme. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Parliament for bringing the very important topic on kidney to the fore.

Mr Speaker, I thank you once again for this opportunity to deliver a Statement in this House as the world celebrates World Kidney Day today, 13th March, 2025. World Kidney Day is celebrated globally to raise awareness of the importance of kidneys to our overall health, and to reduce the frequency and impact of kidney diseases and its associated health problems worldwide on us. The theme for this year's celebration is, "Are Your Kidneys OK? Detect early, protect kidney health".

Normally, everyone is born with two kidneys, except in certain situations where people are born with just one. The kidney is a bean-shaped organ located just below the rib cage with one on each side of our spine. The primary function of the kidneys is to

remove toxins and waste products from the blood through the formation of urine.

Additionally, the kidneys control blood pressure, activate vitamin D from the sun in the body, regulates water and electrolyte balance, and produces a hormone called erythropoietin which is important in the formation of red blood cells in the body. The kidneys are extremely essential to our overall health. Any deviation from their functions causes serious problems for the individual.

Kidney diseases, especially chronic kidney disease (CKD) is one of the leading causes of death and disability in the world. More than 10 per cent of the global population are affected by chronic kidney disease. The prevalence rate of CKD in Ghana is about 13 per cent. This means that 13 people out of every 100 Ghanaians we sampled have CKD.

Mr Speaker, the good news is that kidney disease is preventable. Hypertension, which is high blood pressure, and diabetes are the two main causes of chronic kidney disease. These two diseases account for about 70 per cent of all CKD cases in the world (Alexander et al., 2015). Other factors which increase a person's risk for CKD include obesity, heart diseases, smoking, alcoholism, abuse of certain medications, herbal concoctions, severe dehydration, and some infections such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Hepatitis B and C. The only treatment

options available for people diagnosed of chronic kidney disease are medical management, dialysis and kidney transplant.

Mr Speaker, there are several challenges healthcare professionals and patients face in the management of CKD in Ghana. They include

High cost of dialysis.

Dialysis is the main treatment option for CKD patients in Ghana. Unfortunately, many of the people who need dialysis to survive cannot afford it, leading to premature death. Majority of such people are young people between the ages of 20 and 50 years. The previous New Patriotic Party (NPP) Government, under H. E. Nana Akufo-Addo, through the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA), introduced free dialysis treatment for Ghanaians in about 20 dialysis centres. This is commendable and should be sustained. This programme should be expanded to include all dialysis centres in the 16 regions of the country.

Inequitable distribution of dialysis centres

Mr Speaker, nearly half of the 16 regions in Ghana do not have dialysis centres. Even in regions with dialysis centres, majority of them belong to private people and are located in the regional capitals. This situation forces the patients to travel longer distances to access dialysis.

Uncontrolled advertisement and sale of certain herbal concoctions

The proliferation and advertisement of herbal concoctions on our mainstream media and social media platforms is of great concern. The use of herbal concoctions is said to account for about 30-35 per cent of all cases of acute kidney failure in Africa (Akpan and Ekrikpo, 2015).

High cost of kidney transplant and legislature

The expensive nature of kidney transplant in Ghana serves as a hindrance to many who may be willing to have this treatment. The average cost of transplant is about US\$25,000. In addition, the lack of legislation on organ transplant is the reason very few kidney-transplant cases have been done in Ghana.

Inadequate number of trained nephrologists and nephrology nurses across the country

There needs to be an improvement in the number of nephrologist and nephrology nurses in Ghana. Apart from the teaching hospitals, most of our health facilities do not have specialists to take care of people with chronic kidney disease.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, let me share the following recommendations. The current Government should continue the free dialysis programme the previous Government started. The programme should be expanded to

include all patients receiving dialysis, both inpatients and outpatients, in all NHIS accredited centres.

In addition, the NHIA should increase the amount they pay per session because the current GH¢491 per session is not adequate to pay for the consumables as well as maintain the machines.

Parliament should facilitate the drafting and passage of a legislation for organ transplantation in Ghana. This will enable the kidney surgeons to do more transplants in Ghana.

There should be a conscious effort to increase the number of dialysis centres and dialysis machines in Ghana. Every regional and district hospital must have a functional dialysis centre with qualified doctors and nurses. This will bring dialysis treatment closer to the patients and save them from the long travels which worsens their plight.

4.51 p.m.

The Food and Drugs Authority should pay attention to the proliferation of herbal concoctions and their advertisement on radio and TV.

Government through the Scholarship Secretariat should provide funding for doctors, nurses, and other health professionals to train and specialise in kidney care so that we will have qualified specialists to attend to our citizens.

We must take regular medical checkup very seriously. Kidney function check should be added to the list of routine medical checkups we do every year.

Finally, health education on the prevention of kidney disease should be intensified especially as the world celebrates World Kidney Day today. Education on simple steps such as drinking enough water, exercise, eating healthy diet, reducing salt intake, controlling blood pressure and diabetes among others will go a long way to save many.

Mr Speaker, all of us are at risk of kidney disease. I therefore call upon the entire House to join the world in celebrating World Kidney Day 2025 and encourage us all to take good care of our kidneys.

The theme once again is “Are Your Kidneys OK? Detect early, protect kidney health.” Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Several Hon Members—*rose*—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Once again, the time—So, if you go beyond five minutes, I will cut you short. Let me begin with Hon Dr Sandaare.

Dr Sebastian Ngmenenso Sandaare (NDC — Daffiama/Bussie/Issa): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity. I commend Hon Collins Adomako-Mensah, for making this Statement on this important day, World

Kidney Day with the theme “Are your Kidneys, okay? Detect early, Protect kidney health”.

Mr Speaker, every year, the second Thursday of March is celebrated to create awareness on the need for us to take good care of our kidneys as stated by the maker of the Statement.

Mr Speaker, in Africa and in Ghana, we are more at risk and the disease affects more of the youth between 20 to 50 years, which is the productive age. This means that we have to really work hard to intervene to save our youth as compared to the elderly that are maybe more than 60 years in the developed world.

Mr Speaker, I will just emphasise on one factor and leave for others to contribute. Because all of us are at risk, individually, we should ensure that we check on our health. At least every year one can check his health status and kidney status, once. Once a person celebrates his birthday, he can also check his kidney health.

I want to commend Parliament, the staff and the medical director, because this morning they organised, a programme and presentation that brought together the Kidney Association of Ghana, professors and others. We are grateful to them for being here. This whole week they were checking on the kidney status of Members of Parliament and the staff.

What was stressed was that as Parliamentarians, we should ensure that there is legislation that will look at

organ transplant in this country which will help us in managing kidney failures for those suffering from chronic kidney failure.

So, in conclusion, let us intensify education. Let us check on our kidney status and ensure that we detect problems early so that we can protect the health of our kidneys. I thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Yes, let me go to the Hon Member for New Juaben.

Mr Michael Baafi Okyere (NPP — New Juaben): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I want to commend the maker of this wonderful Statement for a thorough and well-researched Statement.

Mr Speaker, it will interest you to note that kidney disease is becoming a serious disease in this country, and now, it is also one of the diseases that is becoming so fearful in society. Why am I saying that? A lot of people are being diagnosed of kidney diseases now. One of the key things that I suspect we are not doing right when we go for checkups is conventionally, we only focus on the normal checkup that we do at the hospitals without focusing so much attention on kidney checkups. Specifically, doing what we call the split kidney functioning test. I do not know, but I stand corrected, whether we have a machine like that in this country, but I would like to encourage as many MPs seated here this afternoon to take interest in split kidney

functioning tests, not the normal kidney functioning test.

When we go to the hospital, we do the normal kidney test, which will give us the function in numbers. But there is a need for us to also look out for the split kidney functioning test to know the percentages of our kidneys and how they function, so that we know whether the right kidney is supporting us well or is killing us. That is one of the things that we are not doing over time because our interest now is only about the numbers, the kidney tests, which is not enough.

So, we have to also go further by looking at the functioning in percentages, whether the right kidney is giving maybe 30 per cent or 50 percent. This will help one know whether he is developing a kidney problem. So, Mr Speaker, I want to emphasise that there is a need for us to take our check-ups seriously, especially the kidney function check-ups.

I also want to reiterate the fact that there is a need for us to have a lot of dialysis centres, but because government does not have enough funds to purchase dialysis machines, most of the medical facilities in the country do not have dialysis machines, but good news is in now. The good news is that there are certain companies that are refurbishing slightly used dialysis machines to also take care of other facilities like referral hospitals in the regions.

I guess there is a need for us to take interest in that. So, I want to push, maybe, for Mr Speaker to direct that the Ministry of Health to take interest in trying to acquire slightly used dialysis machines that can easily be refurbished. This is so that we can take these machines to the small medical centres and even the regional hospitals to also cater for those who have kidney problems.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, I would like to say without any fear of doubt that there is a need for us to take our kidneys seriously. It is killing a lot of people in this country, especially young men and women. Young men who believe that they cannot function well sexually unless they take concoctions.

5.01 p.m.

It has become a convention or a practice in this country where people think—Not people like me, because we are already fit. We do not need concoctions to perform. But a lot of young people in this country have resorted to the usage of concoctions. These concoctions are killing us and giving us kidney problems. So please, those in the Majority, especially the Second Deputy Majority Whip, the Member of Parliament for Bia East—*[Laughter]*

Mr Speaker, you have to caution the Second Deputy Majority Whip to stop using concoctions to be able to perform his duties right. *[Laughter]*

On this note, I thank you for the opportunity.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr Kofi Arko Nokoe (NDC — Evalue-Ajomoro-Gwira): Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity.

First of all, I want to commend my Colleague, the Hon Member for a wonderful Statement.

Mr Speaker, the rate at which kidney disease is becoming a problem makes it so scary. But then, we have to look at other factors. This is a country where vegetable cultivation is normally close to sewage areas. It is only in this country that we get to see such things. I have always wondered where we learnt that as a nation from. That where we have gutters and sewage drains, that is where we cultivate vegetables. And that is why mostly when one is eating cabbage, one gets to bite into stones and even the smell of it—So I think, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture must have a way to educate people to understand that it is not right. It is just not right. I can say for a fact that most of these companies in the upstream sector mostly purchase their vegetables from Côte d'Ivoire because of this practice.

Mr Speaker, also, we are in a country where a farmer can just walk into a chemical shop and just buy any pesticide or insecticide, and apply it anyhow. It is so scary. It is just like giving an ammunition to somebody to spray and kill people. So, there is a need for us to sensitise Ghanaians to understand that one cannot just be

applying a fertiliser, an insecticide, and a pesticide anyhow.

And last but not least, has to do with—To add to what my Colleague said—Herbal products. We have people just mixing stuff and promoting it. We have herbal sellers who can sit on the radio and speak for hours. They speak more than even medical doctors who have been trained for seven years. They come up with concoctions which they advertise to solve all problems without better research and investigations. Mr Speaker, all these things are contributing factors to the rise of kidney diseases. So, Hon Member, this is a wake-up call to all of us. Because when we watch TV, we see young people full of life—And this is a terminal disease. I have been sponsoring one student from my Constituency who is in a nursing college. She went to the hospital and she was told that she had issues with her kidney. From scratch, she was virtually dying because she knew where she was heading to.

So, Hon Member, this is a wake-up call for all of us because there are a lot of factors which are contributing to this rise in kidney diseases. If we do not, it will be a problem.

Mr Speaker, thank you once again.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Yes, let me go to the pharmacist. Yes, Dr Fred Asamoah.

Dr Fred Kyei Asamoah (NPP — Offinso North): Mr Speaker, thank you very much. And let me also thank the maker of the Statement that deals with kidney and its prevention.

Mr Speaker, kidney is an issue that we do not want to joke with. Every single one of us. Because if we do not take care, it would determine how much we can drink and how much we can take in. One of the issues I want to talk about is prevention. Because in the pharmacy setting, one of the miserable patients that we see when we are taking care of people are kidney patients. Because sometimes, they will come and we see that their veins are protruded and they are so miserable. There are a number of drugs they have to take within a day to survive. And even when it gets to transplant, the number of drugs they need to take in order to prevent rejection of organ is serious.

So, one would want to focus on prevention, prevention, prevention. And one can only prevent if one can have good education for kidney issues. Why? Because we know alcohol can cause kidney issues. We know exercise can cause kidney issues. And we know drugs can also lead to kidney diseases.

Hon Speaker, we are in a country that—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Did I hear that exercise also leads to—

Dr Asamoah: Lack of exercise.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: You said lack of exercise.

Dr Asamoah: Lack of exercise.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: All right.

Dr Asamoah: Mr Speaker, we have notable drugs like what we call non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), typical among them are ibuprofen, and diclofenac. People can just walk into any pharmacy and buy them. And we are in a country that is not paying much attention to the work of pharmacists. We have a lot of pharmacies that have been trained, but we are not employing them. So, any person can walk into a pharmacy, buy any drug, and take them, not paying attention to the side effects. We have a lot of people buying antibiotics anytime. But a lot of antibiotics can also lead to kidney disease. We have a lot of our young ones abusing opioids. Typical among them is the one that we talked about in this House that is coming on our markets; whether licenced or unlicensed. We have our young ones patronising them without any caution. These are things that are leading to kidney disease that we are not paying attention to. But it does happen anyway. When it happens, what are we doing as a country to make sure we take care of those who have kidney disease?

Mr Speaker, per the Abuja Declaration—And we will keep repeating it in this hallowed Chamber—We are supposed to allocate 15 per cent of our national

Budget towards health because we need to have enough centres.

The proposer of the Statement talked about regional centres. Mr Speaker, I will go further to district centres because we need to bring healthcare closer to the people so that people can have access to treatment.

Mr Speaker, in Ghana, if one is looking at our statistics, it is about 0.44 per million as far as nephrologists are concerned, as compared to the international average of 1.6 for low-income countries. So, if Ghana is 0.44 per cent, that is woefully inadequate. That means we have to spend enough resources to train as many as we can to support the healthcare system so that we can take care of our kidney patients.

5.11 p.m.

In conclusion, I want to add that we need to expand infrastructure, and in expanding infrastructure, Mr Speaker, we have to support the local pharmaceutical industry to start producing dialysis fluids within our country because we are importing them, but if we can start producing dialysis fluids within our country, it can reduce the cost, and it can make it available for treatment. Not only that, there are different types of dialysis. We have what we call the peritoneal dialysis and the hemodialysis or the machine-based dialysis. It is very expensive, but we, as a country, can invest so much in the peritoneal dialysis, so we can make it available to kidney patients.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Thank you.

Dr Asamoah: In conclusion, Mr Speaker, we have loved ones who have passed on due to kidney disease. It can happen to you; it can happen to me. So, I am asking that this hollow Chamber make it one of our main objectives to allocate enough funds to support kidney treatment and its prevention in the country.

Thank you. [*Hear! Hear!*]

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Prof Beyuo, does Glaucoma also fall on today or is that one meant for the week? Because I have seen your Statement here.

Prof Beyuo: Mr Speaker, it ends tomorrow.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Is it for tomorrow?

Prof Beyuo: No, it ends tomorrow.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Does it end tomorrow?

Prof Beyuo: Yes, please

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Then resume your seat; I will give you that floor to read the Statement.

Prof Beyuo: Thank you.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: So, let me give it to Dr Mark Kurt Nawaane.

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Mr Speaker, I am not contributing to the Statement. Dr Nawaane, just a minute.

I just want to draw your attention that we also have one that stands in the name of the late Hon Anthony Evans Amoah, former Member of Parliament for Mpohor Constituency who has passed on to glory, and the Statement will be presented by the Hon Kwabena Okyere Darko-Mensah.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Incidentally, I do not have that one.

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Mr Speaker, it was ferried to your Office. With pleadings, he has copies here. So, it is just for us to be guided.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
There is no problem, but I do not have it.

So, let me take Dr Nawaane.

Dr Mark Kurt Nawaane (NDC — Nabdam): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

I want to thank the maker of the Statement. The Statement is very timely, and the theme for this year as stated is “Are your Kidneys Ok? Detect early, protect kidney health”.

Mr Speaker, if you look at the prevalence in Ghana as compared to the global population, the global population stands at 10 per cent, and that of Ghana is 13 per cent. That means that we have more kidney

situations more than the global population, and that is not a good thing for Ghana. So we need to understand what to do and the predisposing factors such as smoking, alcoholism, certain medications, not only herbal medications, but even self-medication, diabetes, hypertension, *et cetera*; they are all predisposing factors, so if we manage the sicknesses well, we should be able to reduce the incidence of chronic kidney disease.

Recently there have been some controversy over the funding of the dialysis. I must say that, for those of us who have been here for some time, we know that the funding for dialysis has been chaotic, erratic, and—*[Inaudible]*—When I say this, I mean that when those who provide services say they need some money, the Government just tries to look around. There was one time they paid GHC4 million, and they started working again, and after some time, they stopped again, so they had to look for money somewhere else. They later tried to say that they have added the treatment of chronic renal disease to the NHIS.

Mr Speaker, let me ask all of us. When we go to the hospital, do we pay something? My good Friend sitting to my right, does he pay something when he goes to the hospital? What about those to the left? Does he pay something when he goes to the hospital? That tells us that the National Health Insurance (NHI) Fund is not enough, and if we continue to make

those statements of adding to the National Health Insurance Scheme without looking for extra resources, we are only deceiving ourselves. That is why President Mahama has established the Medical Care Trust Fund to bring in extra resources for a non-communicable disease.

That fund, also known as MahamaCares, is extra resources. It would be enough because it would bring in extra income, and it is being budgeted for, apart from the NHIA. The NHIA has become a panacea for everything, and we just keep adding to the National Health Insurance Scheme. When one goes to the hospital, they pay, and that tells one that NHI Funds are simply not enough for the current medical care.

So, let us understand that issue and let us thank H. E. President John Dramani Mahama for thinking out of the box, and setting up this fund. That is not only going to help patients with kidney disease, but patients who would need operations such as cardiac operations, diabetes, hypertension, and other sicknesses, and I believe that that would be the solution to this problem of dialysis. So, let us not deceive ourselves that we can just add anything to NHIS without adding any resources to it.

Thank you.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Thank you very much.

Hon Kwabena Okyere Darko-Mensah, are you ready? You are not ready?

All right, then let me take—

Prof Beyuo: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to make a Statement to commemorate World Glaucoma Day.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: No

Prof Beyuo: Should I contribute?

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: No, I thought you were contributing.

Prof Beyuo: Mr Speaker, then let me make a contribution.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: I will take the Statement on Glaucoma Day tomorrow. So, Leadership, bear in mind—

Prof Beyuo: Then let me just make my contribution.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: I will take that one as well as the one on Chicken Pox from the Hon Member for Chereponi, so I will take those two tomorrow.

5.21 p.m.

Prof Titus Kofi Beyuo (NDC—Lambussie): Mr Speaker, I would like to contribute. It will take less than five minutes, I beg you. You asked me to sit down earlier.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute to the Statement. Let me commend the maker of the Statement for bringing such an important discussion to this House and bringing it into national focus.

Mr Speaker, the prevalence of chronic kidney diseases in this country, as mentioned earlier by the Chairman of the Committee on Health, is higher than the global average. And I am going to call for intensive research for us to identify why we have such a high prevalence compared to other countries. Diabetes and hypertension are playing a significant role, but we cannot forget that the poisoning of our waters, food, fish, yam, from the *galamsey* activities with heavy metals may play a role. So this should be a wake-up call for all of us.

Mr Speaker, the emphasis on kidney day should really be prevention and early detection, because in our part of the world, a diagnosis with end-stage kidney failure is almost a death sentence. And when it comes to prevention, Mr Speaker, I think we in this House must set an example. I have been in the House for a little over two months, and I see that our very arrangements do not permit Members to take in adequate water.

We sit here for five hours, sometimes more. We do not have any means of bringing in water here because it is not permitted. There are no water dispensers around for people to drink in between the time that we sit here. So I will call on the House

Committee and Leadership of the House to consider making it easy for Members of Parliament to be able to take enough water while in the Chamber.

Mr Speaker, I want to also on this occasion, commend the good hope that His Excellency John Dramani Mahama has brought by the introduction of the MahamaCares. That is a Ghana Medical Care Trust fund. As though it was coincidence, yesterday, the task force was launched, and this task force is charged with operationalising the fund; the fund that is going to make sure that we can support non-communicable diseases, including the kidney diseases. But the emphasis really should be on prevention rather than treatment. So, I commend His Excellency and commend the Minister for Health. Thank you very much.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Hon Members, I cannot take any—Anyway, you are a leader. Oh, no. Hon Lardi?

Leader, let me give the lady two minutes, then I will come to you.

Ms Theresa Lardi Awuni (NDC—Okaikwei North): Thank you very much, Hon Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute to the Statement made by my very good Brother, Adomako-Mensah Collins.

Indeed, today is International Kidney Awareness Day, and the question here is, are your kidneys okay? Members of Parliament, are

your kidneys okay? How often do we go and check? Parliamentary staff, are your kidneys okay? How often do we make time to go and check? I think that we must begin to prioritise some of these things.

Mr Speaker, our lifestyle has contributed mostly to kidney diseases in this country. Intake of excessive alcohol, some unprescribed medications. People just walk into our pharmacies and purchase medicines on reasons that sometimes we do not understand. And our pharmaceutical services are also giving out medication without requesting a prescription from doctors.

I think they will do us a lot of good, because the young generation now, when one watches them on the social media, Mr Speaker, it is very disturbing. We need to ask ourselves, what generation are we bringing up? What education are we giving out to our people? I would like to urge Members of Parliament to take time off our busy schedules to engage in sensitisation exercises in our various communities. For instance, I had one recently in my community. I have a place called Vegas in Okaikwei North. Yes, and there are a lot of things that happen around there.

They are human beings. They are kids who have left their homes to just relocate, and they need guidance. We cannot only go to them when we need their votes. We need to also mentor them. We need to also be a source of inspiration to them. We need to guide

them to stay away from some of these things that will create problems.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, I would like to thank His Excellency John Dramani Mahama for his foresight. His 24-hour Economy vision is bringing about the MahamaCares that will support dialysis and people who cannot afford it.

Mr Speaker, I would like to urge Members to stay hydrated, eat balanced diets, exercise regularly and manage stress, especially Members of Parliament. We know the kind of stress that we go through in our various constituencies, but it is my prayer that we manage the stress, get regular check-ups, and also check on our diabetic status and also our hypertensive status. It is very important because sicknesses do not just happen. It starts from a point, and I believe that with regular check-ups, we will be able to have early detection and get early treatment.

Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.

Second Deputy Minority Leader (Mr Jerry Ahmed Shaib): Mr Speaker, I thank you very much for this opportunity.

Today being World Kidney Day, I want to take this opportunity to thank, most importantly, President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo— *[Hear! Hear!]* — Mr Speaker, for his vision.

Mr Speaker, I have acted as Board Chair of Korle Bu Teaching Hospital, and I stand here on authority to let you know that but for President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, we would not have a urology and nephrology centre in Korle Bu —*[Hear! Hear!]*— Mr Speaker, as we speak, people do not travel to India and London to go and have treatment for all manner of diseases, especially dialysis treatment.

Mr Speaker, we have a 31-bed station, new, fresh and ultra-modern. Just in October last year, the urology and nephrology centre was commissioned. So if one is a man and is in this Parliament and is intending to go and have a kidney transplant, or one is going to have dialysis treatment, they should not waste their time and money to go and look for euros, Pounds and dollars, walk to Korle Bu Teaching Hospital.

Mr Speaker, they will have the best of care; kind courtesy, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, *nyadea oye*. Besides all of this, what we have not also considered is the contribution that Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo got National Health Insurance Authority to take care of. Anybody suffering from kidney issues and having dialysis treatment was given free dialysis care.

And as of last year, GH¢200 million—Mr Speaker, and that is the problem with my Friends here. They never want to hear anything correct.

5.31 p.m.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Member for Central Tongu, please.

Mr Shaib: Resume your seat; you do not know—[*Laughter*]—

Mr Speaker, last year, NHIA had to disburse GHC200 million just for free dialysis treatment—[*Uproar*]—If Hon Members are here and are indicating,—and I can show Hon Members—

Mr Speaker, it is very important for each and every one of us to understand that.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Prof Beyuo, please. No, I am not giving you the floor.

Mr Shaib: Resume your seat.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: I am not giving you the floor. Member of Parliament for Central Tongu, please, resume your seats.

Mr Shaib: Mr Speaker, it is critical for us to know that—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Madam, please, resume your seat.

Mr Shaib: Mr Speaker, it is important for each and every one of us here to know that if we want to challenge the figures, we can do so properly but do so with a genuine heart. I have come here to tell Hon Members, that I was once an Acting Board

Chairman of Korle Bu Teaching Hospital and I know what I am saying.

Mr Speaker, beside all of this, I need to advise all of us that the ABC of kidney prevention, as in having issues with dialysis, is also well spelt out. Most of my Colleagues have said so already. Let me just rehash that we need to get tested for kidney disease, we need to monitor our blood pressure, we need to exercise regularly, we need to monitor blood sugar and do all the things that matter. Do not buy medicine over-the-counter without prescription

Mr Speaker, with this, I want to say thank you very much and thank you very much to Nana Addo Danquah Akufo-Addo.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Acheampong, Prof Beyuo has just come there to ask you to speak.

Mr Achempong: Mr Speaker, I thought after giving the opportunity to Mr Awuni, we went to the Minority Side, so it is the turn of the Majority Side.

Mr Speaker, Mr—[*Inaudible*]—should not worry himself. Very soon, the estimate will come. National Health Insurance Authority will come and account to us where they disbursed that 200 million from? So, he should not worry.

We will not respond to it today. The right time will come—[*Interruption*]—He said 200 million? Just next week, it would come.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Mr Acheampong, this is a Statement that should not degenerate into debate.

Mr Acheampong: That is why I do not want to engage him. So, Mr Speaker, I will give the opportunity to Mr Charles Agbeve to conclude. Thank you very much.

Mr Charles Akwasi Agbeve (NDC — Agotime-Ziope): Mr Speaker, thank you very much, and I want to tell Mr Jerry—Mr Jerry, he should listen to the, real figures.

Mr Speaker, first I want to commend Mr Adomako for that wonderful Statement, well-researched and documented. In fact, his figures are apt but I want to tell the House today, that His Excellency John Dramani Mahamah's Budget—[*Uproar*]— ably read by the Minister for Finance quoted GH¢9.93 billion not million, included in what he is supposed to do is to take care of what? MahamaCares. It is supposed to take care of the chronic diseases; dialysis, cancers and so on and so forth.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Agbeve: Mr Speaker, Mr Shaib said they have built a new Nephrology Unit at the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital today. Annual cost is between GH¢62,400 to GH¢148,200, that is the annual cost of dialysis for a year. Yes. These are figures from Korle Bu.

Mr Speaker, it is for this reason most families can never afford this. His Excellency saw that vision and yesterday the Minister for Health inaugurated—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Agbeve: To initiate Ghana Medical Cares. Mr Speaker, in conclusion, we need to talk about the role of the private sector. A company called First Sky has been paying for those suffering from chronic diseases in Korle Bu. Last year, they spent GH¢50 million and for the past eight years, they have been doing—This is why the Government of the day is partnering these institutions to make funds available to the families suffering.

Mr Speaker, thank you very much for this opportunity.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Let me now invite the Hon Member for Takoradi, the former Regional Minister to pay a tribute to his predecessor who was also a Regional Minister and a Member of this House.

Hon Members, please let us give respect to our own, a Member who was here has passed on and we are going to listen to the tribute.

So, Hon former Regional Minister, you have the floor now.

STATEMENT**Tribute to Mr Anthony Evans
Amoah**

Mr Kwabena Okyere Darko-Mensah (NPP—Takoradi): Mr Speaker, Hon Members of Parliament, distinguished guests, and the bereaved family, today, we rise in solemn tribute to Mr Anthony Evans Amoah, popularly called A.E. Amoah in the Western Region; a distinguished statesman, man of integrity, and dedicated servant of Ghana, who passed away on the 2nd of November, 2024. His passing is not just a loss to his family and constituents but to this entire House and the nation at large.

Mr A. E. Amoah served Ghana with unwavering dedication, a Member of Parliament for Mpohor-Wassa East (2005-2013), he was a strong advocate for the development of his constituency and the Western Region. His contributions to Parliamentary discourse, particularly, on Communications, Gender and Children, Employment, Social Welfare, and State Enterprises, were measured, insightful, and always driven by a deep sense of duty to the people.

When I entered Parliament in 2009, Mr Amoah's advice tremendously helped in my development. His advice not only centred on our Parliamentary life but our private lives as well. I know that there are Members in Parliament today on the Majority Side who benefitted from his advice. Members

such as Ahmed Ibrahim, Minister for Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs and Joseph Bukari Nikpe can all testify to Mr Amoah's willingness to help in the growth and development of young MPs. As a man who loved his culture, Mr A.E. Amoah from 2011 to 2013 when he exited Parliament always wore kente and Mr Speaker I believe that this must have also inspired the usage of the kente cloth and other Ghanaian attire in this Chamber.

His leadership extended beyond Parliament. As Western Regional Minister (2006-2009) under the administration of President John Agyekum Kufuor, Mr Amoah championed infrastructural development, improved educational opportunities, and prioritised economic empowerment for the people of his region. Even outside government, he remained an elder statesman, serving as Chairman of the Western Regional Council of Elders of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) from 2014-2020, where he played a key role in fostering unity and progress.

Beyond politics, he was a man of wisdom, humility, and immense generosity.

5.41 p.m.

His contributions to journalism, education, and rural development demonstrated his passion for truth, knowledge, and national good.

He was an exemplary public servant who upheld the principles of fairness, objectivity, and accountability. Hon Amoah's life reminds us that public service is not about power but about the impact we leave behind. His legacy will live on through the policies he helped shape, the young leaders he mentored, and the communities he uplifted.

As the Minority in Parliament, we recognise his service, his sacrifices, and his contributions to our democracy. We extend our deepest condolences to his family, friends, and all who mourn this great loss.

Farewell, Hon Anthony Evans Amoah. May your service to the nation and Western Region never be forgotten. May your soul rest in eternal peace. *Da yie*, Hon Colleague.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon Member for Kwesimintsim.

Mr Philip Fiifi Buckman (NDC — Kwesimintsim): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

I rise on behalf of the chiefs and people of Kwesimintsim Constituency to join in condoling the family of the late Amoah and also to say that we are solidly behind them and behind the former Regional Minister in this.

Mr Speaker, whatever has been said about the late Hon Amoah is true and sacrosanct. Some of us had the

opportunity to interact with him. He was a true statesman, a man who did not just show power but a man who was compassionate, a man who was not discriminating irrespective of whichever political party or status you occupied. I must say in addition to whatever has been already said that it is not just enough to eulogise such a great man or just to have a plaque at the regional administration where his name would be written to show that from this year to that year he was here.

Great men like this need to have plaques raised in their names so that in future when his children or even ours come and see that these were the things that this man did when God helped him and put him in a place of power, he was able to do to change the lives of his people.

Mr Speaker, Mr Amoah was a journalist, a great journalist of course. He was a Human Resource Manager of the Graphic Communications Group Limited. Before entering politics, he worked as a journalist and an advertiser. He held a Master's Degree in Sociology in 1995 and a Master of Business Administration in 2000 from the University of Ghana. As a matter of fact, he saw to the upgrade with his plaque on the wall at 2BN, in fact the almighty Second Infantry Battalion in Kwesimintsim Constituency.

I would want to say that today we celebrate him and we join the family to

say that he did his best for his nation and needs to be celebrated.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon Member for Effia?

Mr Isaac Boamah-Nyarko (NPP — Effia): Thank you very much Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to pay glowing tribute to the legendary Anthony Amoah of blessed memory.

Mr Speaker, Hon Amoah has paid his dues for the Western Region and this country. It will interest you to know that Hon Amoah played a very crucial role in supervising the construction of the Essipong Sports Stadium in the Western Region during the CAN 2008. When you have people like this who have served this country and the Western Region very well, it is befitting on us as a House to celebrate him today.

As earlier speakers have indicated, he was a true statesman. In fact, in the Western Region, he served also as a Chairman of our Council of Elders and he was very instrumental in preaching discipline and oneness in the Western Region, which has brought us thus far.

On this note, on behalf of the good people of Effia Constituency, Western Region NPP chaired by Mr Francis Ndede Siah, we will all be going to celebrate the life of Hon Amoah and I pray that the good Lord keeps him well for us.

Hon Anthony Amoah, the Western Region is proud of you. NPP is proud of you. *Da yie, damirifa due.*

Thank you.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you

Yes, Hon Member?

Mr Kofi Arko Nokoe (NDC — Evalue-Ajomoro-Gwira): Thank you Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to also contribute to the tribute read by Hon Okyere-Darko, the former Western Regional Minister and a former Colleague, Minister, and a great politician of the Western Region, Hon A.E. Amoah.

Mr Speaker, indeed, this world is just a stage and we are mere actors, and when the time comes, when we are called to exit by our maker, we would have no choice. But the good news is that we as a people must always strive to leave legacies, and that is exactly what our past senior, who was also in this House did.

Mr Speaker, growing up as a young man in Axim, I remember when he was the Regional Minister and he was such a gentleman, somebody that inspired most of us. And Mr Speaker, the Western Region is a place where we do not kowtow partisan politics. When you stand out as a leader in the Region, we all come to you and also take clues from you.

So, on this day, I, Kofi Arko Nokoe, the Member of Parliament for Evalue-Ajomoro-Gwira, the only Constituency with five paramount chiefs. On their behalf, I would also want to join to sympathise with the family and to assure them that they are not alone. We are together in this and the Hon Members from the Western Regional Caucus—Yes, 50 Hon Members will be there to join you to sympathise with the family to celebrate a hero, because we are all one in this. We pray that his soul is sustained in perfect peace until we meet again.

Thank you Mr Speaker for the opportunity.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Thank you very much.

Leadership?

Mr Jerry Ahmed Shaib (NPP — Weija-Gbawe): Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Hon Darko-Mensah for sharing this tribute with the House.

5.51 p.m.

Mr Speaker, I personally met Hon A. E Amoah about two years ago when it was time for us to have our Parliamentary Primaries. I went with one of his daughters called Linda Amoah and at that meeting, I found a father, a mentor and a friend in Hon A. E. Amoah. When I got back home, Hon Amoah had written a whole passage as

to how I was to prosecute my campaign. When the results were announced and I was elected as the Parliamentary Candidate for my Constituency, Weija-Gbawe, I had to call Hon Amoah, to show my esteemed gratitude to him.

Mr Speaker, I just have these few words for him, and I pray and know that his wife and children would take this in great peace. God knows how much we need them, and so it takes but few to make the land of heaven more beautiful to view; believing this is difficult. Still, somehow, we must try. The saddest word mankind knows will always be goodbye. So, when a little child departs, we who are also left behind must realise God loves children. He was not a child, but God loves him. They should have him in their prayers all the time, and we wish him the best of everything at wherever he finds himself. May he rest in perfect peace.

Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Yes, Majority Leadership?

Mr Acheampong: Mr Speaker, may his soul rest in perfect peace.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Very well. Hon Members, may we rise and give our departed brother a minute of silence.

[A minute's silence was observed]

May the soul of our brother, Hon Anthony Evans Amoah, and all the

faithfully departed, rest in perfect peace.

Hon Members, the time is just 10 minutes to six o'clock; you are obviously in my hands. We would not take any other Statement. I will proceed to adjourn the House to tomorrow—Yes, Minority Chief Whip?

Minority Chief Whip (Mr Annoh-Dompreh): Mr Speaker, I know we are all exhausted, and we commend ourselves for having stayed throughout, particularly you. We commend you that even in the latter hours when we nudged you on the Statement, you indulged us. We want to highly commend you.

Mr Speaker, while you are about to adjourn the House, I want to plead with my Colleagues, the Majority Frontbench—I see the Hon Acheampong in a very relaxed mood. I hope this relaxation is indicative of something.

Mr Speaker, the Appropriation Bill cannot go beyond 31st March, 2025. We do not want a situation where they would say the Minority is sabotaging them. They should get the Annual Estimates. I am saying this because I am quite experienced, not so much, but quite experienced. Today is 13th March, 2025, and we have very limited days. We have very limited days because of the weekends. We want to help them and be supportive of the passage of the Appropriation Bill. The Hon Member should get the Annual Estimates.

I have already related to the Hon Comfort Doyoe Cudjoe on inherent conditions and what we have to do for the extended Sittings. With that, she has rightly counselled, and we will walk that path. I am reminding them again on the Annual Estimates. Hon Acheampong should not look at me with that eye.

First Deputy Majority Whip (Ms Comfort Doyoe Cudjoe): Mr Speaker, thank you.

Mr Speaker, I do not know why the Minority Chief Whip keeps—*[Interruption]*—No, they should not be worried because we are more than an experienced Government, and we would work with time. We are a very serious Government.

Let me tell them that Committees have started sittings. We have over 40 Committees where Members will go and indulge in Committee work. So, the Minority should know that once Committees have started sitting during Sitting hours, it means we would not have a full House. The Annual Estimates would come on time. All we need is for them not to disturb the House. Because all they do now is to disturb the House—

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Mr Speaker, she should withdraw that one.

Ms Cudjoe: I withdraw it.

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Has the Hon Member withdrawn it?

Ms Cudjoe: I have withdrawn it.

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: So, now she should apologise.

Ms Cudjoe: I said I have withdrawn it now, so why should I apologise? But it is a fact that he disturbs the House. He disturbs the House. He even always puts Hon Jerry Ahmed Shaib into trouble. But he is a fine gentleman. He should not do that to him because this young man is now up and coming and he is learning. But Hon Annoh-Dompreh keeps pushing unnecessary things to Hon Shaib to champion, always putting him into trouble.

Mr Speaker, we are in your hands. Just adjourn Sitting to tomorrow—
[Interruption] Did I lie? In Ghana, everybody knows that Ms Cudjoe does not lie but says the facts just as it is. I will say it the way it is. I said, he disturbs Hon Shaib. He should allow him to be himself.

Mr Speaker, we are in your hands. Ghanaians know that I do not lie; I say it the way it is.

Thank you.

Mr Isaac Boamah-Nyarko: —
rose —

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, the Leadership has spoken so I cannot give the floor to you.

Hon Members, let me thank you. We have gone beyond the time but your cooperation has been excellent.

On that note, as I said, we are adjourning to tomorrow, 10 o'clock in the forenoon. The House, accordingly, is adjourned to tomorrow, 10 o'clock in the forenoon.

ADJOURNMENT

The House was adjourned at 5.59 p.m. till Friday, 14th March, 2025, at 10.00 a.m.

