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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

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THE
PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC
OF GHANA

FIRST MEETING, 2025

Tuesday, 4th March, 2025

The House met at 11.09 a.m.

[MR FIRST DEPUTY SPEAKER IN
THE CHAIR]

[PRAYERS]

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, there being no message from His Excellency the President and no Formal Communication by the Speaker, can we move on to the item numbered 6 on today's Order Paper—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 Friday, 28th February, 2025 is to be corrected.

Page 1...7—

Ing Surv Maxwell Kwame Lukutor: Mr Speaker, I seek your guidance on the last paragraph of the item numbered 5(ii), “Staff and Students of Kotobaabi...”. I am sure “Kotobabi” has no double “a”, so it should be “Kotobabi”, not “Kotobaabi”. It is for your direction, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Table, take note. Is it double “a” or single “a”? Any further corrections?

Page 8...11—

Prof Kingsley Nyarko: Mr Speaker, at page 11, there is a minor correction; before the item numbered 10, “The Hon Second Deputy Speaker thanked the Hon Minster”. The “i” is missing after “n”. This is a minor correction; so it should be “M-i-n-i...”.

Thank you.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Noted. Hon Majority Leader?

Mr Mahama Ayariga: Mr Speaker, may I crave your indulgence to take you back to page 4. Yes, I just noticed that—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Majority Leader, let us finish page 11, then we can go to page 4.

Mr Ayariga: All right.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon Member, you have the floor?

Mr Frank Yeboah: Mr Speaker, at page 9, the item numbered 9, Question 8, third line, “Worapung” is supposed to be W-o-r-a-p-o-n-g, not p-u. It is “Worapong”.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Very well. Yes?

Dr Abdul Kabiru Tiah Mahama: Mr Speaker, at page 11, the item numbered *15(ii), the name is “Nasia—Kparogu”. “Kparogu” is spelt as K-p-a-r-i-g-u, not “r-o”, and when we come to the item numbered iii, “Wulugu-Kpansekpe”,

“Kpansekpe” is spelt as K-p-a-s-e-n-k-p-e. So, it is not K-p-a-n, the “n” comes after the “s-e-n”.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Table, take note of the correction at page 11 as well as page 9.

Hon Majority Leader, page 4.

Mr Ayariga: Mr Speaker, my name has been brought as item number 163. Normally, it appears as item number 81 after “Ayamba Laadi” because my surname is “Ayariga”. So, please, Table Office, take note of that. The surname is Ayariga, but sometimes, they make a mistake and put “Mahama” as the surname.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Very well. Table, take note.

Nana Asafo-Adjei Ayeh: Mr Speaker, at page 10, the item numbered *10(iii), “Asiwa-Abosamso/Asumama”, the “Asumama” is A-s-a-m-a-m-a, not A-s-u. Same has been repeated for item number iv, “Dwumakyi-Abosamso/Asumama”, so it should be “Asamama”, but what we have there is “Asu”.

Then, Mr Speaker, when we go to the next one, item number vi, that is “Anyaso-Nsuaem”. The first “Nsuaem” was spelt right, but the second one should be N-s-u-a-e-m, not N-s-u-e-m-e. No. So, it is “Anyaso-Nsuaem”.

Mr Speaker, thank you very much. I am grateful.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Yes, Hon Frank Afriyie? Is that Frank Afriyie?

11.19 am

Mr Frank Afriyie: Yes, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, let me thank you exceedingly for recognising me.

Still at page 11, though Prof Nyarko and Dr Kabiru Mahama have done some work, I think still on the item numbered 15, Mr Speaker with your leave, “Dr Abdul Kabiru Tiah Mahama, Walewale to ask the Minister for the Roads and Highways.” I think that is grammatically not sound. The “the” after the “Minister for” should be deleted so that it reads, “to ask the Minister for Roads and Highways.”

Mr Speaker, thank you.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Table Office, take note of the corrections at pages 10 and 11.

Yes, Hon Member?

Dr Fred Kyei: Mr Speaker, please permit me to take you back to page 9, Question 9, the item numbered 7. The third line, it is “Nkenkaasu” as in “university” so it is not “su”; it is “so”.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Table Office, take note.

Page 12—

Hon Members, the *Votes and Proceedings* of the 26th Sitting dated Friday, 28th February, 2025, as corrected, is adopted as the true record of proceedings.

Hon Members, the *Official Report* of Tuesday, 18th February, 2025. Any corrections?

Hon Members, in the absence of any corrections—

Yes, Prof Nyarko?

Prof Nyarko: Mr Speaker, at Column 42 the last paragraph, let me comment from the third line, "...promote football and sports to bind us, not kill us...", "to" was omitted. It was a contribution that I made after the Statement had been made so if that preposition could be inserted, I would be grateful. Also, if we come to column 91, the last but one paragraph, I would like to start from the fifth line. "The Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies. Mr Speaker, we pretend to be releasing the District Assembly Common Fund", I think that it should be "to be releasing the District Assemblies Common Fund to the Assemblies."

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Table Office, please take note. Any other corrections?

Yes, Hon Member?

Dr Abdul Kabiru Tiah Mahama: Mr Speaker, column 45, on the fifth paragraph, with your indulgence, let me

read, "he would need to be appointed as a Minister for Parliamentary Affairs to have the locus standi" but it is spelt "locus standing" so I think it should be corrected to reflect the "locus standi".

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

Yes, Hon Member, are you on your feet to correct the *Official Report*?

Hon Members, the *Official Report* of Tuesday, 18th February, 2025 as corrected is adopted as the true record of proceedings.

Prof Kingsley Nyarko?

Prof Nyarko: Mr Speaker, with respect and with your kindest indulgence, my understanding was that we were correcting the *Official Report* of 19th February, 2025, but you did say 18th February, 2025.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: The *Official Report* under reference is Tuesday, 18th February, 2025.

Prof Nyarko: Then what we were given today is 19th February, 2025, and I understand that the 18th February, 2025 was corrected sometime last week. So, let us check and be double sure.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Very well. I have been given the wrong *Official Report*.

So, Hon Members, the *Official Report* of Wednesday, 19th February, 2025, as corrected, is adopted as the true record of proceedings.

Hon Members, we have students from Rev. S. C. Memorial Methodist School led by Benjamin Amokwei Koomson, the headmaster. They are from the Ablekuma West Constituency and they are 74 in number. On behalf of the House and on my own behalf, I wish you a fruitful visit to Parliament of the Republic of Ghana.

[Pupils of Rev. S.C. Memorial Methodist School were acknowledged]

Hon Members, we move to the item numbered 7, Urgent Questions. Hon Members, the Urgent Question numbered (a), I have been informed that inadvertently, it has not been transmitted to the Minister. We would then move to Urgent Question numbered item 7(b)—

Yes, Majority Leader?

11.29 a.m.

Majority Leader (Mr Mahama Ayariga): Mr Speaker, I was hoping to get your attention in order to take the briefing from the Minister for the Interior at the Committee of the Whole and when he leaves, we can then start Close Sitting and continue after he has done the briefing. I tried to get to you before you came in, but you had left so I could not —

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Very well.

Yes, Minority Chief Whip?

Minority Chief Whip (Mr Frank Annoh-Dompreh): Mr Speaker, just for the record, and as you had earlier

announced, that Urgent Question 7 (a) cannot be taken because inadvertently, the Clerks-at-the-Table had failed to transmit same.

Mr Speaker, it is interesting to find out that we are also scheduled to take the item numbered 9, but for the intervention of the Hon Majority Leader, we were going to take all the Questions advertised in the name of the Minister for Energy and Green Transition. It is very interesting and revealing that the item numbered 7(a) for the same sector, we are being told was left out inadvertently.

Be it as it may, I think it smacks of certain impression that is not good for us as a House, because if for the same sector, the briefing was duly transmitted, all the other Questions were duly transmitted but that particular Question alone was left out; it is quite revealing but I will leave it as it is.

Mr Speaker, the Majority Leader has made an application that we rather go into Close Sitting as was agreed. I have no objection, except to say that the Minister for Energy and Green Transition is already here and since we are having Plenary engagement, we should rather finish with his briefing and then when we are done, we can break into Close Sitting. Let us take the briefing which is the item numbered 9 before we break into Close Sitting.

But I cannot find— Leader, the referral was that the briefing has to be done by the Minister for the Interior and the Minister for Defence concurrently. I see my good friend and senior Colleague

obliging us and he is here. The Minister for Defence is not here, but since the referral was that the briefing should be done concurrently, is it the case that we only entertain the Minister for the Interior and leave out the Minister for Defence?

Mr Speaker, I do not know what the pleasure of the House is, but the briefing has to be done in whole; both Ministers have to do the briefing, and it is only the Minister for the Interior who is here. For now, may I suggest that we listen to the Minister for Energy and Green Transition on his briefing and afterwards, we can begin the debate on the Message on the State of the Nation.

Mr Speaker, we are ready for the debate, and I thank you.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Majority Leader?

Majority Leader (Mr Mahama Ayariga): Mr Speaker, let us take the briefing from the Minister for the Interior.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Chief Whip, the suggestion is that we should take the briefing from the Minister for the Interior since he is available.

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Mr Speaker, I only pray that they do not put me on a collision course with my Friend. He knows that on any day, I will support him. My only concern is about the joint presentation.

Mr Speaker, if that is the pleasure of the House, I do not have any objection to it. But what happens to our Minister for Energy and Green Transition? I am asking a question.

Mr Ayariga: The Minister for Energy and Green Transition is making a presentation at the National Economic Dialogue, so we would have to reschedule him because they are waiting for him to make a presentation. So I think that I will crave your indulgence for us to reschedule the Minister for Energy and Green Transition so that he can go and make the presentation. If he finishes and we are still here, he will come back and then brief the House.

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: I agree that Hon Mohammed Mubarak Muntaka should brief us, except that the defence being mounted by the Majority Leader seems to be on one leg. He is saying that there is National Economic Dialogue. The Minister for Energy and Green Transition is ready and one can see him very ready to brief us. He was scheduled and rescheduled. In fact, I must commend him. The last time, he was here earlier before he left for Cabinet and he came back. Why? Is it the case that they do not like the Hon Minister? He is always here. The Minister for Energy and Green Transition is always in the House. We must make space for him to present.

As for Hon Muntaka, I have no objection. But my problem is, where do we put the Minister for Energy and Green Transition who is always obediently attending upon the House?

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Chief Whip, frankly speaking, if you do not like somebody and the person has two engagements, how will you be intervening so that he will be able to satisfy at least one?

Majority Leader?

Mr Ayariga: Mr Speaker, the Minister for the Interior is my elder brother and the Minister for Energy and Green Transition is my younger brother, so I have to defer to my elder brother because as for my younger brother, I can always handle him.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, the sense of the House is that we would reconstitute into a Closed Sitting and take briefing from the Minister responsible for the Interior.

11.37 a.m. – *[The house accordingly constituted into a closed sitting].*

1.00 p.m. – *Sitting resumed.*

[MR FIRST DEPUTY SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR]

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

STATEMENT

Gradual Transition of the Nation to the Use of Clean and Renewable Energy

Minister for Energy and Green Transition (Mr John Abdulai Jinapor) (MP): Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

On behalf of the Ministry of Energy and Green Transition, kindly permit me to extend my sincere gratitude to this

august House for the opportunity to brief it on the steps being taken by the Ministry of Energy and Green Transition towards our transition towards clean and renewable energy.

Mr Speaker, I would like to acknowledge Hon Tweneboa Kodua Fokuo, Member of Parliament (MP) for Manso Nkwanta, for his remarks on the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 77/327, which designates 26th January, as the International Day on Clean Energy, marking the anniversary of the founding of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) in 2009. Ghana, a founding member of IRENA, continues to be a key advocate for renewable energy development and climate action globally. I commend the UNGA for this recognition.

Mr Speaker, in the face of the global climate crisis, the Ministry is working towards transitioning Ghana to a net-zero energy economy by 2070 in an equitable and just manner. In 2022, the Ministry of Energy and Green Transition developed the Ghana Energy Transition Framework, which was launched at United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Egypt. This 40-year roadmap targets a future where Ghana's electricity demand would reach about 380,000 gigawatt hours (GWh), supported by 83GW of installed generation capacity, including 21GW from renewables. The transition framework, is estimated to cost about US\$560 billion and seeks to deliver affordable electricity at a generation cost under 4.5 cents/kilowatt hour (kWh). This focuses on four key policies thus: decarbonisation, energy access and security, energy efficiency and cross-cutting issues.

Mr Speaker, to complement this long-term vision, I wish to highlight specific actions and plans that the Ministry is pursuing and implementing to harness renewable energy resources for Ghana's socio-economic growth in an inclusive manner.

First, we intend to pursue a public sector energy efficiency. This is aimed at addressing rising public sector debts in the energy sector. We have developed the Public Facilities Sustainable Energy Action Plan (PF-SEAP) with support from Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). This plan seeks to mobilise US\$181 million in climate finance, focusing on solar energy and energy efficiency measures in public institutions and buildings to reduce Government's electricity costs and ease sector debts.

I am pleased to report that we have secured initial funding from the German Government under the Government Goes Solar Project, the Swiss Government, the Climate Investment Fund, and the African Development Bank to commence the implementation of this initiative. Feasibility studies are complete, and full implementation is expected to commence by the third quarter of 2025. This is aimed at ensuring that we reduce the cost of electricity especially in public institutions and bring about overall efficiency.

Mr Speaker, in the agricultural sector, the rising cost of energy is straining the operations of Ghana's irrigation systems. To address this, the Ministry of Energy and Green Transition

has partnered with the Ghana Irrigation Development Authority (GIDA) to introduce a Water-Energy-Food nexus initiative. This aims to utilise large-scale solar power (PV), wind power and other forms of renewables to ensure that we are able to irrigate our agricultural farms to boost productivity and increase yield as far as agriculture is concerned.

The first pilot project of 1megawatt (MW) solar, funded by the Korean Government, is underway at the Dawhenya Irrigation Scheme. We aim to scale this initiative across all irrigation schemes in the country in the coming months and years.

Mr Speaker, our third strategic objective is to partnerships various agencies and stakeholders for renewable energy deployment. In line with President Mahama's green transition vision, Ghana has completed its strategic investment plan for the Accelerated Partnership for Renewable Energy in Africa (APRA), in Ghana and Africa as a whole. Presented at the 15th General Assembly of IRENA, APRA will benefit from the US\$4 billion United Arab Emirates (UAE) fund for Africa. The APRA aims to help African nations triple their renewable energy goals and achieve renewable energy investments. Ghana's APRA framework focuses on transforming energy systems and promoting green industrialisation and green revolution.

Mr Speaker, capacity building for the green transition. We also seek to prepare graduates and technicians for the evolving energy market. Because as we go through energy transitioning, we need to

prepare young graduates, technicians and field officers so that they can adopt to the changes as far as the green transition is concerned. In this regard, the Ministry, is collaborating with the International Solar Alliance (ISA), to establish the Solar Technology Application Resource Center at Ho Technical University (HTU) in 2024. This center will serve as a hub for training and innovation in renewable energy. We are also committed to supporting HTU's development into a world-class institution for green transition.

Mr Speaker, Renewable Energy Expansion. As you may be aware, Ghana's electricity access stands at 89 per cent of 99.8 per cent with a goal of achieving universal access by 2030. We are expanding off-grid access through renewable energy-based mini-grids, having completed some projects in Ada and awarded a contract for 35 more mini-grids to benefit 70,000 people in in-land or difficult to reach communities. Feasibility studies have been completed for 150 additional mini-grids in the Afram Plains, requiring US\$100 million in funding as far as these projects are concerned.

The Scaling Up Solar and Energy Efficiency. Through the Ghana Scaling-up Renewable Energy Program (SREP), we are deploying 12,000 net-metered solar PV systems across homes. This is to ensure that people with solar systems in their homes, can feed back into the grid when they have excess. That is to say that if one consumes more than they require, one should be able to feed it into the system, so that those who have a

deficit can benefit from one's solar system. Then at the end of the month, we can net-off and if there is a credit or deficit, we can clear that based on the clearing system. When this is achieved, would greatly improve renewable energy deployment across homes, businesses, and public facilities, and this is backed by US\$85 million in grant financing from African Development Bank (AfDB), Climate Investment Funds (CIF), State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), and the Government of Ghana.

1.10 p.m.

As of 2024, Ghana's solar capacity had reached about 205MW to be specific, with an additional 200MW under construction. Our goal is 400MW of solar capacity by 2026. A 30MW floating solar plant is currently under construction at Bui Hydropower Generation Station, with all floater components manufactured locally, showcasing our commitment to depend on local capacity towards our green revolution and industrialisation. This technology offers higher performance efficiency and optimises space utilisation.

The Ministry has plans to expand further significant development in the renewable energy value chain as we move on. Mr Speaker, women play a critical role as far as energy consumption is concerned. In this regard, the Ministry has already launched the Women in Energy Initiative to address gender disparities in the sector. Let me assure this House that we are committed to ensuring that gender is integrated into the green transition and value chain.

Institutional Strengthening remains a cardinal point if we want to achieve this objective. In line with that, the Renewable Energy Act, 2011 (Act 832) (Amended) in 2020 (Act 1045), based on my instructions, we are elevating the Renewable Energy Unit of the Ministry into a directorate, Renewable Energy and Green Transition Directorate in order to bring a sharper focus, provide them with the impetus and the resilience to achieve our objectives.

More importantly, the Ministry of Energy and Green Transition is progressing steadily with the establishment of the Renewable Energy Authority (REA), an agency which would be charged with the responsibility for planning, coordinating, and implementing renewable energy programmes and projects in Ghana. The draft framework and draft Bill have been prepared and are currently undergoing technical reviews. It will be laid before this august House before the end of this year. Mr Speaker, with your permission, let me thank the German government, through Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), for their ongoing technical support in developing the REA.

Mr Speaker, the Ministry, in accordance with the Renewable Energy Act 2011 (Act 832), will establish the Renewable Energy Investment and Green Transition (REIGT) Fund which seeks to accelerate and mobilise domestic and international resources to aggressively deploy renewable energy investments in Ghana. We intend to launch this Fund this year and, our strategy, based on the support we get

from this House, would be to take a component of fossil fuel-based funds—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, the Speaker would take the Chair.

1:11 p.m. —

[THE SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR]

The Speaker: Hon Minister, you may continue.

Mr J. A. Jinapor: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, I was reiterating the point that this Government will soon establish and operationalise the Renewable Energy Investment Fund aimed at accelerating investments in the renewable energy space. We intend to mobilise domestic and international resources and the norm today is that we take a component of revenue from fossil-based fuel and use that component to finance renewable based investment.

Mr Speaker, under your guidance and with support from this House, we would soon come with some proposal which seeks to channel some funds from fossil-based fuel into renewable and green investment. The REIGT Fund will provide funding support to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), research and development, innovations, liquidity guarantees for utility-scale renewable electricity generation, creation of strategic green economic zones, acquisition of clean and renewable energy data, green certification regime, local manufacturing

renewable energy technologies, capacity building and managing the end-of-life (EOL) of clean and renewable energy technologies, energy efficiency and conservation management, solar streetlight deployments, off-grid electrification (standalone and mini-grids) for last mile access, public sector renewable energy investments, e-mobility charging infrastructure development, promotion of productive uses of energy, and non-renewable electricity investments including clean cooking, *et cetera*. The potential sources for financing the Fund will be the national budget and money approved by Parliament.

These include premium payable under the Renewable Energy Purchase Obligation, multilateral and bilateral donors, donations and various levies, including carbon taxes (polluter-pay regime), electricity generated from non-renewable and renewable energy sources, waste management, oil and gas development, among others.

Mr Speaker, this Fund, when operationalised, would serve as a turning point and catalyst for government and Ghana to accelerate its pace towards the green transition that we all envisage.

Mr Speaker, in our bid to step up efforts toward the green transition, the Ministry of Energy and Green Transition has outlined the following upcoming projects: On 12th February, 2025, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) signed a facility with LMI Holding for the construction of a 200MW solar park as part of our green transition agenda, smart DAWA eco-city and green

industrial park project. This initiative promises job creation and expand market access for Ghana's products.

The Ministry is supporting the Volta River Authority (VRA), in partnering with the West Africa Power Pool (WAPP) and the European Delegation, to develop a 150MW solar project, incorporating battery energy storage systems to address intermittency issues associated with solar power stations. This will help us supply power not just during daytime but also in the night. This is a new technology that most advanced countries are pursuing and Mr Speaker, Ghana intends to follow suite.

Mr Speaker, our efforts to diversify the baseload electricity mix with nuclear power which provides it with baseload capacity at an affordable price would continue to be pursued and is progressing steadily with the establishment of a National Nuclear Regulator and owner or operator company. This seeks to build capacity for nuclear regulation and operation in Ghana in the shortest possible time.

Two sites have already been identified for acquisition to host Ghana's first nuclear power plant. Discussions are underway with the People's Republic of China, the United States of America (USA), and the Russia Federation for the deployment of safe, carbon-free and affordable nuclear power for industry and for export.

Mr Speaker, to conclude, I wish to reiterate that the Ministry remains committed and resolute towards ensuring

that Ghana benefits from the global shift toward clean and renewable energy. The Ministry will continue to collaborate with our development partners to:

- (i) Mobilise resources for the implementation of APRA, PF-SEAP, Net-metered renewable energy program, Scaling-up Renewable Energy Program to expand access, especially, off-grid access and e-mobility;
- (ii) Support capacity-building initiatives, including upgrading the Ho Technical University Solar Technology Application Resource Centre (STAR-C), the Renewable Energy Centre of Excellence at the University of Energy and Natural Resources among others, to fast-track ideation, innovation and, market development and growth, with special focus on women;
- (iii) Provide technical and financial assistance to establish the Renewable Energy Authority, elevate the Renewable Energy Unit to a Directorate in line with Renewable Energy Act 832 as amended Act 1045 and expedite the establishment and operationalisation of the Renewable Energy Investment and Green Transition (REIGT) Fund;
- (iv) Accelerate investment to achieve universal electricity access and clean cooking ahead of the 2030 target; support accelerated

deployment of charging infrastructure for e-mobility and collaborate with the relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to domestic the e-mobility market; and

- (v) Accelerate the prioritisation of the KfW loan facility for the Government Goes Solar this will ensure that public universities, institutions, this august House, Parliament House, and other critical state agencies are put on solar energy in order to reduce dependence on the national grid.

Lastly, Mr Speaker, I wish ensure and assure this House that the Ministry of Energy and Green Transition would continue to collaborate with this House and other state agencies in our quest to accelerate the pace towards achieving our green transition and, doing so, in a just and equitable manner. The Ministry also honours our financial obligations to the international organisations of which Ghana is a member, including International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and International Solar Alliance (ISA).

On this note, Mr speaker, let me thank you, once again, for this opportunity. I am most grateful.

The Speaker: Hon Members, this Statement comes under Order 91, so we will be guided by the provisions of that Order. Members will be given the opportunity to comment on the Statement. I see the Minority Chief Whip.

Yes, please?

Minority Chief Whip (Mr Frank Annoh-Dompreh): Mr Speaker, let me, from the outset, commend the Minister who has demonstrated clarity in terms of vision. He has also demonstrated abundant understanding of the sector and definitely continuity, in terms of programmes started by the previous government.

1.20 p.m.

I would want to commend him highly for it.

Mr Speaker, in times past, concerns and actions towards renewable energy, as at my last check, was more of a desk officer operation. I hear the Minister wants to, in line with the vision to upscale, upgrade to the extent of an Authority, which is commendable. But in this country, we often move with speed to upgrade. So, while the Minister is seeking to upgrade, he should also look at giving the Authority the necessary oxygen to be able to prosecute on its deliverables.

Mr Speaker, he made a point on solar system and excess being fed into the national grid; wonderful point. But because of the need on solar panels, we may probably also have to look at what happens in other jurisdictions. Kenya, for instance, have reduced the import duties on solar panels, so the private sector has come in and the business is booming. The importation of solar has become a business for private hands, and it is helping to facilitate the transition.

So, I would want to suggest that the Hon Minister takes a look at that. Indonesia, now, is manufacturing its own solar panels, and I am happy that he said part of the solar farms we have in this country, accessories used for the establishment of these farms were locally manufactured. For me, that is the crux of the argument.

We have discovered lithium and we have bauxite. Lithium and bauxite constitute more than 60 per cent of the raw materials that are used in the manufacture of solar. So, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) could be engaged, and he has said in his address that the Ho Technical University (HTU) would be upgraded. Hon Minister, if I have your attention, the Ho Technical University would be upgraded and they will have a department dedicated for this line of action. I would like to encourage the Hon Minister to go on that tangent, so that we could also upscale.

He mentioned public sector energy efficiency, which is wonderful. The seat of Government, other public institutions, Parliament, and all these institutions, if we could have solar installed, it would help to reduce our bill on electricity. But when I heard all his narration, I heard the Korean Government and German Technical Cooperation Agency (GIZ); there is little on Government of Ghana's (GoG) investment. Of course, the Kaleo Solar Power Farm—Mr Speaker, that is located in your Constituency—was started by the NPP Administration. The NPP Administration started it, and they are continuing. I need to commend them

on that. The Bui Power Authority (BPA) Solar Farm was started by the NPP Government and they are continuing; I want to commend them highly, but I am saying that they need to do more in terms of government-owned investment.

We cannot be overly reliant on the GIZ and the Koreans. If indeed we believe in the concept of energy transition, then we, as a government, must make dedicated funds and all the funds they want to establish: Green Funds and all that—Because they said they are going to reduce taxation, I do not know where they are going to get the money to support these funds they would be establishing, so they may have to take a good look at that.

Mr Speaker, the concern about the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and the carbon credit is something we have not been able to buy into, probably because of our capacity. If the Ho Technical University is going to be upgraded and would have a department dedicated to this—Minister, do not let it be just mere words; I have confidence in you. Do not come to Parliament and say this and the next moment we say the same thing. He has also mentioned that he is making a move in irrigation, just to feed into agriculture productivity, which is very good.

International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and GIZ are supporting. We want to see more from the Government's side, especially on the mini-grid, and this is something we have to do. The Germans have shown class

when it comes to solar in terms of the lifespan of the cells that are used. Probably we should get closer to the GIZ and be able to make a difference.

Mr Speaker, let me commend the Minister, and to conclude, I want to suggest that IRENA has shown the way and the matter on nuclear—As at independence, Dr Kwame Nkrumah spoke about our nuclear energy needs, and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has a well-defined blueprint; we do not need to reinvent the wheel.

I see that the Minister is very spot on when it comes to the understanding of what has happened before and the way is clear. We should not have any excuse why we cannot exploit our nuclear potential; so, we in this House want to give him all the confidence. Mr Speaker, we hope this would not just be mere words. I hope it would not just be mere words. Minister, it would not be mere words.

In conclusion, there is a fine balance we need to find as a country. The argument is made by experts. The Europeans have polluted to be where they are today. In terms of emission, what Africa emits, and in this context, Ghana emits, is insignificant. However, we have been hoodwinked into believing that adoption of green energy and solar is the way out. I do not know. Do we have to pick and choose? We also have to develop our industries.

So are we saying goodbye to fossil fuel because all the industrial countries—Germany is shutting down its coal plant because they are transitioning.

However, we have not been able to develop our industries. That is the crux of the matter. Would solar help us and facilitate the development of our industries? These are questions we need to ask ourselves well, and if the answer is no, then we have to strategically position ourselves. We cannot suddenly transition. It has to be a gradual process, so that along the line, we can also upscale and develop our industries duly.

Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity. I am grateful.

The Speaker: Yes, Majority Leader?

Majority Leader (Mr Mahama Ayariga): Mr Speaker, thank you very much. Let me thank the Minister for attending upon the House and giving us such an exhaustive briefing on the progress in transitioning to clean and renewable energy.

Mr Speaker, I think he has given a very detailed programme and strategy, and we can only urge the Minister to apply himself diligently to the execution of the strategy, and also the programme that he has outlined. I see already that Ghana is making significant strides in trying to develop our solar-sourced energy.

Mr Speaker, there is one thing that I was keenly waiting to hear from the Minister's strategy that I did not hear, and that is biogas. In all this strategy, what are we doing about biogas? I recall when I was Minister for Environment, Science and Technology, and around that time,

we had this energy crisis and some headmasters approached me and complained about, at that time, the erratic power supply problems that we had and the frequent turning off of lights. And I said, but you have 1,000 students on campus. They said, yes. I said, the 1,000 students are all power generators walking around because if they just applied themselves and used biogas technology, they could generate electricity for themselves.

I actually went as far as travelling to Germany, because Germany has really advanced the technology for using biogas to generate heat that then powers generators to provide electricity.

1.30 p.m.

And then, like he said, they actually sell it to the state and make money out of it. So, most villages had their own independent power generation plant based on biogas technology because they have the animals, they have the waste material from the farms, and then they have the human beings, and working together efficiently, they generated enough electricity for their own consumption and very often, also fed it into the system.

So, if one goes beyond just the traditional known sources, which is solar, and we also exploit biogas technology, I believe that we can augment the power challenges that we have in this country. Also, if one looks at the study of the deployment of technology, I think that when it comes to renewable energy and particularly solar,

it is the northern part of the country that has the longest periods of sunshine and opportunity to really exploit the use of solar energy.

Therefore, considering the universities that will host the study of renewable energy and the development of local capacity, if one considers the technical universities in the Upper West, Upper East or the Northern Regions, it would really help because that is where the opportunity really exists for the extensive usage of solar power. So, it would be good to consider adopting one of those universities also as a platform for teaching and disseminating the knowledge and technology for solar power.

Mr Speaker, it is a very impressive presentation, and I commend the Minister for coming to brief us. I believe that Members will find the presentation very useful.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon Minister, on behalf of the House, I thank you so much for such a detailed brief. You have been in this House for a long time, and you have also been in the sector for a long time. We do not doubt your capacity in making sure that you translate your words into action, and you are aware that the House too has a very high capacity and knowledge of the sector. We focused on this greening, climate change and the others, and we have always attended all the conferences. So, please keep on working together with the House, and I

am sure we would be able to respond to the crying needs of our people in that sector.

We thank you so much for coming. But you are aware that the Kaleo project was started by the Mahama regime. It is Kaleo and Lawra, but they were upgraded by the Nana Akufo Addo's regime.

So please, it is not the case that it was started by just the outgoing regime, but they actually increased it. Yes, that is a fact, and that should be made known. These are statements of facts and not debates.

Hon Minister, you are discharged. Sorry for keeping you waiting.

We have in the House some dignitaries with us, and you can see that they are in red apparel. It is for a good reason. We have been taking some actions on a few things, but we have not gone public and this is why they are here, not only to draw our attention, but to urge us on to take action. So, I want to take few minutes to draw the attention of the world, and Ghana in particular, on what we are doing with regard to this issue, and maybe allay the fears of our brothers and sisters who are here, I believe, to urge us on to be seen to be acting on the issue.

This matter has to do with the unsavoury comments that we made on the Floor a few weeks ago, and so I am going to make a Formal Statement on it.

FORMAL COMMUNICATION BY THE SPEAKER

Statement of the Rt Hon Speaker Condemning Unsavoury Comments Against Hon Dr Zanetor Agyeman – Rawlings

The Speaker: Hon Members, it is with a deep sense of responsibility that I address you today on a matter that strikes at the very heart of our democracy—the need for civility, decency, respect, and decorum in our national discourse, particularly, on the floor of Parliament.

The people of Ghana look to this House as the bedrock and beacon of democracy and leadership in Ghana. It is our collective duty to set a standard that reflects the true character and values of our great nation. We know from the Holy Books, the immense power of the word. We, therefore, need no reminders of the power of the spoken word. Words can inspire hope, foster national unity, and strengthen collective resolve. Yet, they can also divide, wound, and erode the very foundations of trust, national unity, love, hope and the dignity we seek to uphold in this House.

It is therefore regrettable that in the course of Parliamentary proceedings on 4th February this year, an Hon Member of this House was subjected to an unwarranted, unjustified, and deeply offensive reckless remark, of being referred to as, for want of a better way to convey the remark, the "daughter of a murderer."

I apologise for having to even repeat it!

You all know the background, but it is important to remind you.

On Tuesday, 4th February 2025, Hon Dr Zanetor Agyeman-Rawlings, Member of Parliament for Korle Klottey, and daughter of the father of the Fourth Republican Constitution, our late former President, Jerry John Rawlings (may his soul rest in perfect peace), sought recognition from the Speaker to contribute to the proceedings on the floor of Parliament. I was then attending a conference in Morocco so my Deputy was in the Chair. Media footage available indicates that during this attempt to speak, the unsavoury remark was uttered off-microphone from a seat of the Minority Side of the House, in reference to the Hon Member.

Such conduct is dishonourable and I strongly condemn it as a behaviour unbefitting of a Member of Parliament.

The law on this is very clear. Article 115 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana guarantees freedom of speech, debate, and proceedings in Parliament, ensuring that such discussions cannot be impeached or questioned in any court or place out of Parliament. This privilege of freedom of speech is reiterated in Order 22 of our Standing Orders.

1.40 p.m.

Hon Members should however note that this privilege is not absolute and must be exercised responsibly and in accordance with the rules of Parliament. Article 116 of the 1992 Constitution provides that while Members of Parliament

enjoy immunity from civil or criminal proceedings for statements made in Parliament, they remain accountable within Parliament through the Parliamentary Committee on Privileges, when those Statements are found to be *prima facie*, defamatory or in contempt of Parliament or in breach of Parliamentary privilege.

Such a Member, when found guilty of defamation or in contempt of Parliament or in breach of Parliamentary privilege would be liable to be reprimanded, or by resolution, suspended from the service of Parliament for a period not exceeding nine months, or expelled from Parliament altogether.

Let me be clear, Parliament is a place for constructive debate, guided by principles of mutual respect and integrity. While we may differ in our views and engage in spirited discussions, there is no room for language that seeks to offend, abuse, insult, demean, defame, blaspheme, or impute improper motives, or impugn the integrity of a Member, or any other person.

In light of this incident, I extend my deepest apologies to Hon Dr Zanetor Agyeman-Rawlings, Member of Parliament for Korley Klottey, H. E. Nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings, the former First Lady of Ghana and widow of our late illustrious President, the family, the Chiefs and all the good people of Anlo Dukor, and Anlo land. No one serving their country should have to endure such indignity.

Consequently, a formal investigation has been initiated to determine the identity of the Member who made the comment. Subsequent to which in line with Standing Orders 218 and 219, the Committees of Privileges and Immunities, and Ethics and Standards shall be called upon to consider the referral and report to the House. Parliamentary rules and regulations must be enforced. Decorum must be restored in this House no matter whose ox is gored.

As we move forward, let this moment serve as a call to action, a call for introspection, a commitment to raising the standard of public debate, and a pledge to ensure that our disagreements remain intellectual and a market of ideas and wisdom not personal vendetta based on impulse, instincts and emotions. We must uphold the dignity and majesty of Parliament and not be enslaved in our past, most of which has been misrepresented.

In the spirit of honour, accountability and decorum, I advise the Member responsible for the remark, to within a week, choose the path of honesty, *mea culpa* and opt for a plea bargain. Taking this step will demonstrate good faith and respect for parliamentary dignity, rather than awaiting the outcome of the ongoing investigation, which will ultimately uncover the Member who made the statement. I take a very serious view of the matter and failure to take advantage of this window of opportunity, will lead to dire consequences, if finally unraveled.

I take this moment to once more urge all Members of Parliament, to let our debates be vibrant but fair. Let our words be truthful, candid and civil. And let our service to the people of Ghana always be guided by honour, integrity, and respect. May the Almighty God, continue to guide, and protect us from all satanic influences and machinations.

I thank you all for listening— [*Hear! Hear!*]

I want to assure you a lot of work has been done since my arrival, and please, I urge the Member to own up.

Hon Members, with this, I want Leadership to guide the House as to what next.

Majority Leader (Mr Mahama Ayariga): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for rendering an apology on behalf of this House to our Colleague, the Hon Dr Zanetor Agyeman-Rawlings. Mr Speaker, we are indeed very grateful to you and I will join you to urge Colleagues to be decorous in the way that we conduct ourselves in the Chamber.

I believe that the investigation that you have launched will definitely unravel the individual who engaged in such a reckless comment and I also urge whoever it is to own up as directed by the Speaker. I want to assure this House that when we ultimately establish the identity of that person, the full weight of this Side of the House will stand firmly behind the Privileges Committee when they seek to exact the highest penalty of this House.

Mr Speaker, on that note, let me apply that we take the Urgent Question numbered 7(b). We agreed that after the Minister's presentation on Green Transition, we will take the Urgent Question.

The Speaker: Minority Frontbench?

Minority Chief Whip (Mr Frank Annoh-Dompreh): Speaker, may you permit me to make a brief comment as I heard the Majority Leader commend you for your Statement. Mr Speaker, I recall an incident happened and it is related to me and I had come under the appropriate Orders to seek your intervention and I recall, Mr Speaker, with respect your feedback was that the lady in question was going to be invited by you. It is a different matter, yes. I am a bit taken aback that I have still not heard anything from you and it is quite worrying. I am only bringing it to your attention. I am unable to comment absolutely on the Statement you made regarding our dear Colleague.

1.50 p.m.

Many of us have spoken on the subject matter outside this Chamber, but once the Speaker has spoken, it brings finality to it. We hope to bring this matter to a close, but I am taken aback that mine has taken close to three weeks. The Speaker had assured us that he would engage the two of us; I am reliably informed the lady was invited, but I was not invited.

Mr Speaker, I am just bringing this to your attention, but I will leave the decision in your bosom because you are

experienced, and clothed with the powers to guide this House in all matters. So, I will just bring this to your notice in hopes that we can bring finality to it. That notwithstanding— *[Pause]*. The application made is for us to—*[Pause]*.

Mr Speaker, on this occasion, permit me to make a point. Ordinarily, I would not speak to it, because in this House sometimes emotions go high and some comments are made, but on the said day when the supposed comment was made, our Colleague also made a very damning comment. *[Uproar]*

Mr Speaker, on that said day, our Colleague—

The Speaker: Hon Members, please, just a minute.

Hon Members, some of you are just a few days old in Parliament—It does not matter? I am looking at you. Repeat what you said. If I were such a biased person, I could not have been voted to be a Speaker in opposition. Please, I was Bagbin before you came into this House.

Your Minority Chief Whip spoke; I have given him enough time to speak, and he is still speaking. He knows how close he is to me, and he knows that I will not ignore the issue I took upon myself. He has mentioned that I have invited the Lady concerned. It is not that I will not invite him. It is a process, and he knows what has intervened up to now. If not, by this time, I would have finished doing that. So please, do not think we are all the same. We are not. That is why I am here, and you are seated there. *[Hear! Hear!]*

Please, Minority Chief Whip, you may continue.

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Mr Speaker, we on this Side, respect your authority and will continue to respect your authority. Where we have dissenting views, we would make those views with the greatest of respect to you. We will not show any disrespect to you. I only made a point, and I am sure that you have taken good notice.

On the other matter, I felt our Colleague, Hon Murtala, made a point ascribing some allegations of J. B. Danquah being a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agent; he said he had evidence of J. B. Danquah being a CIA agent, and also a betrayer of the State. We thought that was outward, outlandish, out of place, and unparliamentary. We felt that on this note, we on our Side would want to make a formal complaint to you that this should be investigated. The records would reflect. Once this is investigated, we should get to the bottom of this too. It is quite unfortunate we have allowed this to go, and we are not commenting about it.

Nobody is attempting to draw parity. No, it is not an attempt to draw parity. The Hon Dr Zanetor Agyeman-Rawlings knows how we on this Side respect her; I respect her a lot. But, Mr Speaker, the allegations thrown at J. B. Danquah cannot be wished away, and we would pray your wisdom on this matter. We should bring some finality to it. I made that point strongly, that it was an unparliamentary comment and was

totally unnecessary. That it should be expunged from the records, and Hon Murtala should be called to answer some questions on the reasons he made those allegations against J. B. Danquah.

The Speaker: Yes, Majority Leader.

Mr Ayariga: Mr Speaker, indeed, with all due respect, I find the conduct of the Minority Chief Whip very appalling. Mr Speaker, a matter of such grave national significance occurred, and he came to this House to make a statement and apologised on behalf of the House, to the family, to our Hon Colleague, and to Ghanaians. And all the Minority Chief Whip is seeking to do is to equalise.

Mr Speaker, Hon Murtala stood on his feet in this House and boldly made a statement, pursuant to his right to free speech in this Chamber. The person who made the comment should also boldly get up and let us see the person. Let the person stand up. If the person is a man, the person should stand up and let us see him or her. The person would not stand up because the person knows that what he or she did was wrong. If what the person did was right, he or she should stand up and let us see him or her—Oh, so they know the person? Do they know the person?

Mr Speaker, I think what the Minority Chief Whip has done is most unfair. If he has an issue with what Hon Murtala said, he should please come properly, and not to use this occasion where the Speaker has so beautifully apologised to this country and our Hon Colleague. Instead, he tries to bring in a

statement that Hon Murtala boldly and confidently made in this House, defended, and established that it was written by authors. He cited the authority for what he said—Meredith. They have not gone to read the book to come back and tell us that the author did not say it. They have not done that and as a Member of Parliament, he is free to express his views in the Chamber, openly and confidently. Not to do this disgraceful thing that was done that day; hide and then shout and malign somebody for nothing.

And when we seek to correct it, they want to politicise and equalise it. Is this the occasion to be seeking to equalise?

2.00 p.m.

Hon Members, honestly, I find this most unfortunate. Let me assure you that, indeed, some serious investigation is going on, and like I said, the full weight of this Side of the House will be brought to bear on the work of the Committee on Privileges and Immunities — [*Hear! Hear!*]*—*So, please, let us leave the matter there and let us proceed.

Mr Speaker, we had agreed to take the Urgent Question.*[Hear! Hear!]*

The Speaker: Yes, Minority Chief Whip?

Mr Annoh-Dompseh: Mr Speaker, I think my respected Majority Leader should know that we will not do anything to undermine the authority of the Speaker. I only sought to bring a matter to the notice of the Speaker, and it is

important he does not mix the two. I thought, at that time, the matter should have been brought to the notice of whoever was presiding then, and it was not done. It is not too late. We can also bring it to the notice of the Speaker and say that this was done; these comments were made, and these comments were not parliamentary. I do not see anything wrong with this, and for him to say my conduct is appalling, I find it quite strange. Leader, I find it quite strange. That is his view.

Mr Speaker, I think we will leave this matter here, and he has made an application that we should proceed, but we are delaying the debate. Mr Speaker, we are overly delaying; our Side is ready for the debate, and the delay is becoming quite strange—*[Interruption]*—Where is my Side? Where is your Side? Your people are supposed to be here, but they cannot be found. So, I would—Except to say that, maybe, we should limit the follow-ups, exhaust the Questions, and then we can zoom into the debate.

The Speaker: Hon Members, before we go there, let me now tell you the Members who are here, and actually, came on demonstration to present a petition, but it looks like we still have a lot to do for Members, the public, and civil societies to know how to present a petition to the House. The rules are very clear that petitions are presented through a Member of Parliament, and the Member comes to the House through the process and is given the opportunity to lay a petition. Then the petition is referred to a Committee that we have established now, Committee on Petitions.

They will now go through the petition and then report to the House. Then the House can deliberate upon the matter. That is still not clear to our people outside this House. I am not even sure some of you know that.

So, I will proceed to draw your attention to those who are here to present the petition, and in fact, they have been here since—I am told before 10 o'clock in the morning. They are being led by their National Patron in the person of Madam Anita De-Sosoo. They also have their National Chairperson in the person of Madam Lydia Angel Nutakor. The others include the Vice Chairman, Mr Geoffrey Atakli Banini; the Secretary, Mr Worlanyo Agrady; Organiser, Mr Kplorm Kofi Dordunu; Deputy Treasurer, Ms Yvette Mortoti; the Youth Organiser, Mr Elikem Amenyawu; the Public Relations Officer, Mr Francis Azorliade; and then we have one Mr James K. Agama and Mr Francis Seshie. These are the names submitted to me as those who have come on the demonstration to draw our attention to that unsavoury remark.

Hon Members, this is your House. You either develop it or you try to destroy it; you know the consequences of that. I preside, and I will apply the rules strictly. Anybody who disagrees is at liberty to do a proper thing, but from today, I will apply the rules strictly. The matters that you just drew my attention to are all covered by the rules, so, once again, Members, take time to read the rules. That will reduce this tension in the House.

Again, take time, and let us work together. You still see each other as strangers, and in fact, enemies, so you do not even have patience to listen to each other. Please, that is not what Parliament is about. If that has been the case, there will be no need to establish a Parliament. We would allow you to slog it out there on the street. Then they know who is stronger, but that is not to be. We took time from 2002, an experience to iron out these rules. Do not let us make the rules useless. They are to guide us. We would get enough time for all of you. Please, just be tolerant of each other's views. We are different, and we have different perspectives. That is why we are not members of the same party.

Leaders, try and be your leaders; do not mislead us. You should rather be more patient and tolerant with each other, and you know when one is on the feet, please, you give signal. If you catch the eye of the Speaker, he will allow you to speak, and the others will have to resume his or her seat, and then we move on. Ghanaians want to hear you.

I am getting very worried and concerned about what is happening. It is not only me. I receive, on daily basis, a lot of concerns from elders, not only in Ghana but outside Ghana. We cannot afford to let our people down.

Hon Members, I would have preferred we go straight to the debate, but since the Leaders want us to take the Urgent Question, I will proceed to call on the Member who has filed the Question. I think there are two Members.

02.10 p.m.

One, the Member of Parliament for Suame, Mr John Darko, and two, the Member of Parliament for Asokwa, Ms Patricia Appiagyei.

We will start with the Hon Member of Parliament for Suame. Please, you may ask your Question now. *[Pause]*

Mr Ayariga —*rose*—

The Speaker: Let me listen to the Majority Leader.

Mr Ayariga: Mr Speaker, we sent the Urgent Question 7(b) because we are told 7(a) was not transmitted to the Hon Minister for Energy and Green Transitions, so he has left. So, we are taking only 7(b), and there is an agreement that there will be no follow-up questions, so that we can move straight to the debate.

The Speaker: Yes, Minority Chief Whip?

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Mr Speaker, those of us on this Side have always shown tolerance. Indeed, we have shown tolerance as you have often counselled. We were struck that the Minister for Energy and Green Transition was programmed to be in the House to give a briefing on energy transition. It took the intervention of the Majority Leader; we were going to take Questions advertised in his name.

Mr Speaker, it is very interesting and revealing that we are being told that Question, 7(a), was not transmitted, but

they transmitted all the Questions in the name of the Minister for Energy and Green Transition and even his briefing, and they left out only that Question. It is very interesting and revealing. We will tolerate them, but it is indeed revealing that they left out only that Question. Whatever it is, we will come to it. They cannot hide. They will answer that Question. Whether today or tomorrow, they will answer that Question.

Mr Speaker, on that note, you will agree that we should proceed—

The Speaker: Minority Chief Whip, you know that no Member of Parliament transmits Questions to Hon Ministers. So, why are you addressing your Colleagues as if they have failed to do so?

It is done by the staff of the Parliamentary Service. The Question is admitted by the Speaker and processed through the Clerk. There is a whole department in charge of transmitting Questions and following up on the Questions until they are answered. And then the same process, it will be advertised, and the Minister will be informed to come and Answer. So, it is not the failure or refusal of any Member of Parliament, whether Minority or Majority, to do so. Please, you know it.

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: We are very tolerant, so we will understand them. Mr Speaker, shall we proceed to take Question 7(b)?

The Speaker: Actually, what I know about you is you are civil with your language; as for being tolerant, I am not

too sure about that—[*Laughter*]—But as for your language, you do all you can to be very civil, and then you respect your Colleagues when you are speaking. Tolerance is another matter, and even sometimes, I am not sure I am tolerant myself. So, it is a human failure and a weakness, but we will try to do so. I can see my Friend looking at me.

Yes, so we will take the item numbered 7(b).

Yes, Minority Chief Whip?

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Mr Speaker, with respect, the agreement was that we will take only the item numbered 7(b), after which we will start the debate.

The Speaker: Yes, the item numbered 7(b).

The Hon Member of Parliament for Asokwa? Well, we will reserve it for her to come and ask appropriately.

Yes, Second Deputy Minority Whip?

Mr Jerry Ahmed Shaib: Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

Respectfully, she directed that I ask the Questions on her behalf, subject to your directions, please.

The Speaker: May you read the appropriate Standing Order, please.

Mr Shaib: Mr Speaker, I have her permission to ask the Question; that is what I am saying. So, Mr Speaker, with your leave, if—

The Speaker: Why are you struggling? You have the Standing Orders with you; just read it. *[Laughter]*

[Pause]

Yes, Hon Member, please, go on.

Mr Shaib: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

URGENT QUESTIONS

MINISTRY OF GENDER, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Measures to Implement the Affirmative Action Act, 2024

Mr Jerry Ahmed Shaib *on behalf of Ms Patricia Appiagyei (NPP — Asokwa):* Mr Speaker, I beg to ask the Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection, what measures the Ministry has put—

Mr Ayariga —*rose*—

The Speaker: Yes, Majority Leader?

Mr Ayariga: Mr Speaker, just this past weekend, you organised an orientation programme to orient Members of Parliament, to show them how to do their work. That Side of the House chose not to attend, and we are seeing the results and the effects of not attending. *[Laughter]*

Mr Speaker, this is why that Side of the House should have taken advantage of the orientation programme that you organised because we were taught all these things. So, please, let us not

politicise these affairs. The Speaker knows what he is doing when he organises an orientation. Wherever the orientation is, please, it is in Ghana, so you should attend so that you can do this job very well.

Mr Speaker, I think you should be merciful today. Let him ask the Question, and I am sure that next time, they will take advantage of the orientation programme that you will organise. *[Hear! Hear!]*

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Mr Speaker, let me let the Majority Leader know that the specific Order is Order 88(3). That is the Order. The Member did not want to sound verbose. At Conclave, the Hon Majority Leader knows and was told that the Deputy Minority Leader is out of the jurisdiction, and we agreed there; it was needless for us to repeat that. He was told and he carried along; he is supposed to carry this House along—*[Interruption]*—

Mr Speaker, when the Majority Leader speaks like this, no, no. When he speaks like this— He is a very fine gentleman; we respect him but when he starts punching us and speaking like this, he is compelling us to also come and punch them. And how would they carry the House? It is Order 88(3), if he does know—*[Laughter]*—We know. We on this Side know. We on this side know the Orders.

Mr Speaker, we will not go into the merits and demerits of what happened over the weekend. We are on record to have written formally and communicated

formally; we want to leave it as such. We communicated formally to the Clerk to Parliament our reservations. And Mr Speaker, for the avoidance of doubt, we had said that any time such—And we do not doubt the wisdom of the Speaker. We on this Side do not doubt the wisdom of the Speaker.

Those of them sitting at the back saying that he should quote the Orders, they better learn their Orders well. They better learn their Orders— **[Some Hon Members: We know it.]**—

2.20 p.m.

Mr Speaker, Hon Jerry Ahmed Shaib—this Caucus has seen some huge potential in him— **[Some Hon Members: Ei!]**—That is why, on our Frontbench, he is the only first-time Member of Parliament (MP) who has been allowed to sit in front. None of them at the back, can or would be allowed to sit at the Frontbench. What they should be doing is to be learning and taking a cue on why Hon Ahmed was recognised by the Minority Caucus and given that mandate to sit in front. They would never sit here at this time—*[Up roar]*.

Mr Speaker, I think the Member should be allowed; the Member elected not to quote the Standing Orders. The Member should be allowed to ask the Question, then the debate can start. We have spent too much time.

The Speaker: Yes, Hon Members, the Standing Order is what the Minority Chief Whip referred to thus the Standing Order 88(3), it says, “In the absence of the Member...” referring to the Member

who has filed the Question, “...any other Member so authorised may, with the prior permission of the Speaker, ask the Question.”

So, Hon Members, in practise, what you do is to state that I have the authority of the person who has filed the Question and who, for good reason, is not available and I ask your permission, that is, referring to me, the Speaker, to ask the Question. Then you are granted the permission and you proceed to do so. That is the practise. I will hold Members to test, whether they have gone to Ho or Mpraeso, I will hold you—You must go by the rules from now on. I think the honeymoon is over. The Question has been asked and the Hon Minister has heard him. You do not need to repeat the Question, unless he wants to repeat the Question—Yes, do you want to repeat it?

Mr Shaib: Mr Speaker, just to thank you for the further directions and I take a cue. I am most guided.

The Speaker: Yes, Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection.

Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection (Dr Agnes Naa Momo Lartey) (MP): Mr Speaker, let me appreciate the efforts of Parliament and other stakeholders, especially you the Rt Hon Speaker Mr Alban Sumana Kingsford Bagbin on the efforts you put into ensuring that the Bill was passed by the Eighth Parliament.

Mr Speaker, the Ministry is in the process of developing a Legislative Instrument (L.I.) to guide its implementation. The setting up of the gender equity

committee and other related boards are underway to ground our implementation process. These are among other key steps being taken to fulfil the ministry's mandate and the manifesto promises of H. E. John Dramani Mahama. We will also engage this august House, especially the Committee on Gender, Children and Social Welfare when constituted, to ensure the effective implementation of the Act through its oversight role.

Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

The Speaker: Hon Member, do you have any supplementary question? **Mr Shaib:** Yes, with your permission, if I can do that—

The Speaker: Yes, please—

Mr Shaib: Mr Speaker, how soon after the Minister's appointment into office will she set up the Gender Equity Committee to oversee the implementation of the Affirmative Action Act and what resources would she use to ensure the effectiveness of same?

The Speaker: Yes, Minister.

Dr Lartey: Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

As I indicated, the boards are being constituted as we speak. So, as we have directives and indications from the Presidency, we will form the boards and the Equity Committee will equally be constituted and work will commence from there.

The Speaker: Yes, Minister, what is the title of the Act?

Dr Lartey: It is the Gender—Affirmative Action Act—the Equity Act—**The Speaker:** Yes, I want it stated clearly. Because what I see on the Order Paper—

Dr Lartey: Mr Speaker, yes, the Order Paper did not—It is the Affirmative Action (Gender Equity) Act, 2024. It is the Gender Affirmative Action Act—*Pause*—

The Speaker: I am sure you have it in your answer, or were you also misled? It is the Affirmative Action (Gender Equity) Act, 2024. Hon Minister, please resume your seat.

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: —*rose*—

The Speaker: Yes, Minority Chief Whip—

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Mr Speaker, it is the Affirmative Action Gender Equity Act—

The Speaker: Minority Chief Whip, yes—

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Mr Speaker, I thank you for recognising me. Indeed, all of us are fallible. Affirmative Action (Gender Equity) Act 2024, (Act 1121), that is what it is—*[Interruption]*—Go and repeat that.

Mr Mahama: —*rose*—

The Speaker: Yes, Majority Leader.

Mr A. Mahama: Mr Speaker, I see the Minority Chief Whip is struggling to

equalise again—[*Laughter*—The Minister is normally—even when we were in law school, even in examination halls, one did not have to cite the number of the Act. One did not have to even do so in examination halls. In any case, she mentioned it.

Mr Speaker, with great effort, they googled and saw the number. We saw them reading from their phones. They googled it.

Mr Speaker, on a lighter note, I think we can continue.

The Speaker: Hon Members, this is a very important Act and I want everybody in Ghana to know the title and its contents. It is so crucial to the development of our nation. That is why we took time to detail it out. We are going to hold the Government to make sure that the provisions of this Act are fully and totally implemented. Notice to the Government, the percentage cannot be lowered. Are you all hearing me? That 30 per cent cannot be lowered.

Please, are there any supplementary questions?

2.30 p.m.

Mr Shaib: Mr Speaker, that is so. Can she outline the specific targets and timelines for the implementation of the Act?

And how does she plan to adjust if these are not met?

The Speaker: Yes, Minister?

Dr Lartey: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I indicated that once we have the Committee formed—The Ministry itself is in the process of working with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and other stakeholders to ensure that the Committees work effectively with this House, to start the implementation processes. So, in our budget allocation, some resources have been put in there for—We have a budget line to ensure effective implementation. Aside the government support that is coming, we are also speaking to Donor Partners (DPs) who are equally interested in seeing to it that the Act is fully implemented.

The Speaker: Hon Shaib, you have the last opportunity.

Mr Shaib: I did not get the response on the timelines. So, respectfully, can the Hon Minister indicate that, so we are aligned?

The Speaker: Yes, Minister.

Dr Lartey: Mr Speaker, I repeated that some of the implementation processes are based on the formation of the boards and others, which is underway. On our part, if the Hon Member wants details, we have met with CSOs, and are forming some sub-committees to start the implementation processes. We are also waiting on this august House to constitute the Committee on Gender, Children and Social Welfare which plays an oversight role. When all of these are put in place, definitely the Hon Member will see more of the actions. Currently, it is more of

desk work so, once we are done, he will see us working.

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu — *rose* —

The Speaker: Is it a supplementary question?

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Yes, Mr Speaker. It is a supplementary question to the Minister for Gender, Children, and Social Protection on the measures and efficient implementation of the Affirmative Action Act, 2024. This is on whether what the Speaker said, has been satisfied or implemented with the current crop of ministers. What would she do as a Minister to ensure that the 30 per cent of women in government in the Affirmative Action Act, 2024 is achieved? Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker: I was looking at the ambit of the Question. The Question was looking for measures the Ministry has put in place to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of the Act. The way you framed your question, I am not sure that aspect that you are talking about is within the jurisdiction of the Ministry. So, it is very difficult but, if the Minister has a response, we will be prepared to listen to her.

Dr Lartey: Mr Speaker, as we are all well aware, the Government is in the process of being formed so, we are watching and looking out.

In any case, what has been done so far gives us hope that the 30 per cent or more than 30 per cent target is on course. Currently, all female appointments that

have been made is around 23 per cent plus so, that gives us more hope that with the forthcoming ones, we will meet the target as stated in the Affirmative Action Act, 2024.

The Speaker: Yes, Minority Leader?

Osahen Alexander Kwamena Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, the Minister just informed this House that so far for the appointments made, 23 per cent of same meets that threshold and that gives hope. Is the Minister aware that in the Cabinet of which she is a member, it is only 10 per cent that has been allocated for women thus far? Is she aware?

The Speaker: Yes, prelude to the debate. Yes, Minister?

Dr Lartey: If the Hon Minority Leader had listened to me well, he would have heard me say that it is for all appointments that have been made, including Cabinet Ministers. [*Hear! Hear!*] So, it is for all appointments.

The Speaker: Minority Leader?

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, this is a house of records and the Hon Minister knows that when she enters the dispatch box, she can only deal with facts. With the greatest respect, the Government announced its Cabinet and H.E. the President communicated his Cabinet to the Rt Hon Speaker. The Rt Hon Speaker read the Cabinet to this House. Perhaps I may give her some updates. Of the 19 Cabinet Ministers I

heard—And she said if I heard her right, so let me put to her what I heard from what Mr Speaker read—It is the Hon Minister herself and Hon Elisabeth Ofosu-Adjare, who were the only female Ministers that, respectfully, I heard as being part of the Cabinet. If it is calculated, it is 10 per cent and not more. Is she saying that this 10 per cent meets the 30 per cent threshold? Is that what she is saying?

The Speaker: Yes, Majority Leader?

Mr Ayariga: Mr Speaker, I think you had given some earlier guides. You indicated that the follow-up questions should fall within the ambit of the main Question. Mr Speaker, I think the Minority Leader should be so guided by you. What has the question of the composition of Cabinet in terms of gender got to do with this specific question?

There is no relationship.

1.20 p.m.

Minority Leader (Osahen Alexander Kwamena Afenyo-Markin): Mr Speaker, relying on Order 89 (1), and I shall read:

“As soon as a Question is answered, any Member beginning with a Member who asked the Question may, without notice, ask a Supplementary Question for further clarification of any matter or fact on the answer but a Supplementary Question shall not introduce a matter not included in the original question.”

Yes, relax.

Mr Speaker, would the Majority Leader be patient and tolerant for this exercise?

Mr Speaker, the Hon Minister, at the dispatch box, told this House that so far, the appointments made meet the threshold. Mr Speaker, appointments are in categories; we have the Cabinet of the President. And I am saying that per the communication from the President, this is coming from the Hon Minister's own answer, not me. And I am anchoring my supplementary question on your own answer in accordance with Order 89.

Mr Speaker, if the Minister says that so far Government has complied in terms of appointments made, I am asking her whether she is aware that the Cabinet's composition has only two women, and the two are the Hon Minister herself and Hon Elisabeth Ofosu-Adjare, and that amounts to only 10 per cent. The Hon Minister said I did not hear her, right? I heard her. Is the Hon Minister aware that there are only two women out of 19 in the Cabinet? Is she aware?

Mr Speaker, this is a question that the Minister must answer and the Majority Leader should not attempt to shield the Minister. The Minister must answer this.

The Speaker: Majority Leader?

Majority Leader (Mr Mahama Ayariga): Mr Speaker, the Minority Leader should be guided by our Standing Orders. Order 89 (1) that he seeks to rely on says that:

“As soon as a Question is answered, any Member beginning with the Member who asked the Question may, without notice, ask a Supplementary Question for further clarification of any matter of fact on the answer but a Supplementary Question shall not introduce a matter not included in the original question.”

It is the original question. The original question is the yardstick, not the answer. The original question is the yardstick for further Questions. Otherwise, they have to give the Minister time to go and then they can ask a proper Question and she would come back.

Mr Speaker, the question he is asking does not arise from the original Question. That is my point. I am saying that even asking based on the answer, the rule is very clear, that the yardstick is whether or not the Minority Leader's further question falls within the original Question. He did not say the answer.

The Speaker: I think it is proper we move into the debate. Let us use this as a prelude to the debate.

Yes, Minority Leader?

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, I am ever ready to go on that jurisprudence path with the Majority Leader.

Mr Speaker, if he wants us to deal with the Question, then let us read the Question. The Question reads:

“To ask the Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection, what measures the Ministry has put in place to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of the Affirmative Action Act, 2024.”

Mr Speaker, the Minister is in office, government is being formed, and her duty in ensuring implementation is what the questioner wants to know. In the process of assuring this House that measures are being put in place, she then added that appointments made so far have all complied. And I am asking her, emanating from her own answer and anchoring it also on the Question, which is not new, to demand of her, whether or not she is aware that the President of the Republic, is fully aware of this Act based upon which he appointed her as a Minister, and she is assuring this House that so far, they have complied. Is she aware that in the President's own Cabinet of which she is a member, only two of them out of 19 have been announced as Cabinet Ministers? We have the Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture; she did not make it to Cabinet to make it 30 per cent, only 10 per cent. And the Majority Leader is preventing her from answering when it is a matter of public record.

Mr Speaker, the Minister must answer this question. So, they should tell us that their Government has failed in putting in place measures to meet this 30 per cent threshold. They should let us know. Their Government has failed.

Mr Speaker, the Government has thus failed in meeting this threshold. So

the Minister should answer. It is a question, and it is not out of order. It is within the remit of Order 89. She would answer.

Mr Speaker, please get her to answer this question.

The Speaker: Yes, Hon Suhuyini?

Alhaji Suhuyini Sayibu Alhassan (NDC — Tamale North): Mr Speaker, thank you very much. I just want to draw the Minority Leader's attention to Order 81 (2), which says that:

“A Question shall be restricted to matters for which the Minister, the Member or the Head of Independent Constitutional Body is responsible or which affect the general policy of that Ministry or Independent Constitutional Body.”

Mr Speaker, in this case, she is not responsible for appointing people to Cabinet. Again, the answer the Minority Leader is seeking to find out, like he himself has correctly stated, is a matter of public record. And we are also told in this House that Hon Members do not ask questions of Ministers on matters that are already known to this House and for that matter, a matter of public record.

Mr Speaker, the Minority Leader is only concerned about making a statement and restating, I am sure for the public gallery, that Cabinet appointments is short of meeting 30 per cent. That is all he seems to be interested in.

Mr Speaker, in that case, I would suggest to him to draft a Statement that I am sure you would be kind enough to admit, so that he can make that Statement on the Floor and not pass it through a Question. Because clearly, what he is doing is not questioning the Minister. It is just making a Statement for the media and for the public to take note of the fact that there are only two women that have been appointed. [*Hear! Hear!*]

The Speaker: Do you want us to continue? I thought we should move to—

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, with respect, the Minister has made a Statement on this Floor which contradicts public records.

Mr Speaker, the Minister cannot escape this. In all humility, she told us that all appointments made have met the 30 per cent threshold. That is what she said. Mr Speaker, that is what she said.

2.50 p.m.

Mr Speaker, she says they have met that threshold.

Mr Speaker, let the Hon Minister answer the question because all this protection—I do not see why all of them are preventing the Minister from answering. She should answer the question. If the question is out of order, that should go into the record, and I will submit.

Mr Speaker, I have asked the question. If you think that the question does not meet the requirement of Order

89, rule me out of order, and let the record take note of it, and then we will all be guided by posterity. But as far as I am concerned, the question has been asked, the Minister would have to answer, no matter the protection from the Majority Leader, and my respected Friend, Alhaji Suhuyini, who is trying to go under Order 81 to create his own issue. I do not mind, but the question must be answered.

The Speaker: Well, from the basis of your further supplementary question, I think you got it wrong because the Minister clearly stated that, so far, the percentage of appointment is 23. She stated it in the answer, but she did not say anything about 30 per cent. I just listened to you. I am trying to correct the error you have made as the basis for your further supplementary question because you stated that she said that the appointments have met the 30 per cent threshold, and I am saying she did not say so. She said 23 per cent, not 30 per cent.

So, please, may we proceed to the debate, because I know it is an issue that is dear to Members, and that you will raise it again. I am very clear in my mind and my passion for this Act is beyond measure. So, I will support any person who wants to see the total implementation of the provisions of the Act. I will do that. So, let us proceed to the debate.

Yes, Deputy Minority Whip?

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, I still have three more supplementary questions.

The Speaker: Well, please, can you read the Standing Orders?

Alhaji Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, I am guided by Standing Order 89(3), and with your permission, I read the (3);

“Any other Member may be allowed to ask not more than two Supplementary Questions except that the Majority and Minority Leaders or co-leaders may each ask not more than five Supplementary Questions on the substantive Question.”

The Speaker: So, where do you come under? Are you a Leader or co-Leader?

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, the interpretation of the Standing Orders—But with my understanding, the Minority Leader and the Majority Leaders are mentioned; then, it moves further to say “...or the co-leaders...”; you can guide me, Mr Speaker, but my understanding is that—

The Speaker: Hon Member, what is the interpretation of co-leader in the Standing Orders? It is there; the interpretation of co-leader is there in the Standing Orders. What does it say?

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, even though I am guided as Leadership mentioned in the Standing Orders, my understanding with the Order 89(3) as has been loaded on our screen, if you mention the Majority Leader and the Minority Leader, my understanding is that the co-leaders are the other Leaders.

Mr Speaker, if it is not the case, I am guided, but I know that Mr Speaker can always create room to accommodate us and allow us to ask questions.

The Speaker: Kindly read Order 6. The definition is very clear there. Please, may we move on to another item.

Hon Minister, we thank you for attending to our call. We are extremely grateful, and you are discharged.

Let us move on to another item. I have a request from the First Deputy Speaker to lay the Report of his Committee. I think it is the item numbered 10(c), at the Commencement of Public Business, Presentation of Papers by the Chairman of the Appointments Committee.

Yes, Minority Leader?

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, with respect, unless the Majority would insist that they would do this without our input. We are just discussing this matter. They have just made the Report available to my Deputy Whip, and I am in communication with the Deputy Majority Leader.

Mr Speaker, I want us to discuss it so that we do this tomorrow. I am not aware of this, but if there is a new precedent that they would want to do it, then I have made my point.

The Speaker: Yes, Chairman of the Committee, what is the position?

Chairman of the Appointments Committee (Mr Bernard Ahiafor): Mr Speaker, at the Committee sitting, we have agreed and went through the Twelfth Report.

Mr Speaker, what is outstanding is the Thirteenth Report, which has not been concluded. But we are talking about the Twelfth Report that we all sat in the meeting room, went through, approved, and it is to be taken by consensus. So, the Minority Leader and Ranking Member of the Committee should be informed that we are talking about the Twelfth Report that the Committee has agreed on, not the Thirteenth Report.

The Speaker: Yes, Minority Leader?

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, at times, we do not need to be making certain pronouncements for record. I am aware that this is the Twelfth Report, and I am not acting in bad faith. I am in discussion with the Leader and his Deputy. Please, sometimes—

Mr Speaker, the understanding is that we would have a discussion because, this very Report, he presided. The Deputy Majority Leader was the one who presided when the First Deputy Speaker was out of the jurisdiction, and he has just reached out to me, and I said there is no problem. So we should discuss, and it can be laid and then rely on Order 104, and even move it the same day once we resolve the matters. There is no problem.

So why would we be breaking shoulders over this matter as if I am

preventing him? If it is his pleasure to have his way, so be it, but that is not the understanding we have had in this House. The practice is that we all engage. Sometimes, do not create the impression for public records as though somebody is difficult. I always act in good faith.

The Speaker: I do not see much problem in this—Chairman, just a minute. I think what the Chairman conveyed to the House is that you have already agreed on the Report.

Now, if after the agreement, the two of you have identified something that you need to consult, that should have been made known—But the Chairman is not aware—Well, but he is the one presenting the Report.

That is his Report. Even though it comes from the Committee as at now, that is the Report that he has to present.

3.00p.m.

So, he is not aware and that is why he emphasised that you agreed. Now, you have identified something that there is a need for further discussion. You should have made that in your submission, so that we can give you more time to discuss because once it is a consensus, we should go on that tangent.

Yes, so, Majority Leader, I think we should allow the Deputy Majority Leader, who chaired the Committee meeting during the discussion of this matter to engage him and whatever differences they identified, they discuss with the Chairman of the Committee.

Then we can present the Report and move on. Please, it is not by majority; it is by consensus, so do not let us break that rule. Let us go on. Then we will go straight to the debate. Please, do your consultation and let us know the outcome today.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin —*rose*—

The Speaker: Let us go straight to the debate.

Yes, please?

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, with respect, there is a pending Motion. My understanding from the Minority Chief Whip, who was at Conclave, was to the effect that the Motion can only be taken today with you presiding. And according to him, the First Deputy Speaker communicated that to him at Conclave that your indication is that you would want to preside over that Motion yourself.

Mr Speaker, I reached out to the Clerk-at-the-Table on this matter because I cannot see it on the Order Paper. He tells me that yes, he has the transmission in his office; he is yet to get us the Order Paper *Addendum*. Mr Speaker, I remember that when we wanted to take it before the Message on the State of the Nation debate, the indication was that we can have this done today.

So, Mr Speaker, I do not know whether the Order Paper *Addendum* is on its way, and I do not want ambiguities and equivocations on such matters. If the

clarity is already provided, let us go by it. The understanding was that we would take this Motion, get done with it, before we proceed with the debate on the Message on the State of the Nation. That was the understanding I had, but, Mr Speaker, this new practice of changing positions, I am gradually getting used to it. This practice of today we say something; the next moment something changes on one's blind side, I am getting used to it gradually.

The Speaker: Majority Leader?

Mr Ayariga: Mr Speaker, I recall the discussions regarding the Motion that he has mentioned. But the discussion was that the Motion may be taken today, Tuesday, but the order was not indicated. It was not indicated that it will be taken before the Motion on the Message on the State of the Nation. The indication was that it could be taken today, Tuesday, after the debate on the Message on the State of the Nation.

Yes, they wanted it before the debate on the Message on the State of the Nation; I was there, and there was some discussion and they were urged upon to put it after the debate on the Message of the State of the Nation and they agreed. Nobody is saying that there was no such understanding, and today was proposed, but it was not said definitely that it will come before the Motion on the Message of the State of the Nation. That was the point. There was no clear commitment that it would be before the Motion, so we can move the Motion on the Message on the State of the Nation and then if by the time we finish, the Order Paper *Addendum* is here, we can also move that Motion.

In any case, you can even—

The Speaker: I presided over the discussion. I ruled that the Motion will be taken today. It is a Half-Hour Motion that was proposed. That was what was proposed and based on my advice, we decided that it should be a substantive Motion, not a Half-Hour Motion because that would be too short for such a Motion to be properly deliberated upon. So, we agreed to make it a substantive Motion.

The proposers of the Motion, led by the Minority Leader, insisted that it should be taken before the Motion on the Message on the State of the Nation, but at the end of the day, my ruling was that it should be taken today. The order, I did not state. I did not state because the Order Paper gives the order of Business for the day, unless a Member gets up to call on the Speaker to vary the order of Business. So, I did state clearly that please, ensure that it be programmed and to be taken today. That one, I am very clear about that.

The Majority Leader was not happy about it being taken today. That one was very clear at the meeting, but I insisted that it should be taken today. That is what happened. This was in my office.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin —*rose*—

The Speaker: Minority Leader?

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, if you may recall, the conclusion of the discussion led to the Majority Leader even insisting that once we are done with the Motion, no reference should be made

in the debates of the Message on the State of the Nation. Mr Speaker, that is what he said, and when he said that you said, indeed, once the matter is closed and referral made, no further reference can be made in the debates on the Message on the State of the Nation proper. Mr Speaker, if we agreed that we are closing it, then how can we then say that we did not agree on the order?

Mr Speaker, it is already 3.00p.m.—

The Speaker: Please, you do not debate the Speaker.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, I am not doing that. You called me—

The Speaker: That is what you are doing now, and what you just referred to was the time we were discussing the Half-Hour Motion. That was when these matters came up, but when we finally agreed that a Half-Hour Motion was not sufficient, so it should be a substantive Motion, that part did not come in again. I am very clear in my mind about these things because I swore an oath and I am bound by it. So, when I am discussing things with you people, I just do not take them for granted. I want to follow strictly according to what we agreed upon and that is what I am doing.

I advised you that 30 minutes duration was too short for the subject matter that you have proposed. It will not be enough space for Members to air their views and finally, you were convinced and agreed that we should do it a substantive Motion. And I directed that,

yes, it be programmed for today, so these are not things that you come and then argue over on the floor of the House again. It will be done. So, please, bear in mind that as we start the debate this will also be part of the Business of the House today.

The substantive Motion that has been proposed, even though not on the Order Paper, should be brought as an *Addendum* to the Order Paper, so that we can debate it today. Yes. Please, so let us move on to the main item for today and we will—You know something.

3.10 p.m.

All this opportunity I have given you to be heard, meant that you cannot be heard? How can you say that? Please, have you read the text on Philip Baxter? Have you read it? No, he knows about Philip Baxter.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, with respect, when you ask me a question and I am answering, then you come in with, are you debating the Speaker?

Mr Speaker, there was a discussion; the Majority Leader had an opportunity to say his side of the story, and I am also making my point, then you come in, then the next moment is Philip Baxtering—

The Speaker: Minority Leader, when you respond this way, it is not fair. It is when I ruled, and so when I state my ruling, and you raise the same issue again, you are debating me. The ruling is clear, and I stated the ruling, and that

ends it. You can disagree with it, and you know what the Standing Order says you can do; you can come by a Substantive Motion. Please you are not part of the Gen Z.

Please, Hon Members, let us move on to the Order Paper and take the item numbered 11, commencement of the debate. And the Motion is to be moved by the Hon Member for Cape Coast South, Mr George K. Ricketts-Hagan.

MOTION

Message on the State of the Nation, 2025

Deputy Majority Leader (Mr George Kweku Ricketts-Hagan): Mr Speaker, I beg to *move*:

That this honourable House thanks H.E. the President for the Message on the State of the Nation which he delivered to Parliament on Thursday, 27th February 2025.

Mr Speaker, in doing so, I would like to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency, the President, again, for fulfilling his constitutional duty, based on Article 67, to basically tell the country the state of our nation.

Mr Speaker, I would like to make a few comments, but to start with the comment, I would like to quote from what His Excellency, the President, said on page 4, the last paragraph of his message.

Mr Speaker, and with your indulgence, I read;

"I am sad to report that the state of our nation is not good. Our country is in crisis, and our people are suffering unprecedented hardships. Mr Speaker, this is in fact"—

The Speaker: Hon Member, the last sentence, what did you say?

Mr Ricketts-Hagan: Our people are suffering unprecedented hardships.

The Speaker: The sentence, I am not talking about half of the sentence. Where you started is not the full sentence.

Mr Ricketts-Hagan: Oh, all right, Mr Speaker. Yes, I am directed.

Mr Speaker, and I quote:

"Mr Speaker, as I stated earlier, Article 67 of the 1992 Constitution requires that I give an account of the State of our Nation to Parliament. I am sad to report that the State of our Nation is not good. Our economy is in crisis, and our people are suffering unprecedented hardships."

The Speaker: Your first reading was not "our economy". It was "our country". So, what I have is different. That is why I asked you to read it again. So now, it is our economy, not our country.

Mr Ricketts-Hagan: Our economy, yes. That is what it is.

Mr Speaker, I would like to make a few comments on this profound statement that His Excellency the President made. And how we got to where we are.

Mr Speaker, His Excellency the President has only been in Office for, I believe, two months. We all knew that the economy was not in good shape. We knew we had challenges, but upon assuming Office, he has seen more, that the position is actually worse than we thought. It is clear that a lot of the flagship policies or programmes of the previous Government had actually failed. Except one, and I will start with the Free Senior High School.

Mr Speaker, in Article 25 of the Constitution, it is clear that if it is possible for the country to actually afford a free education, then the country must do so progressively. When the previous Government was in power, they decided that they were actually going to go ahead and do the free education without actually making any proper provision in terms of a budget to cover this. As a result of that, we have been successful at implementing the free education, but we have not been adequately successful in funding it.

Mr Speaker, I want to come to another flagship programme, which is the One District One Factory (1D1F). It is clear, looking back in the last eight years, when this policy was implemented, we have not actually had a lot of benefit out of it, and it is part of the hardship that we face today. We were told that about 196 companies were

successful on this programme. Yet, there is nothing much to show as to what these companies are actually doing that is having an economic impact on Ghana's economy. But what we do know is that rather than contributing to the economy, the country is actually paying taxes, basically what they call the tax exemption, which means that this is money that the country will not get.

Mr Speaker, at some stage, we were discussing about US\$300 million. Later on, it was revised down to US\$100 million. But it was clear to us that it was money that was needed to fund the elections. And, unfortunately, or fortunately for us, that did not happen. Mr Speaker, so basically, this 1D1F, which is supposed to provide us jobs, is not providing these jobs. And it is as a result of that that we are having the hardship that His Excellency John Mahama was talking about.

Now, I take another programme, which is 1D1F.

3.17 p.m. —

[MR FIRST DEPUTY SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR]

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, continue...

3.20 p.m.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, continue

Mr Ricketts-Hagan: Mr Speaker, the other flagship programme that has

contributed to the difficulties that we have in this country is to do with the Planting for Food and Jobs. This programme did not provide enough food, did not make this country achieve food security, and did not create the jobs that should be associated with this. The more Planting for Food and Jobs that we did, the less food we produced and the less jobs we created. It makes one wonder what the previous Government was planting that we did not get the food and did not get the jobs. In terms of unemployment, as His Excellency the President said, the current hardship that we are facing as a result of a number of our people not having jobs to do—Unemployment basically has moved from 8 per cent to around 14 per cent. So, it clearly tells you that all these flagship programmes that were supposed to create jobs did not actually create them. So the policies were actually a failure, to say the least.

Mr Speaker, another thing that has created the kind of hardship and the crisis this country and the economy is in, is the high level of inflation. The bulk of the inflation that we have in this country today, has been food inflation for the last eight years. We have failed in managing our currency and we have created unprecedented depreciation of Ghana's currency. It has been the worst currency for many years, and it is still the worst currency. It is interesting. When a government or a party that left power about two months ago, wants the current Government that has been in power for two months to fix the mess they created for the last eight years, I will ask them to exercise patience. Their mess will be

cleaned up, but it will take a while. So, they should not be in rush to ask the current Government to clean up the mess.

Mr Speaker, it is actually surprising that with all the problems they created and the amount of debt that we have on our books that resulted in us going to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), even the debt restructuring that we were supposed to do was a mess. We could not restructure the Domestic Debt Exchange properly. We could not do the external one properly. In fact, we used GHC137 billion or we were to use GHC137 billion to do this Domestic Debt Exchange, and the threshold was to achieve 80 per cent. We could have done so without involving the Pension Fund. The Pension Fund was only about 25 or 26 per cent, and they still would have got their 80 percent threshold just by taking 80 percent of GHC137 billion, but they were flip-flopping. “Hardship” is what President Mahama said, and the cause of that hardship is what I am telling you. Hardship—What has brought us where we are, the suffering that we are in today was as a result of the incompetent management of the economy for the last eight years. [*Hear! Hear!*] The poor management of the economy is what has brought us here. The reckless expenditure, the frivolous ones is what has brought us here today, and that is what His Excellency President Mahama was talking about.

Mr Speaker, they went ahead to do the External Debt Exchange. They made a mess there, and for a very long time they could not complete that deal. Part of

it was deliberate by the Government because they knew what would happen, that if they complete that External Debt Exchange Programme, the Cedi would have further depreciated because they would have to start paying the monies that they have not paid since 2022; this country was not paying a debt from 2022. We never paid a single debt of our external debt until 3rd January, 2025, when His Excellency President Nana Akufo-Addo came to read his last Message on the State of the Nation when he told us US\$346 million was going to be paid. Until then, they had paid nothing and our debt was just ballooning. Why would Ghanaians not feel hardship? Why would people not feel in their pocket that things are not working for them?

Mr Speaker, the hardship the President is talking about is the IMF Programme that was negotiated by the previous Government. They have already finished their money. Two-thirds of their money had already been taken; US\$2 billion out of the US\$3 billion had been spent and nobody knows what that money had even been used for. The last payment they got—They always talk about smart borrowing, and I do not know whether there is also smart payment because they said they had borrowed smartly. The IMF gave them over US\$300 million. The last money that they took from the IMF, what did they do with it? They took it to go and pay debt. So that is smart payment, according to them, and that money did not benefit the economy the way it should. That is why we have the kind of hardship that we have in this country

today. Again, because of their poor management of the economy—They always talk about having managed the economy better than this and better than that; yet, simple things that they could have done, they could not do them.

Today, they talk about having negotiated debt so well. I did not know negotiating debt was actually an achievement. The mess they have created, they have negotiated it so well that Ghana is not going to pay anything until 2026. Now, the question I ask is that, in 2026, are they the ones going to pay that debt or they negotiated it for us for 2026? They were taking Euro bonds that should mature in 2060. The managers of the economy knew they would not be allowed to be part of that payment and these are all debts that we are saddled with that we will have to pay going forward. And this country is not going to get out of the situation we are in for a very long time. Long after even when His Excellency John Mahama is gone, there will be more debt that they have created. They took the debt from GH¢120 billion to nearly GH¢800 billion. How did they do that? In eight years, they took our debt from GH¢120 billion to nearly GH¢800 billion, and they are saying we should clap for them because they have borrowed and put this country in the difficulty that we are in. President Mahama has promised that he will clean the mess and we pray that such a government under such a president never rules Ghana again. [*Hear! Hear!*]

In fact, there should be a library for all Presidents. We should move a Private Member's Bill for a library to be created

for all Presidents. So that for a President like Nana Akufo-Addo, there will be records of how not to be a bad President. *[Hear! Hear!]*

03.24 p.m.

Mr Speaker, we have just scratched the surface of the problem that has been created in this country. And when I hear that, “you said you were going to increase the money for cocoa farmers. Why do you not do it now? You are going to do this, go and find the money”. They have closed all avenues of getting money to fund their Budget.

We have, for the first time in this country, under their Government, been declared a junk status; it has never happened in Ghana's history. Never has it happened in Ghana's history that rating agencies such as Fitch Ratings Inc., Moody's Ratings, Standard & Poor Global Ratings are all declaring Ghana a junk status. Is that the good performance of the economy that they are talking about? Is that the good manager of the economy that we are talking about? Now, creating a junk economy makes one a good economic manager? Then as somebody said before, that their kids could manage Ghana's economy.

Mr Speaker, we are in a very difficult situation. We still owe the Chinese about 3 billion which we have not paid. Mr Speaker, we owe the Paris Club 3.8 billion which we have not paid. We also owe the non-Paris Club another 3.8 billion which we have not paid. Even the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, we have borrowed money from. We owe them 8.8 billion

which we have not paid. With the 13 billion Euro Bond, the President came here during the Message on the State of the Nation, at 11th hour, to tell us that they are paying 346 million; that is what we have paid out of the 13 billion that we owe the Euro Bond. They have structured a deal with our creditors to an extent that every year, going forward, we will be paying US\$1 billion every year. That is what they have saddled President Mahama with. That is what they have saddled the NDC Government with. Yet, they have found their voices again in just less than two months.

They have wrecked this economy and in two months, they have found their voices again and are criticising a two-month-old Government that it should resolve an eight-year-old mess. This is unbelievable!

They have been a reckless, reckless Government. They have run this country down totally and they found their voices all of a sudden. It is not even six months and they are talking again. They are talking about taxes again. Yet, they have only been away for two months.

Mr Speaker, this is a serious situation that we are in, and at the moment, we cannot actually go to the Capital Market and we should not.

When we were in Government, and we were taking— The first Euro Bond was taken by the former President Kufuor for 750 million. Subsequently, 1 billion was taken by the NDC Government; I think in three different tranches.

Now, what did the NPP Government do? They came into office and started with 3 billion Euro bond. What the NDC Government would have taken in three years? Have they forgotten that the former President Kufuor's 750 million was paid by the NDC Government by putting money in the Sinking Fund to do that? They have saddled this country with debt, and I would beg them not to be talking about debt. It was rich of the former President, Nana Akufo-Addo, in his last Message on the State of the Nation, to say that we should make sure we do not default. It was quite laughable. The President who has presided over over-borrowing, who has unilaterally decided not to pay his debt from 2022, and who was not paying any interest and has never paid any, was telling President Mahama that he should not default.

The Minority Side have found their voices early. And they have to take their time because Ghanaians have not forgotten; they will be in opposition for a very long time. Because Ghanaians will not forget what they have done so soon. It does not matter how much noise they make. [*Hear! Hear!*] It does not matter what they call themselves, a mighty Minority. They are going to be in opposition for a very long time.

Mr Speaker, with these few words, I move that this august House thanks the President for the Message on the State of the Nation.

Mr Speaker, I thank you very much.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, the Motion to thank His Excellency the President on the Message on the State of the Nation has been moved.

Any seconder?

Mr Dominic Bingab Aduna Nitiwul (NPP — Bimbilla): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, I hope my Hon Friend remembers the song, *Kwaku Frimpong ɔdi asem beba*. I hope he remembers that song very well. We had a very beautiful morning, and “Kwaku Frimpong” has decided to bring trouble into this House.

Mr Speaker, I rise to second the Motion, ably moved by my Friend from Cape Coast South Constituency. [*Interruption*] I said Kwaku Ricketts.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Dominic Nitiwul, the name is George Kwaku Ricketts-Hagan.

Mr Nitiwul: Well, Mr Speaker, I thank you for the correction, but nothing takes away from the fact that he should remember the song, *Kwaku Frimpong ɔdi asem beba*.

Mr Speaker, I am very shocked about the supposed harsh words that Mr Ricketts-Hagan is attempting to place on the last eight years on the managers of the economy and the country as a whole. If these words that he has spoken are that harsh, and he believes that this is a true judgment, I want to give him just about four or five or even six items for us to

compare. If we describe the 2017 to 2024, this harshly, what would he describe the 2009 to 2016 economy? Mr Speaker, because the NPP's record of economic growth under former President Akufo-Addo is higher than what we came to meet under President Mahama's previous Government.

Mr Speaker, the record of per capita income is higher than what we came to meet. The record of agricultural growth is higher than what we came to meet; the record of industrial growth under NPP-Akufo-Addo Government is higher than what we came to meet. Mr Speaker, the record of job creation is higher than what we came to meet.

Mr Speaker, the record of fiscal deficit is higher than theirs; the record on primary balance is higher than theirs, and the record on trade balance is higher than theirs. In fact, the record on current account balance is higher than theirs, and the record of Gross International Reserves are also higher than theirs.

3.40 p.m.

Mr Speaker, the New Patriotic Party's (NPP) record of cumulative exchange rate depreciation is higher than theirs. When he describes this economy on the terms he has, how would he describe the John Mahama Economy? — **[An Hon Member: chaskele]**—It is worse than *chaskele*. If what they are describing is so bad and all the major indicators of the economy is higher than what we came to meet, what would they use to describe President John Mahama's economy? In spite of that, he has become

President again, and they think we on this Side cannot rule? When we compare the indicators, they cannot be compared—

Mr Speaker, I read from the President's Message and he said:

“I have not come here to lament the state of our country, though there is much to lament. I understand why I was elected with such high voter confidence—to solve their problems.”

This is what this President said, and that it is not his style to lament and shift blame. Unfortunately, 80 per cent of the speech was to lament and to shift blame. But Mr Speaker, I have a message from the ordinary man on the streets. The ordinary man on the streets says that President Mahama should note that complaining and campaigning are over; we are in a solution provision time now. Ghana finished reading the book of Lamentations on 7th December, 2024, by voting for him to solve the country's problems.

We did not vote for him to come and complain. He should kindly focus on implementing all the solutions he promised in his manifesto. He cannot shift our minds from this. We are fed up with the complaints. He made us believe he could solve Ghana's problems, and we voted for him. His complaints are too much. If he cannot use the power we have given him to solve the problems he complains about, Mr President should let us know.

Mr Speaker, to start with, we inherited an economy that was in decline; check the growth rate of that economy. The banking sector was in distress. Then, unquestionable power sector contracts were signed, saddling us with a debt of over US\$1.5 billion at that time—they were 19. We had turbulence in the global economy. Everybody knows, and he does too because he is an economist. Still, under Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, in eight years, we created 2.3 million jobs from 2017—**[Some Hon Members from the Majority: Ei!]**—

Mr Speaker, we initiated and oversaw the construction and rehabilitation of more railways than any Government in Ghana in our history. We constructed more public libraries than any other Government since 1992. We constructed more fishing landing sites than any other Government since 1992—**[Some Hon Members: Ei!]**—We constructed two major fishing harbours in Elimina and James Town. We constructed more sanitation facilities than any other Government since 1992—**[Some Hon Members: Ei!]**—We have constructed more sporting facilities than any other Government since 1992. We have resourced the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) and the Ghana Police Service and increased their capacity more than any other Government since 1992.

Mr Speaker, we abolished their wicked and inhuman three-month arrears policy for teachers and cleared all of them. We restored the teaching and nursing trainees' allowance that were cancelled under President Mahama. We

introduced free education for all children. We never asked for Category A or B schools. My little brother from a small village in Nyamanyama is now in Mfantsipim School—**[Hear! Hear!]**—They do not pay anything. We increased Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) Programme from GH¢49 million under Mahama in 2016 to GH¢423 million in 2023. From GH¢49 million to GH¢423 million—That is the record they are inheriting; that is what they have been measured by, and that is the economy they are describing as bad and wasteful?

Mr Speaker, we increased expenditure on the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) from GH¢1.1 billion in 2016 to GH¢6.8 billion in 2024. We introduced the largest medical drone service in the world; it was so efficiently done—**[Interruption]**—Do they want me to remind them that it saved the life of their chairman? Today, they describe this economy as bad. They should measure up to it. We doubled the number of student loan recipients from 30,000 on average per year before its introduction to 58,000 as of today. We registered over 18 million people for the ECOWAS Card, a project they blatantly refused to embark on and felt was not important.

Today, all tax identification, Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT), driver licences, public payroll, criminal records, SIM cards are all interlinked to make one's life easy. We substantially increased and augmented the strength of all the security services: the GAF, the Police Service, Ghana Immigration Service, Ghana Prisons

Service, Ghana National Fire Service, National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO), Ghana Ambulance Service. We increased their numbers and resourced them, and that is what they met. That is why we confidently say that they inherited a very peaceful country; it is second, only in Africa. That is what they inherited.

Mr Speaker, we made investments in all the security services across the whole country. We introduced, the Zongo Development Fund (ZoDF), and constructed infrastructure across all zongo communities, including theirs—[**Some Hon Members:** *Ei!*]—We paid the outstanding pension funds contributions of the public sector workers that we inherited. We established five green houses at Dawenya to enhance vegetable cultivation. We passed the Right to Information Act, 2019 (Act 989). We passed the Affirmative Action Act (Gender Equality) Act 2024, which they just referred to today.

3.50 p.m.

Mr Speaker, we completed and commissioned Phase II and III of the Prempeh I International Airport project in Kumasi, involving the construction of a new terminal building capable of handling a million passengers yearly, including a car park, apron, and all access roads. And Phase I of rehabilitation of the Sunyani Airport, and upgraded and commissioned the Yakubu Tali International Airport in Tamale.

Mr Speaker, I will address what the Hon Member said, but I just want to quote the Chairman of the NDC in 2017,

when former President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo came to this House, and I quote:

“Whatever it is, I am not interested in arguing about the statistics or otherwise of statistics. I am not interested in arguing about the correctness or otherwise of statistics. The bottom line is that whatever terms you describe the economy today, you were fully aware of its state before making your promises. So, I will not use the statistics to form the basis of justifying. And so, I hope he [President Mahama] will not use the statistics to form the basis of justifying when or why he will not be able to implement the promises you promised. We are going to hold you responsible.”

That is the Chairman of the NDC.

Mr Speaker, three things, before I sit. First, is to the Minister for Education, that the Director-General of Ghana Education Service (GES) is overstepping his boundaries—

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

I will now proceed to give the floor to Hon Isaac Adongo. Hon Isaac Adongo, the time is 50 minutes past three, so you have 15 minutes. Please, the floor is yours.

Mr Isaac Adongo (NDC — Bolgatanga Central): Mr Speaker, I rise to contribute to the debate to thank H. E. the President for delivering a very

inspiring Message on the State of the Nation to Parliament. Of course, my Colleague has said it; it is obvious that Kweku Frimpong *di asem beba*. [Laughter]

Mr Speaker, it was only under the previous Government that when the former Vice President Dr Bawumia digitalises—*nsamanfoɔ agye kuro no fa*. He digitalised to bring forth ghosts at the National Service Secretariat (NSS); that is what their digitalisation is about. Mr Speaker, Bawumia *baako*, *nsamanfoɔ bebre*—[Laughter]—To wit, “one Bawumia, thousand ghosts”.

Mr Speaker, we live in a country where after eight years, some people cannot show us a completed functioning hospital. All they have are uncompleted projects at various stages of completion. We have been hearing various stages of completion since 2017. When are they going to complete them? Of course, Bawumia *baako*, uncompleted projects *bebre*.

But, Mr Speaker, when they leave an economy that is struggling to pay its debts, do they want us to invite them to a banquet? An economy where their debt strategy was to borrow recklessly, default in payments, and declare bankruptcy. Do they want the President to come smiling when he is delivering this gloomy picture that they have given him? If that amounts to lamentation, then so be it because the Minority left him an economy that can only be lamented upon.

Mr Speaker, when we have an economy where, *ab initio*, everywhere we turn has debts, we take an economy which already has been restructured and we need to find GH¢280 billion from day one; of course, one can only lament. We cannot be praising and singing tunes.

Mr Speaker, when one inherits an economy where every week, we have to borrow to pay a debt of GH¢6.5 billion, certainly, that is not the type of economy we expect the President to come and clap hands for. But, when one inherits an economy where the Electricity Company of Ghana (ECG), after all the tariff increases, where when people buy even credits, they are afraid to slot their cards in when they get home because immediately they put in the card, the credit goes *hwi*. Do they want the President to come here and clap for them for that type of economy? On top of that, Ghana is still owing GH¢68 billion. Are they not scared that they left this type of economy for H. E. the President?

If H. E. the President appears at a time when COCOBOD is owing GH¢32.5 billion and already has commitments of about GH¢21 billion, cumulatively, GH¢55 billion is what they left for him. This is not a tea-making party, and they want him to come here and be clapping for them. When he tells the people of Ghana this is the economy the Minority left, they said that is lamentation. Mr Speaker, Bawumia *baako*, *eka bebre*. If we pass through ECG, there is debt. Cocoa Board, *eye* debt. Government of Ghana—

The treasury at the Ministry of Finance—In fact, I think Dr Cassiel Ato Baah Forson may have to convert that Ministry into a debt-paying ministry. This is because, whether he has a job to do or not, every Thursday, he must go to the Bank of Ghana and auction to be able to raise money to refinance the Minority's mess, and they are here holding press conferences for creating the mess that he is trying to clean for them.

I heard my good Friend at the back saying that it is scary. The Minority have given us a caricature of an economy. What to fear in our economy is the type of picture they have created for us and when H. E. the President says that, they say that is lamentation. Mr Speaker, they gave us a lamentable economy and that is the only state of the nation that H. E. the President can speak to.

Mr Speaker, when you have a group of people who have been so reckless to the point one finds difficult to understand, and when a person decides to put a stop to their recklessness, they call the person a terminator. Unfortunately for them, the man who inherited their mess is a ruthless terminator. John Mahama is a terminator of ghosts at NSS. H. E. John Mahama came to terminate the Minority's mess just here: the 58 million holes that they left for him. Mr Speaker, H. E. John Mahama came to terminate corruption, the waste in the economy, and the rental of private jets that the Minority were so accustomed to.

Mr Speaker, we have a President who terminated all the wrongs that have

occasioned the management of our economy. The destruction and collapse of our banks have been terminated by H. E. John Mahama. They should be praising him for terminating the messy economy that they left for him. We are now on the path to a proper growth that is inclusive and will create jobs for our people, and the Minority should be praising H. E. John Mahama for that foresight.

Mr Speaker, we have a country where our Colleagues, borrowed to the extent that every corner where they were giving institute loans, they were there. Susu loans, they were interested. In fact, I remember Mr Kojo Oppong Nkrumah was the Minister for Information when he tried to educate me on what is called the Samurai bond, Panda bond, and Century bond. These are the people; they were experts in bonds.

When one asks Mr Kojo Oppong Nkrumah, he would say that this is a Samurai bond and it is in Japan. They knew every corner where loans were being given out—[*Laughter*]*—Panda bond. I want to ask Mr Kojo Oppong Nkrumah whether they are still giving out the Panda bond? —[Laughter]—Mr Speaker, there was actually a bond called Century bond. Bawumia baako, bonds bebre. What is even painful is that omo bo bosea no aa omo entua. Wofa no no, w'agye ne din. They do not pay.*

4.00 p.m.

Theirs is *takashi* debt management record. Borrow recklessly, default in payment, issue “To whom it may

concern,” and declare bankruptcy. And the descendants of this type of government are here, holding press conferences. I have seen that my Leader is here. He should lead his team to Effutu to find a river, where they would wash off their sins before they come back here. There was a musician who said, “*Momma me sapɔ ne samina na me nnware me ho fi wɔ dwa mu*”; they are the people there.

Mr Speaker, I am sure there is a sea in the Constituency of the Hon Member for Effutu. He should take them there to go and wash their sins, because what they did is not acceptable anywhere in the world.

Mr Speaker, His Excellency John Dramani Mahama is the saviour of our economy. [*Hear! Hear!*] Mr Speaker, His Excellency John Dramani Mahama has brought the good news. The 24-hour economy is coming. Mr Speaker, agric-mechanisation centres are coming to create proper agriculture production for our economy. Mr Speaker, women are jubilating because we are bringing the Women’s Development Bank, to provide tailored credit to our women. Mr Speaker, our Zongo women are waiting for the Soyayya Fund, to provide credit to our women in the Zongo communities. We are not going to set up a Zongo Development Fund, or a Zongo Development Ministry, but we would have better impact in the Zongo communities than they have been able to think about.

Mr Speaker, our youth are unemployed, and we are very clear what we want to do. We are in a generation of

technology and we want to bring the one million coders programme, where our children would be taught to develop a career in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The artificial intelligence that is passing us by, we would be arresting them, and bringing it to our youth here. Machine learning would be part of our work, and data coding would be one of our things that we would be doing in our country. Do not forget that we built the data centre. We built the digital centre and we are going to do business process outsourcing to recruit over a thousand of our youth into ICT, in addition to the coding programme.

Mr Speaker, for your information, today the Minister for Transport is in Rwanda, learning best practices to come and formalise *okada* transport to help manage the traffic. That is the Government that we are working on, and the Minority needs to understand that their mess—It is because of *okada*, Ghanaians showed them the way, and gave them a deficit of 1.7 million votes. They have still not learned their lessons.

Mr Speaker, there is only one group of people who are capable of turning this country around. We are the descendants of His Excellency Jerry John Rawlings. [*Hear! Hear!*] We are the only group of people who have managed the most difficult economic era in the history of our country. In 1983, when Ghanaians arrived here from Nigeria and we could not even find food to eat, the founder of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), Jerry John Rawlings, fixed the mess, and we turned this country around.

And we would do just that now, and we would make sure by the time His Excellency John Dramani Mahama leaves office, it would be very clear to them that it is not how long they stay in power, but it is the impact they make while they are in power. And that he would do what they could not do in eight years; he would do it in four years and even more. And that is what we are focused on delivering to the people of Ghana.

Mr Speaker, we are beginning to build the next generation of leaders for our country. Just look around the Ministers we have appointed. You can see our focus on youth and our focus on women. The aim is to build the next generation of leaders, not just for the NDC, but for our country. And that if a young man who wants to aspire for the future, the best place to come is the NDC, because the NDC gives opportunities to the youth. It is only in the NDC that people like Sammy Gyamfi would be given very huge appointments. It is only in NDC that Basintale would be leading the youth of our country. It is only in NDC that Opare Addo would be a Cabinet Minister.

Mr Speaker, the important thing is that when they were in government, Kojo Oppong-Nkrumah was about the youngest man in their government. Kojo should come to this Side because we would give him more opportunities as the National Democratic Congress.

Mr Speaker, at this point in time, it is safe to say that when His Excellency John Dramani Mahama appeared in this

House, a new dawn had fallen on our country. We had moved away from the kind of economic management that was based on sloganeering. We would digitalise. Today, can they show me their digital blueprints after eight years? Where is their digital blueprint? Their digitalisation was in the head of one man roaming around. What if a car crashes his head? That is the kind of digitalisation they were running. Mr Speaker, we were in a country where Ghana card actually captured the data of a human being, and when the human being himself appeared, they asked, “Where is your Ghana card?” What type of digitalisation is that? That you digitalise, take my bio-data on a card, and when I appear, I am not important, but the card that is lying at home is important. Go to your bank today and do not carry your Ghana card—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, conclude.

Mr Adongo: We would make sure that there is proper digitalisation so that when one appears at the bank, they can access their digital data and be processed; that is digitalisation. That is going to be spearheaded by a blueprint that would inform our actions on digitalisation, not a walk-alone digitalisation in the head of one man called Dr Mahamudu Bawumia.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.
[Hear! Hear!]

Mr First Deputy Speaker: It is now the turn of Hon Richard Acheampong. —
[Pause]

Hon Richard Acheampong, you have the floor.

Minority Members — *rose* —

[Uproar]

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Order!

[Uproar]

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: What is going on in this Chamber? Why? This has never happened in the history of Ghana's politics. That will not happen.

[Pause]

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Let me listen to the Minority Leader.

Hon Minority Leader, you have the floor. — *[Pause]*

Hon Members, would you listen to your Leader?

Minority Leader (Osahen Alexander Kwamena Afenyo-Markin): Mr Speaker, we have practices and conventions of this House, and we have all observed these practices and conventions since 1997.

4.10 p.m.

Mr Speaker, never has this House ever resorted to situations where in debate, we go by numerical strength. It has never happened before —

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, order! You should have the courtesy to listen to your Leader.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, in 2001, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) was in Majority. The opportunity was equally given in debates. In 2004 again, the NPP was in Majority, and opportunity was given equally for debates. In 2009, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) was in Majority, and opportunity was given for Members to equally share the platform for debates. In 2013, the NDC was in Majority, again, equal opportunity was given for Members on both Sides to have debates. In 2017, the NPP had an overwhelming majority of 169, the first in our history.

Mr Speaker, in this, there was nothing like the NDC being given less opportunity to speak.

Mr Speaker, at all material times, in 2017 all the way to 2021, time allotted—If Members were given 10 minutes, the 10 minutes was for both Sides, 15 minutes for Ranking Members and Chairpersons was observed. Leaders had their 30 and 40 minutes, and it was done for both Sides.

Again, when it came to how the debates had to be shared, if the NDC Minority had five, the NPP Majority equally had five.

Mr Speaker, it must be emphasised that even in travels, when it came to delegations, there was nothing like the Majority having more. Mr Speaker, it never happened—Can I finish? Hon Member, when I finish, you would have the opportunity to also have your bite. So, listen.

Mr Speaker, in opposition, I recall —

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Leader, this is a house of record.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, can I finish my submission? **Mr First Deputy Speaker:** No, I just want to clarify the issue with you.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, let me finish my submission, most respectfully.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: As a house of record, are you saying as a fact that in travel, the proportions are not applied?

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, I am making my submission, let me finish — [*Uproar*]—

Mr Speaker, the Majority Leader will have an opportunity to come and make his submission. May I finish? Mr Speaker, I had an opportunity— May I use myself as an example? It is a fact that I know. Mr Speaker, I had an opportunity to travel with Hon Ebo Barton-Oduro —

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Leader, let me recognise the Hon Majority Leader.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: That is fine. Please recognise him.

Majority Leader (Mr Mahama Ayariga): Mr Speaker, he made a statement claiming that travels were equally distributed, which is not the case.

You are trying to draw his attention so that he would correct that, and he is refusing to correct that. Mr Speaker, this should not be the way that we go about business in this House. The records are capturing that, which is not true. It is not true. It depends. For instance, if there is a travel in which you are sending two people, you may say, one person from the Minority and one person from Majority, in which case one may say it is equal. But where there is a delegation of five, it has never been the case that we share equally.

So, Mr Speaker, at least he should correct that fact and continue to make his point. Please, let us develop that culture where when the Speaker is drawing one's attention to what appears to be an inaccurate statement, one deals with it.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, as Speakers, we do not take part in the debate, but sometimes we provide some guidance. So, there is nothing wrong if during your contribution, your attention is drawn to something. The Speaker is not taking part in the debate by drawing your attention to that particular fact. It happens in every democracy.

So, Minority leader, you have the floor.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity. Mr Speaker, between 2013 and 2017, I was in this House. The opportunities that I had from the Minority Caucus for travel, the delegation was equal. We were in

Minority. When we came into the Majority in 2017 to 2021, the opportunities that I had to travel on delegation, again, I saw equal numbers.

Mr Speaker, between January 2021 and January 2025, the Eighth Parliament, on all occasions of travels, there were equal numbers. Mr Speaker, in making this submission, I invite *Hansard* to refer to all records of my official travels in this House. Which travels, *Hansard* would confirm that per the administrative records, these were equal opportunities given for Members to travel. That is just by the way.

Now, let us come to the debate. Mr Speaker, it has never been the practice of this House that when it comes to debate, based on numerical strength, the Minority would have less time. And to worsen the case, the Minority is even given less opportunity in terms of numbers, all because the Majority has more. Mr Speaker, I have had cause to draw the attention of my Colleagues in the Majority that only yesterday, we were to the right of Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, I recall all the concerns that the Minority then raised and we had to bend over to ensure that they were heard. Mr Speaker, let us be careful of this precedent that is being set. Let us be careful.

Mr Speaker, the last time the Majority Leader was presenting the Business Statement and brought this matter up, he said that the public is getting a certain impression that we are overshadowing them. Those were his

words. The Majority Leader — I am not misquoting. The man is right here and he said that because of the equal numbers that we share in debates, the public is getting a certain impression that we are overshadowing them. The *Hansard* is there—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority leader, the Majority Leader is on his feet, so kindly resume your seat.

4.20p.m.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, very well, it is his *bona fide*. Recognise him; I will come back.

Mr Ayariga: Mr Speaker, the point I made on Friday was that when there are 188 people sharing equal time with 88 people —*[Interruption]*. I said, when there are 188 people sharing allocated time —*[Interruption]*.

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

Mr Ayariga: I said when there are 188 people sharing time equally with 88 people, and what is done is that, more opportunity is given to the 88 people than the 188, is that all right? That was the point I made. To the extent that because your Side gets to speak more often than my Side, one of your former Ministers went on television and said that the people on this Side do not know how to debate and they do not participate in debate. This is because the Minority Side gets more opportunities than the people on this Side. That is the point I made that day.

Mr Frist Deputy Speaker: Yes, you have the floor, continue.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, just before I continue with my submissions, the records of this House have it that the New Patriotic Party (NPP) Minority has 88, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) has 183, and the four Independent Members wrote to inform the Speaker that they were going to join the NDC. Therefore, the Majority is made up of 187 Members, not 188, for the record.

Mr Speaker, I decided to listen quietly so that I do the correction without rising on a point of order, and I want the Majority Leader to oblige me.

Mr Speaker, they are trying to set a bad precedent, which bad precedent will bring chaos to this House. Which bad precedent will crucify democracy. Mr Speaker, we have human rights activists on the Majority Side. The lead human rights activist is the Majority Leader. Why are they trying to, as it were, go against the promises of our Constitution? Equal opportunity is guaranteed.

Mr Speaker, we will not, I repeat, we will not allow the Majority to use its numbers to intimidate us. Mr Speaker, they should know that they are not going to be in this Majority forever. Today, the Minister for Education, Alhaji Haruna Iddrisu, is in this House, and his Side is proposing this. *Ei, Haruna! Ei, Haruna! Ei, Haruna!* And Mr Speaker, Hon Mahama Ayariga, who was a *de facto* legal advisor to the Dr Ato Forson Leadership, is today, saying that if he

gets three, we should get one. It will not happen today; it will not happen tomorrow.

Mr Speaker, this is coming from a Harvard scholar.

Mr Frist Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Leader, I think you have made your point, conclude.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, I am not done, with respect.

Mr First Deputy speaker: You have made your point; it is very clear. May you conclude.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, the last time when this matter came up, the Second Deputy Speaker, who was in the Chair, made it clear that when the matter came up for discussion, Mr Speaker himself opposed to this arrangement and I said that we should go to Mr Speaker for a discussion on this matter. The Second Deputy Speaker rejected this proposal. Mr Speaker, we therefore, accepted, and approved the Business Committee Report without that item. So, this is not a matter that we have agreed to.

Mr Speaker, it is a way they want to use to run away from their own Message on the State of the Nation. We are ready to debate the Message on the State of the Nation. If they do not want us to debate the Message on the State of the Nation, they should say so. If they cannot stand the heat of the Minority, they can walk out. Walk out is part of parliamentary practice. They should walk out. They can

go out. Today they are saying that they have a Majority. Look at their seats; look at all the empty seats. They are even less than 70; they are 64 Members. They claim that they have a Majority, 64. They have 187 Members but they only brought 64 Members for an important day like this. Absent Majority; absentee Majority Members. Where are they? Count; empty seats all over. Then they want to use the empty seats to intimidate us. We will not allow them. It will not happen today. It will not happen tomorrow. We will resist the Majority Side.

Mr Speaker, please rule on this matter. Stop them. It is our turn to debate. We are ready. Hon Abena Osei-Asare is ready. She is our next to debate. Allow her to debate. You are not calling another person from their Side. I submit. *[Hear! Hear!]*

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Majority Leader?

Mr Ayariga: Mr Speaker, last Friday morning, the Business Committee met and our own Standing Orders say that one of the responsibilities of the Business Committee is to allot time for debate. We agreed that we were going to debate for four days and for each of the days, there would be ten contributors. So, if one multiplies four by ten, that will be forty. This Side of the House, represented at the Committee meeting by four Members, proposed that we should share the time equally. They will take 20 and this Side will take 20. So, each day; five people on their Side and five people on our Side. Our Side said no, we could not allot the time equally because we are

not equal —*[Interruption]*. Mr Speaker, We —*[Interruption]*—

4.30 p.m.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Majority Leader, please continue. *[Pause]*

Hon Minority Leader, with all due respect, he is making allusion to matters that happened at the Business Committee. I am mindful of giving the floor to the Minority Chief Whip to also speak on the matter, so that he can have the opportunity to make his view heard as to the matters at the Business Committee. That is what I intend to do.

Hon Minority Leader, the convention is very clear that, at any point in time, I will recognise the Majority Leader and the Minority Leader against each other on a point of order, but to recognise another person against the Minority Leader and the Majority Leader on the point of order is not the way we should go. You know the time-tested practice, so why do you want us to do otherwise? *[Pause]*

Hon Members, order! If it were to be the Minority Leader who is up on the point of order against the Majority Leader, I would have recognised him— *[Pause]*

Hon Minority Leader, what your Side is requesting me to do will be to the effect that anytime at all that you, as the Minority Leader, is on your feet, I can recognise any other Member on a point of order.

Hon Minority Leader, I will give you the floor.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, the practice has always been that when there is a point of order, any Member in Leadership can rise. Mr Speaker, you sitting in as Speaker— Check the records: Mr Dafeamekpor is a Chief Whip—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hence, the absence of the Majority Leader—

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, can I finish?

The problem is that you also do not listen to us. I have had several occasions where Mr Ricketts-Hagan will be seated, and Dafeamekpor will rise on the point of order against me, and I will resume my seat. It is the Chief Whip of the Minority who got up on his feet to raise a point of order.

In fact, Mr Speaker, I will bring you a *Hansard* where the Majority Leader was seated right here, yet Mr Dafeamekpor rose on a point of order against me. The *Hansard* is there, and you were presiding. Mr Speaker, let us get the precedent clear; the Minority Chief Whip was on his feet on a point of order. When I was making my submission, the Majority Leader stood up on three occasions against me on a point of order. He was at the Business Committee meeting; at least, recognise him. He is a Chief Whip in Leadership. I am not saying that any other Member outside; I have never said so. So, please, kindly recognise him with all due respect.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Minority Leader, if it is matters emanating from the Business Committee, allow the Majority Leader to land, and I will give the floor to the Minority Chief Whip.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, this is a point of order, and you never allowed me to finish my point. Let us not treat ourselves this way. What is happening is dangerous for democracy. It is dangerous, Mr Speaker. Allow him to make his point of order submission. If he finishes and you think that it is not well situated, you can rule him out. But, please, allow him; Mr Speaker, allow him. I am pleading with you; please allow him.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Minority Chief Whip, strictly on point of order under Order 122.

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Mr Speaker, The Majority Leader was misleading the House. First of all, he came late to the Business Committee. Before he arrived, we had come to some good agreement. First, we had agreed on a number of people who should speak before he came. We had agreed that five apiece: five on our Side, five on their Side. We had also agreed that chairpersons of Committees, Ranking Members and Deputies will be allocated 15 minutes. Other Members in Leadership will be allocated 20 minutes. Then other Members will be allocated 10 minutes. That was the agreement. The five from each Side was agreed.

This morning, Mr Speaker, I gave you the list at Conclave. If they had contrary views, they should have raised

it at Conclave. What is this? Why are they picking and choosing? So, he should not mislead the House. And next time, he should come early enough. If he has very good suggestions to make at the Business Committee, he should come to the meeting on time. He came late, and when he came, the decision had been taken already.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Minority Chief Whip, what was the decision contained in the Business Statement adopted on Friday?

Mr Annoh-Dompreh: Mr Speaker, you have asked me a question. Can I answer? Yes, so, the Second Deputy Speaker presided, and we debated on the same matter, and the Second Deputy Speaker said that the matter on the number of people who speak on each Side, the convention and practice should be sustained. That was the ruling—*[Interruption]*—No, that was the ruling, and he said, as far as he is concerned, one from here and one from there. That was said. That was the decision.

Mr Speaker, you can refer to the *Hansard*; that was the decision.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Majority Leader, you have the floor.

Mr Ayariga: Mr Speaker, the work that we do in this House requires the highest level of integrity. The Speaker himself, today, severally, reiterated the importance of integrity.

Mr Speaker, I arrived at the Business Committee meeting late and then, when

they indicated that they had agreed that they would present five people and we would present five people, I objected.

4.40 p.m.

I said, no, this is not possible. There and then, my Majority Chief Whip said, it is as if Leader was here. When you made this proposal, I objected, but you overpowered me. You see, my Leader has come and he has repeated the same position—*[Interruption]*—Those are the facts, he knows, I will not lie. Mr Speaker, I will not lie.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Ayariga: So, apparently, it had been raised by the Chief Whip on this Side, but they concluded that it should be five, but I said, no. I said, I will not accept it because they cannot be 88, and we will be 187, and we would share equally with them—*[Uproar]*—I refused. So, we debated, but we could not arrive at a consensus. Because we could not arrive at a consensus, we said that the matter should be put to a vote.

The matter was put to a vote, and they said they did not want to vote and they were objecting to the decision. I said, the Standing Order says decision should be by voting. So, if they would vote, they should vote; if they would not vote, then they are abstaining, and they said they were not abstaining. I said, if they are not abstaining and they are not voting, what kind of position is that? So, we voted and recorded the votes. The vote was that seven of us approved the decision to use the population size in the House as a ratio

by which we will share contribution. Four of them said we should record that they were against the decision. We said, that meant that they were voting against the decision. Seven had voted for, so we had taken the day. We came to this Chamber and we reported. We rehearsed the same arguments. The arguments that he is repeating here were rehearsed here on Friday in this Chamber.

Mr Speaker, we said, the rules are that the Business Committee should programme debates and allot time, and we have met and allotted the time. This Side will take 68 per cent of the time, and they will take 32 per cent of the time. Then they objected, but the Report was adopted. After the adoption of the Report, the Speaker made some statements saying that he thinks that contributions should be governed by Order 115, and I said, no, that is his opinion.

So, I insisted that we should state clearly what the conclusion was. Then he said the conclusion of the House was that it had adopted the Report of the Business Committee. Is that all right? But he, the Speaker, had expressed his view on the matter. He said it was just his view. Everybody was here. He said it was just his view. But that the Report is what has been adopted, and the Report says that this Side should enjoy 68 per cent of the time, and that Side should enjoy 32 per cent of the time. That was the conclusion.

Mr Speaker, we will go by the conclusions of the Business Committee as adopted. [**Some Hon Members of the Minority:** We will not go by it.]—If you

will not participate in the debate, you can leave—[*Uproar*]—We will debate. We are going to debate, and this is going to be the order of Business going forward.

Mr Speaker, he spent about 30 minutes trying to justify his position. Our Side—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members—

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu —*rose*—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Are you on a point of order?

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Yes

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, Alhaji Habib Iddrisu?

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: *On a point of order.* Mr Speaker, the Majority Leader is misleading the House. He is misleading the House in the sense that when he presented the Business Statement, I was the first to be on my feet and I raised the issue with regard to precedents of this House. And I also drew the Speaker's attention to Order 115.

Mr Speaker, if we check the Business Statement, the Business Statement then, based on the narration he was giving, at the concluding part on that subject matter of proportion in terms of the debate concluded, and if I can paraphrase, saying that the Minority, however, disagreed and it was now for the consideration of the House.

Mr Speaker, you know when matters from Committee are referred back to the Chamber for consideration and the procedure as such. So, I invited the Speaker for us to expunge that from the record because even as of then, we did not even have a decision quorum to take that decision on the consideration from the Committee. Then the Majority Leader was now on his feet trying to say that he was going to amend the Report by just standing, as a result of the fact that I raised the matter of unavailability of decision quorum. It is not true that we approved the Business Statement to confirm that we should speak on—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: So, do you mean to say a decision quorum to have a Business Statement adopted?

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: No, at the Business Statement, I do not have a copy now—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Or at the Business Committee?

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Business Committee Report—I do not have a copy of the Report, but on that particular matter, they concluding by saying—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: No, I want a clarification from you. Are you saying we need the number for making a decision under Article 104 to be able to adopt the Business Statement?

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, not the entire Business Statement, but that part. Ordinarily, when the Business

Statement comes, it is in a particular form. But that decision or what was presented in the Report was to the effect that the Minority, however, disagreed and it was now for the consideration of the House. It was written in the Report.

After his attention was drawn—So, it is not true that we agreed on that percentage. What we agreed in approving that Business Statement was that one will speak from this Side and one will speak from that Side. That was the decision, and nothing less than that.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon First Deputy Minority Whip, how is a decision taken at a Business Committee or any other Committee? Is it by majority or by consensus?

Alhaji Habib Iddrisu: Mr Speaker, many a time, Business Committee Reports are by consensus, and in this particular matter, it was specified in the Report that it was for the consideration of the House; there was no consensus. We did not take such decision. The decision we took was to the effect that one here, one there, and nothing less, nothing more. And that is what we stand by.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Majority Leader, you may conclude on the issues.

Mr Ayariga: Mr Speaker, Alhaji Habib Iddrisu was not even at the Business Committee meeting—*[Uproar]*—He was not at the Business Committee meeting.

Mr Speaker, Standing Order 284, which governs voting at Committees, and let me read it. It says that:

“(1) A decision at Committee shall ordinarily be by consensus.

(2) Where a Committee is unable to reach consensus, the decision shall be by majority vote of the members present, either by voice vote or by headcount.”

So, we argued and argued about this debate arrangement, and we could not reach consensus. I cited this Standing Order and said, since we cannot reach a consensus, we will have to vote, and then we voted. We were seven on the Majority Side, and there were four on the Minority Side. They said their heads should not be counted, I remember.

04.50 p.m.

I went around holding their heads, saying that since their heads do not want to be counted—We joked about it at the Committee meeting, and then when we finished, for the avoidance of doubt, I insisted at the meeting that the Clerk to the Committee should state clearly what she was going to record. She repeated the conclusion and said that seven voted for, and four said we should record that they were against. So I said they should make sure that is what is captured in the Report. When the Report came here, then there was an insertion that seven voted for, and then four said they were against and that the matter is being referred to Plenary to decide. That is what was contained in the Report, so he drew my

attention to that aspect of the Report. Subsequently, I followed up with the Clerk and asked why he put that. The Clerk said:

“Everything that is discussed is subject to Plenary adoption; the entire Report has to be adopted. So, you have voted, seven of you have voted for this arrangement, four are against, but whatever it is that you have done here, has to be accepted by Plenary. So Plenary is the final arbiter of the matter.”

That is the explanation that the Clerk gave me. The Clerk is here.

Later on, I said no problem. So here we had a debate and they raised the issue of Order 115. The Hon Speaker intervened and expressed his opinion. We told the Hon Speaker that the Business Statement is what is going to be adopted and what is contained in the Business Statement is what the House has adopted to guide business next week, to govern the debate. And so, this is how we concluded. And when the Hon Speaker expressed his views, I still said: “Mr Speaker, I want the record to be clear on what the decision of today is.” Does the Hon Member remember? And I repeated it three times Mr Speaker. The journalists were all here. The record is there. Please let us have integrity. It is there. The Clerks were sitting here and I insisted three times that I wanted clarity, so that a day like this does not come. And he was clear that what is contained in the Report and adopted by the House is what will govern the House, but he as Speaker thinks that Order 115 will govern it. I

said what he thinks is different. What is in the Report is what the House has adopted. That is how come today we are giving you the numbers that we are giving you. Mr Speaker that is it.

This House is governed by rules. As for what has happened in the past, if some Hon Majority Members slept over their rights, that is up to them. But this Majority is saying that it is most unfair that when we have an opportunity to debate and we are 187; they say we are 187, and they are 88, we will share the time equally. They take 20, we take 20. It does not reflect the balance in the House.

Mr Speaker, they are talking about rights. Every Hon Member of Parliament—

If we accept the arrangement, it means that they get two opportunities and the Hon Members on my Side get one opportunity. That is the arrangement that we have. They get two opportunities and the people here get one opportunity. And I am saying that is not fair; that is not equitable. That is not fair. They are talking about human rights. They are violating the rights of the Majority by this kind of arrangement. That is why we concluded, and what we concluded on at Business Committee was adopted here, and that is what will govern the debate. Mr Speaker, it will not change. Two on this Side, and one on the other Side.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, I think we have debated this matter for far too long. My view is that there is no issue that cannot be resolved

by our own Standing Orders. We have to build consensus, and in the absence of consensus, then we can take a decision by way of voting on the matter. *[Uproar]*—

Hon Members, in the submission of the Hon Minority Leader, he stated clearly that the Speaker has his own view on this matter, and the Second Deputy Speaker has also expressed his view on the consensus on this matter. For me, equality is equity. Under the circumstance, I would want the Hon Leaders to engage and build consensus on this matter.

Hon Members, after the exhaustion of that opportunity, when we are not able to build consensus, then we have no other option than to apply our own rules to address the situation. So, Hon Members, I will plead with the Majority and the Minority Leader to further engage and build consensus on this matter.

Meanwhile, Hon Members, I will plead with you that for the purposes of today, and until the matter is resolved amicably, either by consensus or a decision of the House, we should exhaust the 5-5 for today. *[Uproar]*—

Yes, Hon Majority Leader?

Mr Ayariga: Mr Speaker, with all due respect, if you ask us to go and engage, the least you can do is to abide by last week's decision of the House. That is the least you can do, but you cannot rule in their favour and say that we should go and engage. No, Mr

Speaker, we will not accept that. The House adopted a position last week, and it is that position that has to prevail. Mr Speaker, that is most unfair, and I am registering my protest. The House adopted a position; we adopted a position and you already called him to contribute to the debate. Mr Speaker, I disagree entirely. With all due respect, I never will do this.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Majority Leader, it is not a ruling *per se*.

[Uproar]—

Mr Ayariga: Mr Speaker, it will not happen. We will not agree, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, Order! Hon Members resume your seats!

Hon Members, I expressed my view and indicated clearly that the two Hon Leaders should engage. And in the absence of reaching consensus, then we will come to the House and apply the rules. But if my view is not acceptable in the circumstances, I would want to have the House suspended. *[Hear! Hear!]*

The House is accordingly suspended for 30 minutes.

5:57 p.m.— Sitting suspended

6.02 p.m. — Sitting resumed.

[THE SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR]

The Speaker: Hon Members, welcome from the suspension of the Sitting. Since the First Deputy Speaker

was presiding, he gave me a briefing but I want to hear from the Leaders. Please, where do we go from here?

Mr Ayariga: Mr Speaker, on Friday, the Business Committee met and one of the issues that we worked on was how to programme ourselves for the debate on the Motion to thank the President for delivering the Message on the State of the Nation to Parliament. We also considered the allotment of time for Leadership, Committee Chairpersons and ordinary Members of the House. Then, when it came to the question of how many Contributors should come from each Side, I essentially argued at the Committee meeting that in effect, what we were doing was an allotment of time to each Side. Because, for instance, if we agree that an ordinary Member or Leadership on the Majority Side should speak for 15 minutes and then the Leadership on the other Side also should speak for 15 minutes, at the end of the day, when we add all the 15 minutes of both Sides, it means in effect, we are giving each Side two hours.

So, I took a position that it is unfair to have a situation where we have 187 Members of Parliament desiring to speak and contribute to the debate and then this other Side which has 88 Members desiring to speak and contribute to the debate, then you allocate two hours to each Side. When we take our two hours, it becomes difficult for us to make sure that as many people as possible reflecting our size get the opportunity. Then the other Side will take their two hours, but because they are not many, a lot more people will get the opportunity than our Side and if it persists—

Mr Speaker, if you would recall, in the last Parliament and even the Parliament before it, there were NGOs that were tracking the contribution of Members on the Floor and grading them on the basis of whether or not they are even contributing. It often becomes a campaign issue in constituencies of MPs, where they are being accused by constituents as not contributing to debate on the Floor. So, I felt that the lopsided distribution of time where a Side that has 88 Members share the same time as a Side that has 187 Members, makes it impossible for us to be fair to this Side of the House.

So, I insisted and they objected. I said, pursuant to our Standing Orders, we should put it to a vote and we put it to a vote. We were seven and we all voted in favour of us sharing it based on our numerical strength in the House. The four objected. We came here, the Report was laid, debated, there were further objections here in the Chamber and we insisted it should be put to a vote. It was put to a vote and the Report was adopted.

Today, when we came and tried to implement it, an objection was raised again. So, we rehearsed the arguments at the Business Committee meeting and repeated the arguments that we engaged in at the Plenary on Friday. The First Deputy Speaker said Leadership should go and consult, but in the interim, he was going to rule in favour of us sharing the time 50:50, where the Minority Side would present five speakers and we also would present five. I still objected to the First Deputy Speaker's ruling on the matter, whereupon he suspended Sitting

and asked that we engage. So, we met you to put forth our different sides of the argument and invited you to come yourself and take a decision on the matter.

Mr Speaker, I think basically, that is what happened.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, with respect, I shall proceed to give an account of matters in my perspective, guided by the rules and the practices of this House.

Mr Speaker, in this Parliament, we are governed by the Constitution, the laws we pass, our Standing Orders and our practices and conventions. Without dragging matters too long, I shall just refer to the Parliaments of 2017 to 2021. Although that Parliament had the NPP having an overwhelming Majority of 169 seats, the House was still guided by the existing practice where when it came to debates, Members were given equal opportunity to have their say. We continued the practice when you assumed the Chair during the Eighth Parliament. When we came into this Ninth Parliament, that has also been the practice until my respected Senior at the Bar, Hon Mahama Ayariga, a respected Harvard scholar known for his human rights advocacy, decided to reinvent the wheel to introduce a new practice.

Mr Speaker, I do not think that the House will be done any good if we accept this proposal. It is very unknown to the practices of Parliament. Perhaps the Majority Leader is using some lenses that can only see for today. I have a

confession to make and I am not worried about how the media would take it. We make mistakes and when we realise that it is a mistake, we admit. I recall when we were enacting these new Standing Orders, a proposal came from you that the Minority Leader should chair the Appointments Committee. We disagreed with you. We were on the Majority Frontbench because we felt like, if the Minority Leader is going to chair the Appointments Committee, what would be our fate?

6.12 p.m.

Mr Speaker, today, I can tell you that you were looking in the beyond. Sometimes we disagree, but where on an occasion like this, I feel strongly that the point you were making at the time held a lot of value, and still holds value for a democracy, I must admit it. I will not shy away from it when I am wrong.

So, Mr Speaker, the joy of being in the Majority should not suddenly make the Leader of this House forget that there is a Side to be protected and heard. We are not seeking to dictate to the Majority how the Majority should do its Business; no. The Leader of the House has not given us a single parliament where, when it gets to debate, the Majority is given more than the Minority, or debate is agreed upon based on numerical strength. No parliament in any serious democracy practises that.

Mr Speaker, he says that some Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) came up with some reports and whatnot but, in this House, any Member who is

desirous of speaking would always get an opportunity to speak. So, I would not want to belabour the point. We have said a lot. That practice of allowing equal opportunity is pure and unsoiled.

The Majority Leader should not look at only today, because we had 169 in 2017 and just in four years, the 169 reduced to 137 plus one. It appears Mr Speaker was prophesying when he said the Majority, as we were then, could suffer some electoral misfortune. Indeed, we are now seeing our mighty few. But, Mr Speaker, do not allow this overwhelming Majority to make you think that your superiority will be there forever. Four years is far but near.

To my last point for the day, Mr Speaker, the Hon Majority Leader in his earlier submission said that, well, if in the past the Majority slept on their rights, this time the Majority will not sleep on their rights. I found it very rich, that a practice all of a sudden has become rights that we have slept on. So, he is telling us that we are quiesced, we slept on our rights and did not insist on our rights yesterday, when we had 169 and 138. So, if we allowed them, the Minority then, to have their way in a fair balance, they having the Majority today, will not sleep on their rights. I do not think it is about rights being exercised, but it is about a discretion from Mr Speaker to recognise.

That is why we Leaders are engaged and consulted. Mr Speaker gives us that opportunity to guide him and says, “look, are you going to—How many do you want, Leaders, on this occasion? Three,

four or five on both Sides?” Then guided by it, he can take the lead.

So, Mr Speaker, I shall conclude by submitting that please let us keep to the known practice. We are doing the Message on the State of the Nation so, if you call five from Majority Side, give five to the Minority Side as well. Let us share whatever number equally for our debate without more.

I thank you so much, Mr Speaker.

Mr Ayariga: Mr Speaker, the logic of his argument is that the discretion ultimately lies in the Speaker, the presiding officer. If that is the case, then there is no issue of five on this Side, five on that Side; it is left to the discretion of the Speaker. *[Interruption]* No, that is it. I am saying that it is left to the discretion of the Speaker.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, on Friday, the argument that the Minority Side marshalled against the position that I took, or the Majority Side took, was that under Order 115, the discretion is that of the Speaker. So, the Speaker can exercise his discretion and say, a Side, is many, so he will give them more opportunities and the other Side, they are not that many, so he will give them less opportunities; that discretion is that of the Speaker. That was an argument that was made on Friday.

Indeed, the presiding officer, on Friday, was called upon to rule on that matter. Hon Habib Iddrisu raised that issue and said that the right to speak is subject to the Speaker deciding that one

should speak because one has caught his eye. So, we cannot impose numbers on the Speaker. If we are going to resolve this matter, then it has to be resolved based on the rule that ultimately, it is up to the Speaker to decide, in which case, the Speaker can decide that based on numerical numbers, one Side should be given more opportunities and the other Side should be given less opportunities. But that is the discretion of the Speaker.

The same way, the Speaker can decide that one-one on both Sides, or the Speaker will consult us then, and among us as Leaders, we will come to some agreement and we can guide the Speaker then, he will also apply his discretion.

So, let it not be the case that there is a rule that says that any time one person speaks on the Majority Side, then automatically there must be a corresponding person on the other Side to speak. Let us all agree to the rule in Order 115, that, one would rise and if they catch the eye of the Speaker and the Speaker decides that the person should speak, he or she speaks, irrespective of the numbers on either Side of the House. I think that that is the position that we must conclude.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, this is a lawyer who is arguing in court, knowing that he has a very bad case. So now, he throws every card on the table in an attempt to confuse the judge. This is not a Speaker who can be confused by this matter. **[Some Hon Member:** Father oo Father]

Mr Speaker, on a point of law, the argument must be situated properly and in context.

6.22 p.m.

It is not about discretion only, but a discretion rooted in practices and conventions. And in my earlier submission, I said that these practices and conventions are pure and unsoiled. The Majority Leader, therefore, has no cause to attempt to reintroduce a new practice unbeknown to this House. The practice is not a broken practice. We have not had any challenge with that practice. He is now saying that we should go by a certain Order 115 and then allow discretion and all that. There is a practice. Which practice is that when Mr Speaker recognises one on his right, he recognises the other on his left. And then he also seeks advice from Leadership to guide him.

Mr Speaker, I think this matter should be put to a peaceful rest. I end my submission.

The Speaker: Hon Members, one of our former chairmen and Head of State gave a reason, and one of the reasons for which he led a *coup* that the small amenities that the soldiers were enjoying were even taken away from them. So, the small discretion that the Speaker is to exercise, you, Leaders, want to take that one too away from the Speaker. Small discretionary power that is left for the Speaker, you the Leaders and Business Committee want to take that one away too from the Speaker. It is very clear and you are quoting the Order 115(1); it says,

“Subject to the discretion of the Speaker...”, and Order 169(3)(b), that is an Order that deals with Consideration Stage of Bills, a Member who intends to speak shall rise in the Member’s place and address the Chair while standing only after catching the eye of the Speaker. This one too, you want to close my eyes and decide on what to do. It would not happen—[*Laughter*]

We are in the season of majoritarian governments all over the world. Last year’s elections, we are told, were about 72, and many of them ended with very huge majoritarian systems. But one thing is clear: democracy is about leadership of the majority; a majority that listens to everybody. It is also about giving the minority a say and the majority having its way. We have even gone beyond that to say that democracy has developed to a stage that you do not leave anybody behind. We have to go together, so those principles are still relevant. And for our Parliament, they are not only relevant; they would be implemented.

If you go to our Constitution, Article 296, on the exercise of discretion, it is very clear. It says:

“Where in this Constitution or in any other law, discretionary power is vested in any person or authority

—

- (a) that discretionary power shall be deemed to imply a duty to be fair and candid;
- (b) the exercise of the discretionary power shall not be arbitrary,

capricious or biased either by resentment, prejudice or personal dislike and shall be in accordance with due process of law.”

Article 296(c) deals with regulations, and here, the regulations we use would be our Standing Orders, so this is not something that is within your discretion or your powers. It is within the jurisdiction of the person presiding, and particularly, the Speaker. If you go through the Constitution and the Standing Orders, they refer to only one person as “the Speaker”. The others are “a Deputy Speaker” and “a Chair”. That is, in the absence of the Speaker and the Deputy Speakers, you have one of you chairing. And many of you who were here in the Eighth Parliament would attest to the fact that sitting on this Chair is not the same as sitting on your chairs.

And one day, you recall I invited the former Member of Parliament, Hon K.T. Hammond, to chair and after that, he confessed that when he sat on the Chair, the Speaker’s Chair, it became different. That is how we feel when we sit here. You have not to be neutral, but you have to do everything to be impartial. Whether people like it or not, once you are satisfied that you have exercised your discretion impartially, you get blessings from God. So, please, this one is not the opportunity for us to hear everybody. We are simply to convey to His Excellency the gratitude of the whole House. And that creates a platform for the House to express their views about what he has come to say through us to the nation. And what he has come to say has raised a

number of debatable issues, and that is why you debate the Message on the State of the Nation.

If not, it is not something for me to put a Question and for you to give an answer. After the debate, I would simply convey your gratitude to His Excellency the President; so, this is the opportunity, since by practice, the Majority always goes with the position of the President. This is an opportunity that you give ample time to the Minority to have a say. That is what happens.

In the Second Parliament of the Fourth Republic, the NDC had 133; NPP were 61; CPP had two, and PNC had, I think, five. The total was, for those not in Government, 67 and NDC had 133.

6.32 p.m.

But our late Rt Hon Justice Daniel Annan gave ample time to the 67, more than the 133, and they aired their views. They have the say; when it comes to an issue of decision, you have your way. That is it in democracy. So, it is not a number that you count how many should speak on each Side of the House.

But I do not know whether because of the first Republic where we had the parliamentary system, Westminster system of governance, or from 1969 to 1972, 13th January 1972, where we had the same system of governance, that you talk about this. If not, this House is not arranged against Opposition and Government. This House is arranged in a horseshoe manner calling for consensus building. That is why you have the

House arranged this way. So, there is nothing like the right Side and the left Side.

On this left Side, we have the NPP Members and we have the NDC Members, true or false? So, can you say that this Side is opposition? No. We moved away from the terms “Opposition” and “Government” to “Minority” and “Majority”. There are good reasons for that. So, please, I am not going to go by any numbers from any recommendation by any Business Committee or Leaders.

We consult Leaders and all these Committees to guide us, but as for the discretion, it is in our bosom. So, whatever ratio you are trying to use will not apply here. We will decide who has caught our eye and the person will speak. But as I said, it is always skewed in favour of the Minority—[*Hear! Hear!*]*—*Because they have to have their say, then you would have your way. Please, that is my ruling and we would go by it—[**Some Hon Members:** Father oo Father!]

I am coming to you—[*Laughter*]*—*I am not sure today,—Once again, whether your Leader, the Minority Leader, will say on this Floor again that you do not need the protection of the Speaker. This time, he will not look at me—[*Laughter*].

So, please, we want to hear the best; we want to hear from all of you, but definitely, this opportunity is too limited. We have, in the Standing Orders, with this experience and knowledge, created

room for all other Members to have a say on this Floor. Nobody will be allowed to go home and say because of a pillar, he is not able to catch the eye of the Speaker—[*Laughter*]. No pillar will cover you. We would grant you space to have a say on the Floor. So, with this, please, it ends the debate on the issue of quotas and numbers on the debate on the Message on the State of the Nation.

We will move on and you do your best to catch the eye of the Speaker, guided by the Standing Orders. The advantage that the Majority has in this particular one is the fact that the four independent Members said they are going to do business with the NDC. So, they constitute a very small minority. That is a minority group; I will take due notice of that group, too. They will not be swallowed up in the midst of the populous NDC Members. I will be very watchful, and if I see any of them trying to have a say, he will be granted an opportunity. We would take that along, but I will grant more opportunity to gender, because I want to see more women in Parliament in the future. That I will do.

We would also consider professionalism and experience, because the document we are dealing with is a technical document. Even though the President used beautiful English, there are a lot of technical words that he used, and we know from your background and experience, those who would be able to break down those words to the understanding of the ordinary Ghanaian, so that we can carry them all along. We are informed, in the exercise of our

discretion, by all these matters; so, please, have confidence in your Speaker. I am fair and candid. Today, I will step on your toes; tomorrow, it will be somebody else's toes, not yours.

So, let us go on, and I am prepared to take a number of you. I will not allow tyranny of the Majority; neither will I allow the dictatorship of the Minority. That will not happen. So, please, let us proceed.

The Motion was moved by—Majority Leader, do you want to thank me for my ruling too? *[Laughter]*—Yes?

[Pause]

Mr Ayariga: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, at the time that the objection was raised, Hon Acheampong had caught the eye of the Speaker and the Speaker had invited him to contribute to the debate.

Mr Speaker, if I understood your ruling, it is that whoever catches the eye of the Speaker gets to speak. That is my understanding of your ruling, and at the time that the objection was raised, the person who had caught the eye of the Speaker and the Speaker had invited him to debate was Hon Acheampong. That was what happened. He had caught the eye of the Speaker, and that is the effect of the ruling of the Speaker. That the Speaker has a discretion and he exercised that discretion and invited Hon Acheampong to debate. That is where we were.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, with respect, I do not think that the Leader of the House should reintroduce another controversy. Hon George Kweku Ricketts-Hagan moved the Motion; it was seconded by Hon Dominic Nitiwul; Hon Isaac Adongo spoke, and it was the turn of Hon Abena Osei-Asare.

Mr Speaker, a list has been sent and we have agreed to take five from each Side. It was the turn of Hon Abena Osei-Asare, and they introduced that so-called rule that more must be called on the other Side.

6.42p.m.

So, Mr Speaker, let us have a peaceful evening. It is the turn of Hon Abena Osei-Asare. Mr Speaker, Hon Adongo had finished his debate. It was the turn of our respected Colleague. Please, let us have a peaceful evening.

The Speaker: Hon Members, please, the eyes that were here when all this took place were the eyes of the First Deputy Speaker, who was presiding, not my eyes—*[Laughter]*—

First Deputy Speaker, please, can you lead us in this?

First Deputy Speaker (Mr Bernard Ahiafor): Rt Hon Speaker, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity. Rt Hon Speaker, the first issue that we had taken was a brief from the Minister for the Interior and after that particular brief, the first person recognised was the former Minister for Defence, from the Minority Side.

The second person who was given the floor was Mr Dominic Nitiwul, also from the Minority Side but Mr Speaker—*[Uproar]*—I said Deputy Minister was sitting at the far end there. No, I am not talking about this Motion. I said when we took briefing from the—*[Interruption]*—Would you listen to me in silence? So, Mr Speaker, you can balance the House by taking two from here and two from here. It is still balanced. So, after taking the two of them, I took another two from the Majority Side.

Mr Speaker, when it came to the debate, the motion was moved by Hon Ricketts-Hagan, seconded by Mr Dominic Nitiwul. Then I gave the floor to Mr Adongo; then when I recognised Mr Richard Acheampong, there was a hullabaloo but Rt Hon Speaker, when in the previous matter, I recognised two from the left Side before recognising another two from the right Side, there was no problem about it. Mr Speaker, those are facts.

Mr Dominic Nitiwul can attest to the fact that when it got to the time for them to make comment on the briefing of the Minister for the Interior, he was the second person who spoke from their Side. So, presiding, you have a way of balancing the two Sides. Yes, the person who caught my eye was Mr Dominic Nitiwul.

The Speaker: Hon Member, my understanding from the submissions made by the First Deputy Speaker is that the Motion was moved by the Deputy Majority Leader and seconded by Hon Dominic Nitiwul. Am I right?

Some Hon Members: Yes.

The Speaker: Then after that, Hon Adongo had his bite. Then after that, Hon Acheampong was called and then there was objection from the Minority Side. That was what took place.

Some Hon Members: Yes.

The Speaker: Well, there is no dispute at all.

Hon Acheampong may continue—*[Hear! Hear!]*—After that, we will go to the Minority—*[Uproar]*—Please, there is no debate. You will have your opportunity. Do not worry. You will be given the opportunity—*[Uproar]*—Please.

Hon Minority Leader, the Hon Richard Acheampong caught the eye of the Speaker. I cannot overrule that so, allow him to have his say. After that, I will come to your Side. Yes, you insist? Hon Acheampong, Deputy Minister, just a minute.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin—rose—

The Speaker: Yes, what is it you have to say?

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, we have submitted a list.

The Speaker: Hon Member, we have gone past this. The list you submit is a guide. The Speaker is not compelled to follow the list that you submit. We have gone past this.

[Pause]

Yes, Minority Leader.

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, with respect, if the very act of the First Deputy Speaker, which gave rise to the controversy, is allowed to stay, what it means is that then we are back to square one.

Mr Speaker, the practice that I know when it comes to debate, is that when you take one on one Side, you take the other. Mr Speaker, you just quoted Article 296 of the Constitution. Yes, the discretion to recognise is within your bosom and that you have just interpreted Article 296. Mr Speaker, the order of recognition, as I know, is that when one is called, the other is also recognised.

Mr Speaker, as you have been told, Mr Ricketts-Hagan moved the Motion. They did not allow the other Side to second. It came from this Side. Mr Adongo has had his say, Mrs Abena Osei-Asare was up and then the Majority Leader insisted that they should call—yes, we know what is going on here. You signaled that Mr Acheampong should be called.

Mr Speaker, what is happening is unfair to us. It is very dangerous. A certain precedent is being set. We need to have our turn. It cannot be that they have two continuous speakers. Mr Adongo has spoken. At least our Side must speak. Then we do it in turn. What is wrong? Mr Speaker, I would submit that in the circumstances we find ourselves in now, giving us the next

opportunity to speak after Mr Adongo would be most appropriate in the circumstance because you have just made your ruling. But to still go ahead to recognise Hon Acheampong, would render otiose, all the arguments we have made thus far.

The Speaker: Majority Leader?

Mr Ayariga: Mr Speaker, when a ruling goes in favour of the Minority Leader, he is excited. When a ruling goes against him—[Pause]—Mr Speaker, when a ruling goes in his favour, he celebrates it. When a ruling does not go in his favour him, he says he will not accept.

6.50 p.m.

Mr Speaker, we cannot work like this. You just gave a ruling; unless the Minority Leader did not understand your ruling. He did not understand your ruling because the conclusion was that the Speaker has the discretion to decide who speaks. That is all. The Speaker has the discretion, and once he exercises the discretion in favour of anybody, that person obtains the right to speak.

I am saying that at a time when the controversy arose, the Speaker in the Chair at the time had recognised Hon Acheampong, so he is simply enforcing the ruling. Enforcing that ruling is completely different from subsequently also achieving balance. So please, when they behave this way, it does not give an indication that the Speaker is in control of what happens here. It will seem as if whatever they want is what must happen

in the Chamber. No, that is how it appears. That whatever they want is what must happen in the Chamber. It cannot happen that way.

Mr Speaker, I think that you have decided and Hon Acheampong will be heard.

The Speaker: Hon Members, Order 127—Decision of the Speaker on interruption of debate.

“A decision of the Speaker in respect of interruption of debate under Order 122 is not subject to review by the House except on a substantive Motion made on notice.”

Order 122 deals with interruption of debate. And so you may disagree with me, but the only thing you have to do is to come by a substantive Motion on notice. That you can do.

The House is made up of Members of Parliament, the Clerks-at-the-Table, the Speaker, and the staff that support us in the conduct of our Chamber business. It is the same for the Committees. That is what is defined as the House. The definition of Parliament is as contained in the Constitution. So there is a slight difference between Parliament and the House, even though sometimes they are used interchangeably. But that is the right definition of the House, and we have captured that in the new Standing Orders that we are using now. So please, Members, better look at it.

Hon Richard Acheampong, you may continue. [*Hear! Hear!*]

Mr Richard Acheampong (NDC — Bia East): Mr Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to join Colleagues in thanking His Excellency the President for the Message on the State of the Nation, which he delivered to Parliament on Thursday, 27th February, 2025 which has been captured at page 4 of today's Order Paper, item numbered 11.

Mr Speaker, the President came to the House on the strength of Article 67 of the 1992 Constitution to deliver this message to the House. After the message, I have heard Colleagues from the other Side say that the President came to lament and that he was doing propaganda. Then I heard my Colleague, Hon Nitiwul, who started by quoting what the former President said when he appeared before this House for his first Message on the State of the Nation. But he failed to conclude that part; I want to help him conclude it. I am referring to column 1534 of the first Message on State of the Nation delivered by His Excellency, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo. I will read from the fourth paragraph, and I quote:

“Mr Speaker, to give a fair account of the State of our Nation, I would have to give an account of the state of our economy, our governance, and our national culture and attitude.”

They hailed the President for saying this, and His Excellency John Dramani Mahama did exactly that. It is like one is sick, and visits their doctor to complain that they have a headache. The doctor

cannot just give one paracetamol; the doctor must diagnose what is disturbing them. After that, a prescription is given. So the President must tell us the current state of the economy. After that, he will give us the solutions.

Mr Speaker, after the Statement, the President made a solemn pledge. And the *Ghanaian Times*, February 28, 2025, captured it rightfully so for us. This is the front page: “I will fix economic crisis, reset Ghana to growth and prosperity”. So the President did not throw his hands in despair. He did not come here to lament. He told us the current state of the economy and gave us solutions. The President told us that he, John Dramani Mahama, will fix this mess created by the NPP administration.

I have heard them also say that he should stop lamenting and fix it. Then that is a genuine admission that something is broken. That is why we are calling upon him to fix it. If it is not broken, one does not fix it. So we thank them very much for admitting the mess created for all of us and we are calling upon John Dramani Mahama to fix it; he will fix it for all of us.

Mr Speaker, the President provided us with a solution. He gave us hope, and the Message was so inspiring. These are the takeaways: He is going to fight corruption. He is going to realign ministries, agencies and departments, hence the 23 Ministries were created. He has appointed 60 Ministers and Deputy Ministers, and even we are still left with four. If you put the two together, we are talking about 60.

So Mr Speaker, if the President is walking the talk—Because he promised the people of this country in our manifesto that he is going to work with a lean government by appointing 60 Ministers together with Regional Ministers. And indeed, as we speak, we have 56 ministers appointed. Mr Speaker, this is going to give us a breathing space. Because if the President is disciplined and engages the labour front, that he wants to give them a 10 per cent pay rise, they will listen to the President because he is walking the talk.

The President told us that he is going to cut unnecessary expenditures. We had a President who appointed about 123 Ministers. We complained about it, and they told us the end will justify the means. The end has justified the means; the result is 88 that they have. They started with 169. Their second term, they came to 137. They wanted to do a third term and the verdict is out there, 88. And it rings a bell, so when I hear them say, they have done this, they have that—Are they saying that people of this country are so ungrateful that all the good things they did, they did not see them? For punishing them up to this level with a vote difference of 1.7 million.

Mr Speaker, the President promised that he is going to put in place a programme called the Feed Ghana Programme. Look at the inflation level that we have in this country, as we speak.

7.02 p.m.

We left inflation at 15 per cent. They increased inflation to 54 per cent, and now that it is coming down, it is 23.8 per

cent. Is it not the case that they took our debt stock from GH¢120 billion to GH¢721 billion? — [*Hear! Hear!*]—Is it not the case? They have gone to the other Side, and they are saying they have done so beautifully, such that the people of this country are ungrateful, and they punished them for all these things.

Mr Speaker, with the mess they created, sometimes I sit back, and ask myself, how can our Friends be that bold, and organise press conferences telling everybody that they left about GH¢6 billion buffers and so on. What is the effect of all these things? The President told us that they left US\$64,000 in the Sinking Fund, the dollar account. Are they disputing this fact? They left GH¢143 million in the Cedis account. Nobody is arguing about it. How can GH¢143 million and US\$64,000, pay GH¢6 billion bond holders' coupons? That cannot be possible. How?

Mr Speaker, there is good news for all of us. The President extended an invitation to our Colleagues. Let us put our hands on deck. The winner takes all mantle has become a problem for all of us. Let us build the Ghana we all want. We invited them to a public dialogue but they refused to attend. But if inflation comes down, will they not benefit? If the exchange rate is stable, will they not benefit? If prices of goods and services are even stable, will they not benefit from it?

Mr Speaker, we are talking about our food import and the drivers of our inflation is food and transport. These are some of the things for which we want to

bring everybody on board, so that we will get the buy in; so that at the end of the day, nobody will complain that they were not involved. Come and let us all take part of this restructuring and resetting that we are talking about, building the Ghana we all want. So, that by the end of the day, we will have one country, because we are one people. It does not matter one's political difference. So please, they have lost the election. There is nothing we can do about it and they cannot change the narrative. We are one country. Let us put all hands on deck and deal with the situation.

Mr Speaker, Hon Adongo said it here. If there are about 80,000 ghost names, how much are we losing? If Members may recall, in 2018, our Friends announced to us that they had dealt with issues about ghost names.

That very year, the Chief Director of Ministry of Finance was captured as a ghost—[*Laughter*]—The man who was supposed to make payments, who transferred money to Controller and Accountants General, was classified as a ghost. It tells us that the information they put out was misleading. They give us information as if they are doing something better, but at the end of the day, if we go to the grounds, we cannot see those things over there. Reality has dawned on all of us. The results are out there. The verdict is out there. So, the President provided leadership. He did not throw his hands in the air. He has extended invitation to everyone. Let us come together and reset this economy, reset this country, and build a Ghana we

all want. So, by the end of the day, we can also sit back and say we were part of the process. We contributed our quota. That is why we are where we are today.

Mr Speaker, I will conclude by saying that in the Message on the State of the Nation, the President touched on Adwumawura Programme and according to the President, we will create, track and mentor businesses. Out of this, about 10,000 businesses will be supported.

Mr Speaker, *okada* business has come to stay, whether we like it or not, and it is giving convenience to many people, especially when people are stuck in traffic. Right now, the Minister for Transport is undergoing some engagement with other countries; Rwanda is part of it. He will go to other countries to learn best practices. They have done it better. Some Hon Members travel to China and India and they see people using motorcycles to transfer people to market places. Though they have limited lanes, and there are certain places the *okada* cannot go, one can see them all over the places that they travel to. So, it is possible. It is not yesterday's possible. This one is possible. [*Hear! Hear!*]

Mr Speaker, under this programme, we are going to engage about 10,000 operators and we will teach them road safety issues. It is not the case where we are just allowing them to ply our roads without any protocol. No, we would need to train them about road safety. We have to make sure that they put on their helmets and all the safety mechanisms are put in place. It will create

employment for our youth, so that they will not go back to the streets and be stealing and doing other things, which all of us will say are unacceptable in our society.

Mr Speaker, I would thank the President for being bold and telling us the true state of our economy. We all know Cocoa Board is on its knees. We know GIHOC Distilleries Company Limited is on its knees. Nobody should come and tell us another story because we are living it. We saw it and he who knows it, feels it— [*Interruption*— He who feels it, knows it.

Mr Speaker, we know the verdict out there. That is why we are where we are today. But there should be a paradigm shift. We are going to reset the nation to build the Ghana we all want.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

The Speaker: Yes?

Osahen Afenyo-Markin: Mr Speaker, just a quick information to you. Mr Speaker, our Side listened quietly and enjoyed Mr Acheampong. I only pray, that our Colleagues would also be quiet to listen to Mrs Abena Osei-Asare.

The Speaker: Yes, Hon Member for Atiwa East, right?

Mrs Abena Osei-Asare (NPP—Atiwa East): Mr Speaker, thank you so much for the opportunity. It has taken a while, but I am glad I have been given

that opportunity to also add my contribution to the Message on the State of the Nation.

Mr Speaker, honestly, we were expecting the President to use the Message on the State of the Nation to set the tone for his administration's governance, but what did we see? We rather saw a predictable mixture of economic doomsday, political blame-shifting, and populist promises that is unsustainable, looking at where he claims we are now. In addition to painting that gloomy picture he says he inherited—

The Speaker: Hon Members, please.

Mrs Osei-Asare: Mr Speaker, in addition to painting that gloomy picture he says he inherited, the President has outlined very heavy expansionary fiscal policies, and I doubt, if in any way, this is not a populist agenda. I doubt if this is sustainable. On one hand, the President says the economy is in an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) state, but on the other hand, he has pushed far-reaching social intervention measures with no clear funding plan. Mr Speaker—
[Interruption]—

The Speaker: Hon Members, please.

Mrs Osei Asare: Mr Speaker, clearly, we in the New Patriotic Party (NPP) never shied away from the challenges in the economy. We were honest about it, and that is why we came up with the Post Covid-19 Programme for Economic Growth (PCPEG). That is what we came up with. We did not lament.

07.12 p.m.

We did not throw our hands in the air. We acknowledged the challenges and came up with this programme which we sent the IMF to assist us in the bailouts. So, we did not go to the IMF empty-handed, but we went with our plan. And two years down the line, Mr Speaker, you see and everybody can tell that, truly, the plan yielded some results.

Mr Speaker let me start with the financial sector. For us, the data is clear. We left a much stronger financial sector than what we inherited in 2016—[**Some Hon Members from the Majority: Ei!**] Mr Speaker, this is why I say so. In 2015, an Asset Quality Review Report was done with the IMF stating the strengths and weaknesses of the banks. And in that report, we saw that some of the banks were bleeding. President Mahama, at that time, failed to do the needful; he failed to stop the bleeding. In 2016, he failed to stop the bleeding. It took a strong and decisive leader in the person of Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo to do the needful to forestall the total collapse of the financial sector. [*Hear! Hear!*]

Mr Speaker, as a result of this, one, we were able to save 4.6 million depositors' money. Two, the total banking assets which we inherited in 2016 was around GH¢81.2 billion. By October 2024, the total banking assets which we had was GH¢367.5 billion. We also saw the private sector credit increase by 28.8 per cent. And clearly, we have also seen improved ratios in the banks, and this is data coming from Bank of Ghana for January 2025.

Mr Speaker, I am beginning to suspect that with the criticisms that the President is giving in the financial sector—Or maybe, he wants to use that as an excuse to recklessly give out banking licenses again for us to witness what we saw in the DKM saga. We have not forgotten about that. Let us remember: we needed a bold and decisive leader to stem the tide in the financial sector, and it was the NPP Government, led by President Akufo-Addo who did that and saved so much, and here we are with the results today. Data does not lie.

Mr Speaker, still on the economy, we were here when the President told us that we have scanty reserves for debt servicing and speaker after speaker on the other Side mentioned that as well. But Mr Speaker, what he failed to say was that, across the globe, there were resource challenges as a result of COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine war—*[Interruption]*—Mr Speaker, I was expecting this from them.

It is the same with President Mahama. When he goes out there, outside this country, he acknowledges the effect of COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine war. But as soon as President Mahama gets back to Ghana, he closes that memory. He closes that and never mentions the fact that COVID-19 happened, as well as the Russia-Ukraine war. So, clearly, we left—

Mr Speaker, let us take note that this same scanty resource is what we have left in the form of Gross International Reserves of GH¢8.9 billion. And this is

what they are currently using to shore up the Ghana cedi against its trading currencies. Mr Speaker, currently, the cedi is relatively stable.

Mr Speaker, we also left in, not necessarily in the Sinking Fund, but we left huge sums of money such that they were able to pay the GH¢6 billion coupon due. We left enough money to enable them to pay the GH¢6 billion coupon, which was due just two weeks ago. So Mr Speaker, one does not have to keep money only in the Sinking Fund. There are several accounts which one can keep money. These are innovative ways of raising money and keeping money, and that is exactly what we did.

Mr Speaker, like I said, we left a huge sum of money in the account and that is why they were able to pay the GH¢6 billion. We all know how President Mahama was very happy when they were able to pay the GH¢6 billion. This is money that they did not work for. This is money that we ring-fenced and saved to enable our incoming Government to also be able to fulfill its obligations. That is what we do. There is continuity in government, so we think ahead and we make sure we make such provisions. *[Hear! Hear!]*

Let me also put it on record that, yes, it is true that in 2016, when the NDC was leaving, they left US\$250 million in the Sinking Fund. But they have forgotten that when they left US\$250 million in the Sinking Fund, that year alone, the debt servicing due for us to pay when we inherited the reins of Government was US\$1billion—**[Some Hon Members:**

Ei!]. Take out US\$250 million from \$1 billion; what does one get? Ask us how we paid it. We did not go around complaining about it, but we did the needful because we had a decisive leader who was responsible and competent.

Mr Speaker, let me also put on record that it is evident for everybody to see that an economy that grew by an average of 6.3 per cent from first quarter (Q1) of 2024 to the third quarter (Q3) of 2024, cannot be said to be an economy in an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) state. An economy that had 3.4 per cent growth in 2016 was never called a mismanaged economy. An economy that had 3.4 per cent growth in 2016 was not called a criminally mismanaged economy. How should we call a 6.3 per cent economic growth rate? It is not just okay to be throwing out words. If you have the data, let the data speak for you. [*Hear! Hear!*]

Mr Speaker, we also made sure that, as of November, we had a primary balance of 0.4 per cent. In 2016, what did we see? We saw a negative primary balance. Against all these things, against all the negative impressions that the President created about the economy, we were able to exceed our domestic revenue collections—[*Hear! Hear!*]*—*In 2024, we were able to exceed our domestic revenue collections. So, how does one call such an economy? So clearly, on the Message on the State of the Nation, Mr President would have to come again, because he gave very inaccurate figures and facts.

Mr Speaker, we all acknowledge that we are not out of the woods yet. We began with the Domestic Debt Exchange

Programme; we had about 99 per cent participation. We have also done the External Debt Exchange Programme; we have 93 per cent participation. We were able to exceed US\$8.1 billion. I am asking my Friends on the other Side that what is left of the external is just 7 per cent. This is not too hard, so they should complete it, and let us finish this. It is just 7 per cent left; we have done 93 per cent of the work, so they should go ahead and finish with the just 7 per cent left. I doubt if they will be able to do it.

Mr Speaker, let me also come to the populist expansionary policy. I heard His Excellency say that he is coming up with the Agriculture Economic Transformation Agenda. He is coming up with the Feed Ghana Programme Agenda, the Poultry Farm-to-Table, the Nkokɔ Nketenkete Programme, the One Million Coders Programme, and finally, the Ghana Medical Care Trust (MahamaCares).

7.22 p.m.

Mr Speaker, but let us ask ourselves, which President will name an initiative after himself or herself, except President Mahama—[**An Hon Member:** The last time, you branded buses after yourself]*—*

Mr Speaker, I must say that these are real expansionary policies. And I ask myself, President Mahama says he would cut down expenditure. So, on one side, he is cutting down on expenditure and on the other side, he is bringing huge expansionary policies. Where are they going to get the funding from? Let us be realistic about this—[*Interruption*]*—* And let us make sure that one—

What we in the Minority are demanding of the President is that we want him to be responsible, competent, and focus on one; sustaining and improving the growing confidence in the economy as a result of the turn of things. We want the President to sustain the growing confidence in the economy and not commit to large scale expansionary projects. Two, we also want the President to ensure fiscal discipline and efficient use of resources. That is what we expect from the President.

Mr Speaker, we also want the President—One thing that is on my heart is for the President to strengthen the private sector—

The Speaker: Order! Order!

Hon Members, at least, she still has one more minute, so, please, listen to her.

Mrs Osei-Asare: For the President to strengthen the private sector to enable the private sector to create jobs, and not Government creating temporary jobs that would not last, then at the end of the day, disappoint a lot of people.

So, in keeping up with the National Economic Dialogue, I am very happy with what happened yesterday. Yesterday, Dr Ishmael Yamson said one thing that was very profound. I read on *Joy Online* that he said, nobody can transform this nation as President Mahama himself because in places where there have been transformation, it takes just one single leader to do that—*[Uproar]*—

The Speaker: Order! Order!

Hon Members, please. Some of you would have difficulty in catching my eye, for sure. This is because if what you do is just to make noise and shout across, there is no way that you would get an opportunity to contribute because you have done it by shouting, and then you will complain that your constituents do not hear you. But they see you; the cameras are capturing you and they are looking at you, shouting. Please.

Mrs Osei-Asare: Mr Speaker. I am rounding up. What I said was that yesterday, I saw on my *Joy Online*, what Dr Ishmael Yamson, one of the participants at the National Economic Dialogue, said. He said that in places where transformation have taken place, it takes just the leader to do that. So, we are expecting His Excellency the President to take the bull by the horn and hit the ground running to implement the policies in his manifesto.

I want to assure him that we, on the Minority Side, are ready to criticise constructively and to also assist him to make sure he runs this economy and makes decisions that inures to the benefit of all of us.

Mr Speaker, I want to thank you so much for the opportunity—*[Hear! Hear!]*

The Speaker: With the guide that I have here, it is the turn of Hon Kojo Oppong Nkrumah—*[Hear! Hear!]*

Mr Kojo Oppong Nkrumah (NPP — Ofoase Ayirebi): Mr Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Motion and the debate before this House.

I want to start off by reading a portion of the Message on State of the Nation and to also ask my Colleagues in the House whether they heard the President say this, and whether they believe that this is the true state of the nation:

“Mr Speaker, we inherited an economy that was running a high deficit with increasingly high inflation and interest rates. It was also characterised by rapidly depreciating currency. This unstable macro-environment created an unfavourable investment environment for both indigenous and foreign capital. That is why we have called the National Economic Forum as an attempt to forge a consensus for a homegrown fiscal consolidation programme.”

Did we hear the President say this? **[Some Hon Members: Yes]**—And is this the true state of the economy? — **[Some Hon Members: Yes]**— You see, this was not in the Message on State of the Nation—*[Laughter]*—They have just exposed themselves. It was not in the Message on the State of the Nation—*[Laughter]*—This was President John Dramani Mahama in 2013—*[Laughter]*—lamenting about the economy he inherited from the former President. Do you know who that former President was? Professor John Evans Atta Mills—*[Laughter]*—They can check *Hansard*—*[Hear! Hear!]*—There is a similarity between what the President did in 2013 and what he did here, in the Chamber of Parliament, in 2025. Do you know what that similarity is? Lamentations.

Mr Speaker, there is a phenomenon where new Heads of State spend a lot of time lambasting, berating, and demonising their predecessors, hoping that they would use it as a basis to galvanise a certain narrative about why they came to power. Why he came to power does not matter; he is in power today. His job is to fix it. When a President during the Message on State of the Nation spends his time lamenting like he did in 2013 and last week Thursday, what he does is that he invites the remnants of the previous Administration to also come in to defend our record.

In between the two, the real issues that they campaigned on and the things that the millions of young people who were singing *Kwen Kwen*, are waiting to hear him deliver on, get lost in the cracks. I want to spend some time reminding them of the things that they campaigned on and the things that many people were hoping that when the President mounted the podium, he would explain how he would be delivering on them.

The President campaigned on the cost-of-living crisis. He campaigned that transport fares were high and were still going high and that if he is given an opportunity to come to power, he would roll out a programme to tackle it. Did anybody hear the President explain here how he was going to tackle the phenomena of transport fares that are going up?—**[Some Hon Members: No!]**—He spent all the time lamenting and trying to blame the past Heads of State, just like he did in 2013.

The President campaigned on high electricity bills and the fact that if he has an opportunity to come to power, he would introduce measures to tackle it. When he mounted the podium on Thursday, the expectation was that he would lay out a programme, which programme we now in Parliament will spend time debating. Did anybody hear the President explain how he was going to tackle electricity tariffs that keep going up? —[**Some Hon Members: No!**]—

For many months, when the President was campaigning, he was speaking about high food inflation. When he mounted the podium, I was hoping to hear him outline his programme to deal with high food prices. I did not hear it, and I do not know if Colleagues heard the President outline it here, so that we could be debating it by now.

In fact, in the first two months of the President's Administration, what he has started doing is to remove some of the pillars that helped hold some parts of the economy together. It is not true that everything that went on in the last eight years was bad. It is not true that everything that went on was good. There were pluses and minuses. What we have to do now is to build on the pluses. But already the President is dismantling the pluses. Take the Gold-for-Oil (G4O) Programme—[**Some Hon Members: Eii!**]—which was introduced as a measure to help bolster our currency.

7.32 p.m.

It was introduced to, among other things, help reduce the forex demand that was used in importing fuel for our country. Today H. E. the President's new administration says it has dismantled that plus.

We are waiting and hoping to hear in the Message on the State of the Nation what is replacing it, so that our currency will not soon tank. What we are seeing instead is a reduction or a drawdown of our gross international reserves to support the currency and instead the Gold for Oil programme has been dismantled.

Mr Speaker, H. E. the President travelled the length and breadth of this country talking about unemployment. In fact, he promised the young people of this country that, for those who were afraid that if he wins power, he would terminate their appointments, they should fear not; he will keep them and that for every one of those jobs, he will recruit two more people. He said 'ye be fa yen nkorɔfoɔ de ɔmo aka ho. It was shocking that when H. E. the President assumed office, the first thing he did was to terminate them. Thousands of young Ghanaians who have been properly recruited into the public services were terminated. While H. E. the President mounted the podium, we did not hear him outline a programme that he is going to use to create or to expand the job creation bracket.

Mr Speaker, another thing that we were hoping to hear H. E. the President talk about was the growth of the Ghanaian economy. Yesterday I heard my Brother Dr Cassiel Ato Baah Forson talking about the fact that yes, there had been growth but that growth in his opinion had not been able to tackle poverty. Growth between 2017 and 2020 when COVID-19 hit was an average of seven per cent, undisputed. H. E. President Mahama campaigned on the fact that he is going to do better than seven per cent. When he mounted the podium, the whole country was expecting that he will outline a programme that is going to grow the Ghanaian economy by more than seven per cent. Did anybody hear him speak about that one? [**Some Hon Members: No!**] The whole address was used for lamentation, blaming the previous administration, enlisting debts that he had inherited in various places.

But, if the President wanted to give a balanced account of what he had inherited, I would have imagined that he would have also spoken about the assets that he inherited. The President did not tell us that when he assumed office on the 7th of January, the gold reserves of this country were 30 tonnes and that when he was leaving office the last time it was 8 tonnes. That is over 22 tonnes increase in our gold reserve through Dr Bawumia's gold purchase programme. The same Dr Bawumia that Hon Adongo was bastardising a few minutes ago.

If the president wanted to give a balanced account, I was expecting that he would tell us that when he assumed

office he realised that the Ghanaian economy that he left, the economy which by the way during his tenure shrunk by about US\$10 billion, when he came back the economy had expanded by about US\$20 billion. The President did not tell us that.

I was expecting that the President, when he mounted the podium, if he wanted to give a balanced account, would tell us that our gross international reserves which he left at US\$6.5 billion when he was leaving power, when he came back the morning of the 8th of January, when he reported to work, he found out that it was about US\$8.9 billion. This is a balanced account, if he wanted to give a balanced account—But no. What he wanted to do was to lament, complain and blame the previous administration.

Mr Speaker, if indeed our Colleagues on the Government benches want a reset, the first reset we should be doing is moving away from the politics of the past, where new heads of state spend an inordinate amount of time lambasting, complaining and blaming the past, and spend very little time putting their programmes on the table so that we interrogate and support.

When many of our colleagues of the Majority appeared before the Appointments Committee and Osahen Afenyo-Markin asked them if they were part of the manifesto committee and had seen the provisions that the manifesto has said on this subject, they said no, they have not seen it. One would have imagined that by now the programmes for governance, the

Majority would be laying them here, and those who did not see it at manifesto time will see it and even contribute the ideas.

We have been in government before. Sometimes one can be here and see a Colleague lay a paper but one does not even know the details but he or she is part of the Majority. One would imagine that by now the Majority's Economic Transformation programme and 24-hour economic programme would be brought here. These are the things that we were hoping the President would be giving details about, so that by now Parliament will be seized with them and will be interrogating them.

Today, none of them has come before us and we are spending all our time lambasting the past, trying to blame the past, complaining about the past. That is why Ghanaians voted for them. They have an opportunity to do what? To fix it. No, we do not need to wait for the Budget; we need to have them here and now so that we can have an opportunity, for the Majority and us, to work on them.

Mr Speaker, I will be concluding soon. There are three major things that I want to draw the Government benches attention to.

First is to stop the propaganda. They have won the election already so they do not need to do more propaganda. The propaganda will not create jobs. It will not put food on the tables of people. It will not put clothes on the backs of people. Rather, they should bring their governance programmes.

Till date, we do not have a single definition for the 24-hour economy programme. Everybody one talk to has a different definition. Programme *baako*, definition *bebree*. They must spend time doing less propaganda and more time bringing their governance programmes so that Parliament can assist them and work on it.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, political parties, and this goes to all of us generally, while we do our manifestos and make promises, we spend more time putting out the granular details of our programmes. This is so that in times like this, we will spend less time doing the blame game of the past and previous presidents and more time interrogating the programmes that they are going to govern with and assisting them not to even repeat the mistakes that we made. Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this.

The Speaker: Hon Members, it is now the turn of Hon Agyei Mensah.

Mr Isaac Adjei Mensah (NDC — Wassa East): Thank you, Rt Hon Speaker, for the opportunity to join my Colleagues in thanking the President for the insightful delivery of the Message on the State of the Nation.

Mr Speaker, I got a bit disappointed to see my Colleagues on the Minority Side behaving the way they do. The worry is that this is a President who has inherited close to GH¢800 billion debts. The economy is in a mess, everything is tattered. He came here and was in that remorseful position. My understanding

is that this is a President who came here and he has told them that he is going to fix the mess that they have created. Ordinarily, he would be calling for the fact that some of them who are culprits to be prosecuted. But he says, no, take on. We are aware that there is no country any longer. Here is Ghana. We are the same people. Our colleagues have created a mess. This is the only country that we have. We are going to fix the problem.

Mr Speaker, he said that he, President John Dramani Mahama, will fix the problem so, that is a commitment. But on a more serious note, Mr Speaker, I expect my Colleagues to appreciate that, yes, there has been a mess in the system. The economy is in a mess., the road sector infrastructure.

Mr Ayariga — *rose* —

Mr I. A. Mensah: Thank you, Leader, for saving me. Honestly speaking, Mr Speaker, it is instructive and I think it is important that we take notice of this. At a time that President Mahama in 2016 was handing over power to New Patriotic Party (NPP), we owed US\$120 billion as total debt from the colonial times to that period. And it was a problem.

7.42 p.m.

Why have you sent us into this mess? Now you have left close to GH¢800 billion and you are not allowing yourself to be told that you have caused a mess.

Mr Speaker, let us come to the infrastructure sector. The President was clear, and as we speak, the total commitment of the sector is GH¢105 billion. Then the total debt stock is also GH¢110 billion. Together, the road sector alone which has internal debt, has close to over GH¢200 billion and that is more than the GH¢120 billion that was bequeathed Nana Akufo Addo, and that is a whole lot of mess and so much noise.

Mr Speaker, as we speak now, Nana Akufo Addo and Dr Bawumia and my Colleagues there were saying that the total network of road they have constructed, since the inception of the Fourth Republic, no government has ever done that before. We tried to explain to them, but they never understood that. They would not accept that. Now the records are clear. The records are that they were not able to define and to tell Ghanaians the state of our road in terms of good, bad, and poor, because they have never conducted any survey. They are not in a position to tell us the total road network that they had or left Ghanaians.

As at the time that President Mahama was leaving office, the total road network was 78,402 kilometres. That is certified, validated and sealed. As we speak now, there is not any evidence to show; they have not been able to validate that. When we went into the details during the transition and investigations, we saw that the whole place is in a mess. Mr Speaker, President Mahama has committed himself that yes, in the road sector, there is a whole lot of mess and that he has

solution to that and that we are going to make sure that we resolve that sector.

Railways is a major problem, and since 2017, Nana Akufo-Addo made promises, series of promises, that the western railway line was going to be sorted out. So much money was expended in the railway sector but we do not have anything to show. There is nothing to show, and I think that we need to investigate this. So much money, several billions of dollars have been invested in this sector and we have nothing to show. The Tema to Mpakadan railway, is that what we have to show? Recently, we were told that some flashy coaches had been procured from Hungary or some other country and we cannot even use them.

Mr Speaker, what I need my Colleagues to understand is that the road sector is in a mess but we would fix it. How are we going to fix it? There is a solution to that. President Mahama was clear when he was here during the address, the Message on the State of Nation. What did he say? These areas are going to be sorted. One, we are going to uncap the Road Fund. The Road Fund that was capped and so much money was coming in, but we are not getting the money for maintenance, that is going to be opened up and there is going to be enough money for maintenance. Again, the District Road Improvement Programme (DRIP) that they hurriedly brought on board because of elections, we would utilise that. The Big Push has a lot of details for the road sector. So we are going to prioritise—Hon Majority Leader, I know you are good at bringing

him to speed. So the DRIP is going to be used to help improve the road network.

Again and again, maintenance is going to be key because all our roads are in deplorable state. Contractors are not being paid. About 85 per cent of our contractors from 2018 to 2024 have all left sites and our roads are in a deplorable situation. How do we solve this? The road network is so key to the economy and about 90 per cent of our economy hinges on good road network. So it is something that is clear. We are clearing the records. Never ever, should it be repeated. Never ever should they say that Nana Akufo-Addo has constructed roads more than any other government since independence. It is not true today and it is not true tomorrow.

As at the time that we were recording, that is in December, 2023, roads in the credit of Nana Akufo-Addo stood at 6,977 kilometres. That is sealed, that is recorded, that is validated. When President Mahama was leaving office, in just a term, he had constructed, sealed, and validated 8,118 kilometres of road. We just saw the details. So, when we compare all the presidents, from President Rawlings, President Kufuor, President Mills, President Mahama, and President Akufo-Addo, he is the worst performing president, as far as road construction is concerned. The records are there to show. In the Budget Statement, they are all there.

But it is important to note that as we speak now, the 98,000 kilometres that they said they constructed has not been validated or confirmed. So, they have no

justification to say that they have constructed roads. The one that President Mahama left, the 78,402 kilometres have been validated and sealed.

It is also important to note that we want to know state the road network. How do you get to know that? In terms of performance, three key pillars are important. One is the total network size. So they say they have performed so much in the road sector. What is their total? I am telling them the performance of this man; what this man did. He had extended road network from 68,027 kilometres to 78,402 kilometres and that was President Mahama. Again, there is another pillar which is the proportion of roads maintained. Roads maintained at the time that President Mahama was leaving office— And that is why he said that he is going to fix it. Fifty-seven per cent of our roads were maintained.

As at the time Nana Akufo-Addo was exiting, at the end of 2024, the proportional road maintenance was 43 per cent, and this tells you that they have not performed.

It is also important to know the state of our roads. How do we know the state of our roads? One could do that by a road condition mix. In all these, all we are trying to say is that Nana Akufo-Addo performed abysmally. He never did anything in terms of proper road construction and maintenance. And that is what the President is saying. The President is saying that he is going to fix the mess. He said the road sector is in crisis. President Mahama was clear. He

said the road sector is in crisis and he is going to fix it. And how would he fix it? We all have to come together. All our roads are in deplorable state. Maintenance is not working. Maintenance regime has collapsed. So we need to come together. I was expecting that they would thank President Mahama for the wonderful delivery and say that this man is in here, we do not have any country other than Ghana, let us all come together. If Nana Akufo-Addo, for whatever reason we do not know, has sent us into that ditch with all those billions of dollars in debt, let us all come together. The National Economic Dialogue that is ongoing, we expected all of them to be there, contribute and participate in that. They never did that. There was Senchi Economic forum that we also invited them. I learned that Hon Osafo Marfo went there and they nearly killed him.

So for me, I am so much concerned about the road network. For me, I am concerned about infrastructure. Railways is very critical. They never performed anything better than aviation. So what the President is saying is that the national airline, we are going to have one. They made a lot of noise and nothing has happened. So it is going to open up and that will be competitive bidding. We are going to invite private partnership for people to come in so that we can have a national liner. He said it. He is going to fix it. Now the Ho Airport which is now up to speed, is going to be developed to a level of a training centre which is going to be the hub for aviation training. That is very critical. And I think that when this is done, our infrastructure will do better.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, I think that we need to put this in real perspective. As far as road issues are concerned, Nana Akufo-Addo and Bawumia government, as at the time they were living, were the worst performing president ever. And that one is in the history books. They have not performed. They have no records to show. They have left the state in serious debt, over 200 billion. One for total commitment and the other one for the debt stock.

7.52 p.m.

Contractors are leaving sites; they are not being paid. President Mahama has committed himself that contractors would be paid. The road fund is going to be uncapped and he also said that the road toll would be brought back with the use of technology. So, much money would come into the kitty and we would use that for the maintenance and construction of our roads. The NPP Government illegally abandoned and scrapped road tolls. The Minister was asked to come in here and he did not come. All we were told was that the toll booths would be used for toilet facilities and so on. In the middle of a highway, the NPP Government was going to use those toll booths for toilet facilities.

The NPP Government did not get it; they never get it, and so on and so forth. It is gone; it is not going to happen again. We are going to put the whole system in a good shape. I want to thank President Mahama for his delivery and his good heart, and for the very fact that he never threatened to try and prosecute people.

Thank you so much, Mr Speaker. I end my case.

The Speaker: Hon Members, it is now the turn of Hon Nana Agyei Baffour Awuah.

Nana Agyei Baffour Awuah (NPP—Manhyia South): Rt Hon Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity given me. I want to commence by commending the President for addressing this House, pursuant to Article 67 of the 1992 Constitution.

Mr Speaker, I have also taken a cue from you that as Minority, our job, very respectfully, is to also assist the Majority to govern by having our say. So, in this regard, I would take the opportunity to remind the President of some of the issues he skipped in addressing this House.

Mr Speaker, while the President acknowledged a peaceful transfer of power, he failed to acknowledge that we handed over to him a peaceful country. But Mr Speaker, I can appreciate why he skipped that. It is simple; he could not have mentioned that without admitting the fact that since he took over the helm of power, unprecedented mayhem has been visited on the people of this country.

Mr Speaker, he could not, because he would have also had to acknowledge what happened in Obuasi on the fateful day of Saturday 18th January, 2025, very respectfully, Mr Speaker, where seven people lost their lives. Where by the

statement of the Ghana Armed Forces, seven people lost their lives.

Mr Speaker, it can be appreciated why, because if he had acknowledged it, he would have also had to acknowledge the fact that it was under his reign that AngloGold Ashanti closed down.

Mr Speaker, the good news is that under the leadership of Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo and the NPP, AngloGold Ashanti is now fully operational and is doing so well that by the end of 2024, it had posted 243 per cent of dividends. Mr Speaker, the President could not acknowledge it because he would have had to speak about the unprecedented post-election violence in the history of Ghana, to the extent that the Ghana Police even gave up. They threw their hands in despair and said they could not protect the Electoral Commission of this country in counting the election results.

Mr Speaker, this is where we find ourselves. Sadly, the President appeared in this House, failed to talk about this, failed to give us a clear plan in maintaining law and order. Mr Speaker, obviously, the President had forgotten that the maintenance of law and order is very important for economic growth. Perhaps, another dialogue is required on how to maintain law and order as well as security.

Mr Speaker, I noticed in the President's speech, the 10-million-dollar big push, commendable. Except to say that, today marks exactly 12 years since the President cut the sod for the US\$10

billion Hope City Project. The fascination with US\$10 billion, Mr Speaker, is curious; the fascination of the President with the figure US\$10 billion is curious.

Mr Speaker, interestingly, while the President acknowledged that he inherited 2 million unemployment population, he failed to also state that he had made several thousands of people unemployed within two months of being in office. He has made several thousands of youths in this country unemployed just within two months of being in office. What is now the population of the unemployed youth of this country? The Ghana Statistical Service, very respectfully, will put this out, but the record should go in there that through the effort of President John Dramani Mahama, some Ghanaians who have been at home for over 10 years but courtesy, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo's Government, secured employment, are today now unemployed just by the stroke of a pen.

What are we talking about? Are they not Ghanaians? Are we saying that today, we should have an NDC and NPP Ghana? Is that what we are saying? Are we saying that going forward, when the NDC is in power, anybody who is considered NPP should sit idle with his or her hands folded at the back? Is that what we are saying? That is not the Ghana we all seek to build.

Mr Speaker, while the President came to this House to inform us that he had cut down the number of Ministers, he failed to update the House on where the civil servants who used to be in the

consolidated ministries are now. Where are they? Have they been made redundant? Have they been seconded to other Government ministries? Or have they been dismissed?

Mr Speaker, interestingly, when we take a ministry like the National Security Ministry, their overhead cost was in excess of GH¢1 billion as at 2024. Mr Speaker, when we take the salaries of the Minister and his Deputy out, I do not think it will be less than GH¢900 million.

Mr Speaker, so where are the savings? It is populism. Let us begin to face it and give a better explanation to Ghanaians that we need more hands to save this country, and more hands to execute Government agenda.

8.02 p.m.

Mr Speaker, as we speak, we have *korɔkorɔ the Jon cats*. Today, we have directors in charge of Agribusiness at the presidency; we have them. Today you have directors in charge of Black Star Experience. They were criticising Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo for having persons in charge of Diasporan Experience at the Jubilee House. Today, they did not scrap it; they have them. That is *korɔkorɔ the Jon cats*.

Mr Speaker, in this era, where, for instance, the world is moving towards energy transition, Mr Speaker, we need to be truthful to Ghanaians that at a place like the Ministry of Energy and Green Transition, it is not enough to have a Minister and a Deputy Minister. The

world is aggressively pursuing an agenda to transform the use of energy from non-renewable energy to renewable energy, and we have only one Minister there, seeing to power, oil and gas, and also seeing to the renewable energy. How do we compete with the West?

Mr Speaker, it is very important that we begin to speak truth to the Ghanaian people by making sure that we explain to them why we make certain appointments, except that we must make sure it is quality. Mr Speaker, the President omitted to explain to us why his Attorney-General and Minister for Justice will file *nolle prosequi* without his prior approval.

Mr Speaker, the Attorney-General, in his press statement to explain the *nolle prosequi*, stated that he did so without the President's prior approval. The President has heard it, but he has not and he could not explain to us. Is it a case that he is not in charge? Is it a case that because of his style of giving directions, he has given a cut-blank direction to the Attorney-General to do as he pleases?

Mr Speaker, we need explanation as to why an Attorney-General would turn himself into a prosecutor and a judge at the same time and redraw a case to the extent that it will constitute a discharge and acquittal. An Attorney-General, for the first time in the history of this country, unprecedented, became a judge and a prosecutor at the same time. In that vein, what moral rights does the Attorney-General now have to prosecute other acts of corruption? Mr Speaker, this is very important because, historically,

every challenge in Government, any form of interruption that a government has experienced, one key fact or reason that has underpinned it has been corruption.

Mr Speaker, we should not be seen by Ghanaians as taking a partisan approach to the prosecution of corruption. The moment the Attorney-General is seen to be redrawing and filing *nolle prosequi* in respect of cases, very respectfully, involving his party members, the conclusion, Mr Speaker, that any Ghanaian will likely come to is that he is being partisan. It is exactly what has happened. It is exactly what forced him to give a reason of taking that step, which is the first time any Attorney-General has done that. He is putting all of us at risk by that conduct, so, very respectfully, the President ought to have explained to us; he ought to have explained to us how, in the face of that, his Attorney-General was going to proceed to prosecute other matters.

Mr Speaker, the President also stated that he was going to end the politicisation in the Judiciary. When did the Judiciary become politicised? Is it after the decision which Mr President obtained at the Supreme Court in the year 2013 or after it? The President ought to have explained to us why the Judiciary was not partisan, at the time, for the first time in the history of this country, he appointed the General-Secretary of a political party to the Supreme Court. At that time, it was not partisan. He was the first to have done that in the history of this country—[*Interruption*—Mr Speaker, it is important that the President comes

clear on the way forward in terms of law and order. It is necessary for his economic agenda. Investors must have confidence that when they invest in this country, they will not be assailed by lawlessness. People will not come to their homes and businesses in the name of change of power to demand that they should be handed over to them and to demand that their legally obtained concessions should be given to them. We need, very respectfully, going forward, to have this confidence.

Mr Speaker, the President also failed to mention before this House that even though in the NDC's manifesto they have promised to set up new high courts in the newly created regions, the Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo Government had already commenced with the construction of new high courts in all those regions, and they were at various stages of completion. The President ought to have acknowledged that. That way, we would have had a true state of the nation. As it stands now, very respectfully, we were served and we were fed with a skewed state of the nation. Half-truth—

The Speaker: Hon Member, you have one more minute.

Nana Baffour Awuah: Half-truth, untruth and so on and so forth.

Mr Speaker, I really appreciate this treasured moment. I am very grateful for the opportunity—*Hear! Hear!*]

The Speaker: Hon Members, we now have to listen—From the guide I

have here and I am looking at, I do not seem to have the guide. So, that was why I was signaling the Leadership to give direction. It is now a different name here.

Yes, Hon Felix Kwakye Ofofu?

Minister of State, Government Communications (Mr Felix Kwakye Ofofu): Thank you very much Mr Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the Message delivered by the President of the Republic of Ghana, H. E. President John Dramani Mahama, to this House.

8.12 p.m.

Mr Speaker, I have listened in dismay to how our Colleagues on the Minority Bench have attempted to create the impression that the President veered off the requirements of the 1992 Constitution in the delivery of his address to this House. Mr Speaker, Article 67 of the Constitution is quite clear that the President is to deliver a Message on the State of the Nation before this House. So, if any President came here and focused his entire attention on telling us what the state of the nation is, without going into what plans he has to address whatever problems he has encountered, Mr Speaker, he would be well within his rights to do so.

But right at the outset, President Mahama made it clear that he was not here merely to give an account on the state of the nation, but he was here to tell us exactly what he was going to do to get us out of the abysmal depths into which the Akufo-Addo-Bawumia Government

sank this nation. And Mr Speaker, he inspired hope in the generality of the people of Ghana.

I have also listened with considerable shock as our Colleagues on the other Side have insisted that the economy they bequeathed to President Mahama and his Government was anything to write home about. Mr Speaker, during our days in secondary school, we read the books of the venerable Professor Naa Afarley Sackeyfio, who wrote in one of her books that the lizard says, it is not as indignant at the boy who threw a stone at it than at the one who lauded the boy for having a good aim. It is bad enough that they bequeathed the country to the Mahama Administration in the state that they did. But it is completely unacceptable and constitutes an insult to the people of Ghana to tell them that the terrible economy that they left is better than the one that they inherited.

Mr Speaker, fortunately, economic analysis is not done in a state of vacuum. Ghanaians have lived through the worst economic crisis in a generation. Ghanaians have lived through the worst economic crisis under the Fourth Republic, if not in the entire history of Ghana. Mr Speaker, since the year 2020 or immediately after the elections of that year, the Ghanaian economy has been in a tailspin. For the first time in decades, a Ghanaian government defaulted on debt payments.

Mr Speaker, there is no better measure of the collapse of an economy than the failure of a government to meet its debt obligations. When President

Mahama was leaving power in January 2017, Ghana could fulfil its debt obligations. Our Colleagues on the other Side say that the economic indices they left were better than the ones that they inherited. That cannot be true. When the NDC was leaving power in 2017, our debt-to-GDP ratio, which is a theoretical measure of whether or not one can offset their debt in one-bullet payment to the size of their GDP, showed that we could do that with barely half of our GDP and still have almost half to spare on other things.

At a point, our debt-to-GDP ratio, under the NPP, leapfrogged to 104 per cent. It meant that if, theoretically, we were to pick all of our GDP and pay our debt with it, we would still require another 4 per cent to do so. It is the worst in our history under the Fourth Republic. Mr Speaker, the budget deficit is the greatest indicator of economic prudence because the fundamental principle of economic management is that one cannot live beyond their means. Even in our own lives, if we spend far more than we earn, we would always end up in difficulty.

Mr Speaker, when we were leaving power in 2017, our budget deficit, which essentially measures the difference between our revenue and expenditure, was 6.1 per cent. Since the year 2020 up until 2023, every single year under the NPP, they left double-digit deficits. If we look at the exchange rates, in the year 2016, the Ghanaian cedi lost 9 per cent of its value in the entire year. Mr Speaker, last year, the cedi lost 19 per cent of its value. The year before, it lost

24 per cent of its value. The year before that, it lost 54 per cent of its value—**[Some Hon Members: Eeii!]**—

Mr Speaker, our Colleagues claim that they have left a healthy primary balance. The primary balance is simply the difference between revenue and expenditure minus interest payments because that is almost statutory; we cannot do anything about it. They programmed a surplus or a primary balance of positive 0.5 per cent.

Mr Speaker, I can tell you that on commitment basis, they have missed that target by 800 per cent margin—**[Some Hon Members: Oh!]**—And the day that the Minister for Finance comes to this House to read the Budget Statement and Economic Policy, he will bear it all. We cannot have that kind of primary balance and insist that our economy is healthy.

Mr Speaker, look at our public debts. They inherited a public debt of GH¢120 billion, and I remember distinctly that President Akufo-Addo stood to your right in this House and declared that the GH¢120 billion debt was unheard of. At the last reckoning, Mr Speaker, our public debt stood at GH¢721 billion—**[Some Hon Members: Eeii!]**—Even then, it was because they denied 1.3 million Ghanaian bondholders of their rights to earnings on their bonds.

Mr Speaker, the Domestic Debt Exchange Programme (DDEP), as Mr President rightly noted, is the harshest economic policy in the history of Ghana. An amount of GH¢240 billion, which was due 1.3 million bondholders, were

withheld. They were told that contrary to the agreement they reached with the Government of Ghana that they were going to be paid a certain interest rate, it was going to be reduced drastically. The maturity periods too were going to be extended. Even pensioners were not spared the ordeal. So, for the first time in our history, our aged pensioners had to picket at the Ministry of Finance, on a daily basis, in demand of what was due them.

Mr Speaker, these indices point to one fact, that the Akufo-Addo-Bawumia Administration have been the worst managers of our economy by far and away, and there can be no dispute about it. Our Colleagues on the other Side also ask that how is President Mahama going to finance his well-thought-through proposals on economic recovery? Let me address that.

Mr Speaker, in the last six weeks alone, GH¢52 billion of the debts that they bequeathed have been due for payments. So, the Minister for Finance has done what every Minister for Finance has done, which is perfectly legitimate, rolling over the maturities. That is all that has happened. That is the why if you pick Ghana's debt today, it has not increased by 67 billion.

8.22.p.m.

Mr Speaker, but I was coming to what President Mahama intends to do to make savings that can be channelled into other areas of expenditure. Mr Speaker, President Mahama made it clear during the campaign, and, indeed, Ghanaians

had urged upon the political class the need to reduce the size of governments. So, President Mahama stated boldly that in the event that he was elected, he will work with 60 Ministers. This compelled our Colleagues on the other Side to immediately promise to work with 50 Ministers.

Mr Speaker, these are the same people who defended to the hilt, the appointment of 125 Ministers. It would interest you to note, Mr Speaker, that the worst economic outcomes that this country has seen emanated from their performance between 2017 and 2020. After that point, all they did was to try to patch up for the wrongs of 2020. That terrible economic performance was brought about by the biggest government in our history of 125 Ministers. That means that they did not need a legion of Ministers to be able to manage a country properly.

Mr Speaker, now, I used myself as an example of the savings that would be made by having a reduced Government. My Colleague and friend on the other Side, Mr Oppong Nkrumah, who by the way is my constituent also, used to head a Ministry called the Ministry of Information.

That Ministry had 76 people working there to manage Government information. **[Some Hon Members: Eei!]** As I speak, it is myself, a deputy, and five other people who now manage Government information—*[Interruption]*—

Mr Speaker, if we move from 123 or 125 Ministers to 60 Ministers, that

means that we would buy 60 less Land Cruisers, we would buy 60 less saloon cars, we will need to provide 60 less bungalows—[*Hear! Hear!*]— We will need to provide 60 less sets of Political Aids, Executive Assistants, and others—*Hear! Hear!*]—

Mr Speaker, President Mahama has not limited himself to just reducing the numbers of Ministers. In any event, as I speak, there are only 56 Ministers, and in fact, there are 42 Ministers running Ghana as we speak because Deputy Ministers have not been approved. Four nominations have not been made to make up the 60. But if it comes to the Presidential Staff, if we take out the Civil Servants under the Office of the President under the Akufo-Addo Administration, there were 337 political appointees under President Akufo-Addo. [**Some Hon Members:** Eei!] As I speak now, there are 26 Presidential Staffers, people that one can classify as Presidential Staffers, and then four directors. As I speak, if we put together the total number of people who work at the Presidency, where I operate from, they will not amount to 60 yet they had 337 political appointees—[*Uproar*]—So this is a man who wants to be prudent.

Mr Speaker, the reason that is important is that they send a clear signal to the people of Ghana that we are not here to feed fats on their public purse, we are not here to squander their money on the personal comforts of Ministers and political appointees. More importantly, President Mahama gave indication, and I have heard them say that he came here to

lament and that he did not provide a way forward.

Mr Speaker, I have a copy of the Message on the State of the Nation.

The Speaker: Hon Member, you have one minute left.

Mr Ofosu: President Mahama was very clear.

Mr Ayariga: Mr Speaker, he has just started— [*Laughter*]—

Mr Ofosu: Mr Speaker, President Mahama was emphatic in the address that I hold in my hands, that he was not here to lament, even though there was much to lament about. How can we not lament a situation where 1.3 million bondholders are denied their bond savings? They say that they left buffers. When we speak about buffers, it simply means one thing: money that is set aside for the specific purpose of paying debts.

Mr Speaker, the accounting to which monies are paid for the purpose is what you call the Debt Service Reserve Account or Sinking Fund. They claim that this is not a fund that they were particularly not fond of, and that they did not use it. This is not true. In previous times, they have made huge transfers into and from this account. There was a time, on 7th October, 2024, when they transferred as much as US\$225 million into this account. A sub—

The Speaker: Hon Member, you are timed out—[*Uproar*]—

Mr Ofosu: Mr Speaker, in conclusion, they left a paltry US\$64,000. Mr Speaker, we are about to mobilise GH¢15 billion. So, for them to be able to sustain a claim that they left buffers for that purpose, they must show the accounting to which GH¢15 billion was held.

Mr Speaker, I thank you very much for the opportunity— *[Hear! Hear!]*—

The Speaker: Hon Members, we now listen to Mr Gideon Boako.

Mr Gideon Boako (NPP — Tano North): Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Address that was presented to this House by the President. My good friend and classmate, Mr Felix Kwakye Ofosu, made reference to what Prof Naa Afarley Sackeyfio said in one of her books, that, “Do not tempt me because I do not have the power to resist temptation.” The Hon Member has gone on a path of putting out some information and data in his attempt to rationalise what we describe as lamentations by the President, and in so doing, some misleading data have been put out.

Mr Speaker, it is important to establish that no government can run the full hog of a term without having to deal with some arrears in payments, some unfulfilled promises, and even in some cases, things that were not promised are delivered. But at the end of the day, analysts and scholars have given us indicators that measure whether the overall performance was good, moderate, or it was bad and that analysis is akin to

what a physician would do on a patient. One may walk to the hospital as very healthy, but a doctor through laboratory test is able to tell, because of the level of one’s temperature, a person has headache and this is what the economists have done for us.

Mr Speaker, I put this into context to indicate whether the economy that has been handed over to President Mahama and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) is an economy that is poorly managed or it is not. And the acid test to all of this in political decisions is what is the alternative. President Mahama is two months into his government, so we can only measure him in relative terms by comparing what he has inherited with what he left when he once had the opportunity to serve and I want to carry everybody along. Let us look at some of these indicators and make our own fair judgement, because this is a House of records. President Mahama and the NDC left office in 2016 with a real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 3.4 per cent. This is when the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had given a target of 5.4 per cent, and even the previous year, 2015, was four per cent. Yet, President Mahama ended up with a declined growth of 3.4 per cent. Today, the economy that he says is not in good shape has growth for the third quarter of 2024 of 6.4 per cent and would exceed the IMF target of four per cent by the end of the year.

Mr Speaker, the Mr Felix Ofosu talked about fiscal deficits and said it measures the prudence in government expenditure, and I agree with him. They

left office in 2016 with a non-rebased fiscal deficit of 9.3 per cent and a rebased fiscal deficit of 6.5 per cent.

08.32 p.m.

Today, the fiscal deficit is around 4.2 per cent, leaving a deficit of 6.5 per cent, and the one who left a deficit of 4.2 per cent, who has managed the economy better?

But you see, that aside, the primary balance determines the fiscal health of any economy. And Mr Speaker, it is interesting to note that President Mahama left the economy in the health of the negatives— a primary deficit of 1.4 per cent. Today, our primary balance is in the surplus. So, if you are talking about data, you have to support what you say with data.

And interestingly, Mr Speaker, Ghana has had an all-time high of primary balance of 1.59 per cent in 2021. But shockingly, our all-time low in terms of our primary balance was recorded in 2014, under President Mahama; all-time low of primary balance since independence.

Mr Speaker, he talked about debt-to-GDP ratio. The debt-to-GDP ratio non-rebased, when they left office was 73 per cent. The 55.6 per cent they talk about is after the 2018 rebasing. Today, the non-rebased debt-to-GDP ratio is 72 per cent. It is lower than what they left in terms of non-rebases. They should wait for next year when the Statistical Survey rebases our GDP to see whether the debt-to-GDP ratio will not be below what we left. That is the most important thing.

Mr Speaker, again, our current account balance, which records our international transactions, including exports and imports, was in the deficit during President Mahama's time when he left office in 2016, today, it is in the surplus. Mr Speaker, our Gross International Reserves were 6.2 billion, today, it is 8.9 billion. It covered 3.5 months of imports cover, but today, it is covering four months of imports cover. Which of these two is the best?

Now, they talk about exchange rate depreciation. Yes, our cedi naturally had a characteristic feature of undergoing depreciation because of the regime that we practice. But they left an exchange rate depreciation from 2009 to 2016 of 72 per cent. What President Akufo-Addo left is 71 per cent. Which one is the best? So that is important to note. Mr Speaker, this is an indication that the economy is doing well.

Mr Speaker, a relatively strong economy is the one that is able to provide infrastructure, that is able to provide jobs, healthcare, pay salaries, provide stable electricity, and all of that. Mr Speaker, the Government that President Mahama is inheriting has laid solid foundations. And Mr Speaker, it is based on this solid foundation that the Government has been able to reduce the number of young people who were not employed by 2.13 million. President Mahama has a responsibility to reduce that further.

Today, we have seen the growth in the agriculture sector and our exports are increasing. That is why we are having a

trade surplus. For the first time, we are recording trade surplus.

Mr Speaker, let me move on to the issue of debt and borrowing. It is important to put into context, that as we speak, Ghana's debt in dollar terms is US\$47.9 billion. Out of this US\$47.9 billion, the NDC government from 2009 to 2016 contributed US\$21.2 billion, which is 43 per cent. The NPP Government contributed US\$18.7 billion, which is 38 per cent. So, out of the total debt stock of this country, the NDC Government contributed more in dollar terms to our debt stock than what the NPP contributed. That is important; that is important to note.

But, Mr Speaker, today, we are talking about a Government that is just two months in office; two months in office operationally. And in these two months, this Government has borrowed GH¢67 billion from their Treasury Bill market. This past Friday, the Government has again indicated that this Friday, it is going to borrow GH¢5.7 billion. By the end of this week, our total debt borrowed from the Treasury Bill market will be GH¢72 billion in two months. If you extrapolate this for the rest of the year, President Mahama will end the year with debt, domestic debt, borrowed over GH¢200 billion. But when you talk about this, then they hide behind semantics and talk about net borrowing. But in actual sense, what is net borrowing on the domestic bond market? Net borrowing on the Treasury Bill market is simply the bills that are issued within the period minus the bills that are maturing. Now, if you have a positive net

borrowing, you are increasing your debt. We should be talking about negative net borrowing and not positive net borrowing. That is the most important thing that you have to know.

Mr Speaker, a lot is also happening on our debt market. We have seen the Treasury Bill (TB) rates coming down, which is a good thing. But Mr Speaker, there is a question, and the question is, what is driving the rates down? It is important to ask these questions. Is the Minister for Finance artificially managing the TB rates? Is it sustainable? And is the Minister for Finance controlling both price and quantity on the TB market? The reason I am asking this is that we cannot have TB rates coming below inflation levels and at the same time, monetary policy rates is 27 per cent and we have inflation at 23 per cent. What I am saying is that the decline in the TB rates is not in sync with economic fundamentals, and that raises a lot of questions. That is why a lot of analysts believe that the decline in the TB rates is artificial.

Mr Speaker, let me raise this important option. Why would any treasury management team decide to go and purchase TB rates below the inflation rates while at the same time, the monetary policy rate is 27 per cent? If they do that, it means their real return is going to be negative. Is the Bank of Ghana indeed on the open market as dictated by the Bank of Ghana Act, 2002, as amended by Bank of Ghana (Amendment) Act 2016, that they should maintain price stability? If the Bank of Ghana is on the open market to ensure

price stability and map up excess liquidity, they will be ushering their Open Market Operations (OMOS), and the OMO comes at monetary policy rate plus or minus 2 per cent. Which treasurer will go and purchase bills offering 19 per cent when the Bank of Ghana is offering 29 per cent? The drop in the rates is artificial, Mr Speaker; it is artificial. It is not in tandem with the economy's fundamentals, and that is very important for us to note.

Mr Speaker, it is important to also establish that the Government of the NPP, while we were producing all the positive and good economic indicators, we managed to keep our lights on. And it is important to know that President Akufo-Addo did not burden the Ghanaian people with a lot of costs in terms of electricity bills. President Mahama—I am coming; let me give you the data. Mr Speaker, I am producing data of electricity tariff increases in this country. In the year 2009, there was no increase in electricity tariffs. In the year 2017, there was no increase in electricity tariffs. In the year 2010, President Mahama and President Mills increased electricity tariffs by 89 per cent. In the year 2018, President Akufo-Addo reduced electricity tariffs by 17.5 per cent. In the year 2011, the NDC increased electricity tariffs by 10 per cent. In the year 2019, NPP increased by 17 per cent. But Mr Speaker, guess this, in the year 2012, electricity tariffs went up by 7.42 per cent. In the year 2020, there was no increase in electricity tariffs. In the year 2013, they increased electricity tariffs by 58.9 per cent. In the year 2021, there was no increase in

electricity tariffs. In the year 2014, they increased it by 28.3 per cent. In the year 2020, there was no increase in electricity tariffs.

8.42 p.m.

Mr Speaker, it is instructive to note that seven out of the eight years of the previous NDC Government, they increased electricity tariffs. But five solid years out of the eight years of President Akufo-Addo and the NPP Government, we did not increase electricity tariffs in this country. That is the government that they have inherited.

Mr Speaker, the cumulative effect of all these performances by the President Akufo-Addo Government is the fact that President Akufo-Addo and the NPP Government were able to construct the highest number of roads in the Forth Republic, that the Government was able to provide the largest number of health infrastructure than the NDC. We started and completed 47 non-Agenda 111 hospitals—[**Some Hon Members: Ei**]—We completed nine Kufuor's Euroget De-Invest Projects. We constructed 21 treatments and holding centres. We completed six inherited hospital and all of that.

Mr Speaker, they are allergic to the facts, so they do not want us to talk about the facts. What I am talking about is that the Government that President Mahama inherited is the Government that has recorded the highest growth in agriculture than the NDC has. It is the Government that has constructed the highest number of interchanges than the

NDC. It is the Government that has seen the highest annual increase in cocoa prices in the country—

The Speaker: Hon Member, you have one more minute.

Dr Boako: Mr Speaker, as I conclude, I would like to make this policy suggestion to the Minister for Finance and the Governor of the Bank of Ghana (BoG) that the collaborative effort to collapse the bond market and ensure that excess liquidity in the system is not traded in the open market by the BoG at the monetary policy rate plus or minus two per cent to force everybody to go to the Treasury-Bill (T-bill) rate, is not helping the country. That is why we are seeing over subscriptions at the T-bills level.

Mr Speaker, if this continues, this is important, what is going to happen is that there will be excess liquidity in the system. The bond market will be closed, and banks will not lend to the private sector. And even when they decide to, with the private sector appetite for credit, the quantum may not be able to absorb the excess liquidity. There would be no other alternative to the investors than to go to the currency market to buy dollars.

Mr Speaker, consequently, that would cause huge depreciation to our currency and because the exchange rate between two—

The Speaker: Hon Member, your time is up—[*Hear! Hear!*]

Hon Members, I think we have come to the end of the debate for today. Definitely, we would continue tomorrow. The Business Committee has proposed that we use four good days for this debate and today is the first day. So, it would take us into next week, since Thursday is a public holiday. Any indication or you are in my hands? Is that the position?

Mr Ayariga: Mr Speaker, we are in your hands.

The Speaker: Hon Members, I will proceed to adjourn the Sitting to tomorrow at 10 o'clock in the forenoon. Sitting is adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

The House was adjourned at 8.46 p.m. till Wednesday, 5th March, 2025 at 10.00 a.m.

