



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

CONTENTS

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS AND THE OFFICIAL REPORT— [Col. 1]

STATEMENTS—

- (a) A call to Action: Looming Nationwide Water Crisis— [Col. 9]
- (b) Football-Related Violence in the Kumasi Asante Kotoko versus Nsoatreman Football Match— [Col. 30]
- (c) Deepening Local Governance in Ghana: Addressing the Challenges of Unit Committee Members— [Col. 55]
- (d) Local Level Stakeholder Participation in Local Governance— [Col. 58]
- (e) Education at Crossroads: Safeguarding Progress in Ghana's Educational Sector— [Col. 105]
- (f) The State of Ghana's Forest Reserve and Water Bodies— [Col. 113]

ADJOURNMENT— [Col. 168]

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

BOUND VOLUMES of the Official Report (each with a comprehensive Index) are published periodically during the Session. There is no fixed subscription rate, but prices will be quoted on each publication.

*Published by the Office of Chamber Reporting
Parliament House, Osu, Accra.*

*Designed and Printed by the Publishing Department,
Parliament House, Osu, Accra.*

THE
PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC
OF GHANA

FIRST MEETING, 2025

Wednesday, 19th February, 2025
The House met at 11.36 a.m.

[MR FIRST DEPUTY SPEAKER
IN THE CHAIR]

PRAYERS

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, there being no message from the President and formal communication by the Speaker, can we proceed to take the item numbered 5?

**VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS
AND THE OFFICIAL REPORT**

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Correction of *Votes and Proceedings* and the *Official Report*. Hon Members, the *Votes and Proceedings* of Tuesday, 18th February, 2025 is up for correction.

Hon Members, page 1...7—

Page 8? Yes, Hon Frank Afriyie?

Mr Frank Afriyie: Thank you, Mr Speaker. If it pleases you, permit me to seek your guidance on this.

On page 8, the item numbered 8 under Statements, if I recall properly, the Minister for Health was in this august House yesterday, essentially, to give an update, per your invitation, on the outbreak of three major diseases: cholera, meningitis and Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV). But, over here, per the records, HMPV is completely missing. Mr Speaker, I seek your guidance. Thank you.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Table, take note. I think it is an omission so let it be corrected.

Yes, Prof Kingsley Nyarko?

Prof Kingsley Nyarko: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

This is still on page 8, the item numbered 7 on the *Official Report*. Yesterday, I saw on the screen two *Official Reports* dated 11th and 12th February, 2025 but, I do remember clearly that the one we corrected was dated 11th February, 2025. However, what is captured here is Wednesday, 5th February, 2025. I will plead that the Table Office looks at it and reconciles it. I have it on my phone and it was dated 11th February, 2025 so, we have to check and do the needful.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: I think what was taken was 5th February, 2025 and today we are going to take that of

6th February, 2025. We took one *Official Report*.

Prof Nyarko: What was taken yesterday was 11th February, 2025. I have it here.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Very well. We can reconcile.

Prof Nyarko: Yesterday, I remember I corrected it.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: We can reconcile the record.

Prof Nyarko: Yes, it was that of 11th February, 2025. They were two but we took only the *Official Report* of 11th February, 2025. That of 12th February, 2025 was not done.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: We can reconcile it. Yes, Hon Member for Bibiani-Anhwiaso-Bekwai?

Mr Bright Asamoah Brefo: Mr Speaker, may I refer you to page 7?

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Are you taking me back to page 7?

Mr Brefo: Yes, Mr Speaker. Hon Bright Asamoah Brefo, Member of Parliament for Bibiani-Anhwiaso-Bekwai, I was in the Chamber yesterday but for mysterious reasons, I find my name in the list of Members who were absent yesterday.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Table, please take note.

Yes, Hon Member for Bosome Freho?

Nana Asafo-Adjei Ayeh: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Humbly permit me to take you to page 8—Statements. I am seeking your guidance on verification. “The Hon Minister responsible for Health, Mr Kwabena Mintah Akandoh”, he is a Member of Parliament so, his designation and constituency should also be captured. I do not know if it is right to—This is because looking at other MPs who made Statements, their constituencies have been captured but that of Hon Kwabena Mintah Akandoh was not captured.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: He was here in a designated capacity, not as an MP but as the Minister responsible for Health. That is the capacity in which he briefed the House so, virtually, there is nothing wrong.

Mr Ayeh: Mr Speaker, I agree. By your kind guidance, that is all right.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Very well.

Any further correction? Page 9...10. Hon Members, any correction?

Yes, Hon Fred Kyei Asamoah?

Dr Fred Kyei Asamoah: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to seek your guidance on page 10, the item numbered 10, “the House accordingly approved the following as members of the committee.” Mr Mahama Ayariga is the Majority Leader, Osahen Alexander Kwamena Afenyo-Markin is also the Minority Leader, and the list goes on. Will it be right to add to these names their designations as Majority or Minority Leader since they are Members of a Committee that has been set up?

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Then, by your suggestion, Mr George Kweku Ricketts-Hagan is a Deputy Majority Leader. Once the names are captured here, I think it suffices. It is neater this way.

11.46 a.m.

We all know the Majority Leader and the Minority Leader. So, for the purposes of the record, their names suffice. If you look at the attendance, their constituencies have already been added, so if it is not added here, it is not too much of a problem.

Any further corrections?

Hon Members, the *Votes and Proceedings* of Tuesday, 18th February, 2025, as corrected is hereby adopted as the true record of proceedings.

Hon Members, we have the *Official Report* of Thursday, 6th February, 2025, for correction.

Any corrections?

Prof Kingsley Nyarko: Mr Speaker, a minor observation at column 15, second paragraph. It reads,

“Mr Speaker, examples of contributions of member countries include Spain and the Spanish National Organisation of the Blind (ONCE) ...”

When a person is getting old, they lose sight of some of these things. I do not remember if there should be an “i” before “n” in the spelling of “Spanish”. I am not quite sure about that, so if they could check whether it is “Spanish” or “Spainish”.

Thank you very much.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Table Office, take note and check.

Dr Abdul Kabiru Tiah Mahama: Mr Speaker, I seem not to have neither the hard copy nor soft copy of the *Official Report* we are considering now. I am wondering if it was an oversight to be uploaded onto the system or hard copies were provided to Hon Members of which I did not get a copy.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Please, recheck; I am reliably informed it is on the console.

Dr Mahama: Mr Speaker, it is not there. I am certain that it is not there.

[Pause]

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Is it the case that all of you do not have the *Official Report*? Hon Members, if you do not have the *Official Report*, then it will accord with common sense and reason that we defer the correction to tomorrow. But if you have, then we can go ahead and do the correction. Or do the overwhelming majority of Hon Members have it?

Hon Members, the correction of the *Official Report* of Thursday, 6th February, 2025, is accordingly deferred to tomorrow, Thursday, 20th February, 2025.

Those who have copies should bring it tomorrow, so that they could make hard copies for those who do not have it. Thank you very much.

Yes, Hon Member for Kpandai?

Mr Matthew Nyindam: Mr Speaker, I want some clarification and guidance on the correction of this *Official Report*. Yesterday, we had the *Official Reports* for 11th and 12th, and today, we are back to that of 6th

February. I do not know why we cannot get them according to the days. This is because yesterday, we had that of 11th and 12th February and all of a sudden, we are back to that of 6th February. I do not know if the Office of Chamber Reporting or Table Office could do something about this inconsistency.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Hon Member for Kpandai. Your observation is well noted, but if you take a look at the *Votes and Proceedings*, it is about the correction of the *Official Report* for 5th February, and today, it is about the *Official Report* of 6th February. The argument was whether it was the *Official Report* for the 5th or 11th February, and I asked that they check. Sometimes, it is the volume, but they are working on it.

Hon Members, let me use the opportunity to acknowledge pupils from the Azures International School led by Mr Emmanuel Adolph Logah, a teacher. They are from the Tema West Constituency, and are 52 in number. My dear pupils, you are welcome. Have a fruitful visit to the Parliament of Ghana.

[Pupils of Azures International School were acknowledged.]

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, the item numbered 6—Statements.

Hon Members, we have received a Statement from the Hon Member of Parliament for Afadjato South, Mr Frank Afriyie, on the urgent attention required to address water supply challenges across Ghana.

Hon Member, you have the floor.

11.56 a.m.

STATEMENT

A Call to Action: Looming Nationwide Water Crisis

Mr Frank Afriyie (NDC — Afadjato South): Mr Speaker, let me celebrate your magnanimity even as I prepare to deliver this Statement, which is largely on the supply of clean water, its relevance, and supply challenges.

Mr Speaker, let me thank you for this highly prized space to stand before this esteemed House to address a critical and urgent issue that transcends the Afadjato South Constituency, where I represent, resonating deeply across the entire nation. Our beloved Ghana is on the precipice of a water crisis that, according to research from the Water Resources Commission, is anticipated to culminate in severe water stress by 2025 if urgent and decisive actions are not taken. This was reported in the March 4, 2022 edition of the Daily Graphic and other media outlets. This

prediction is particularly alarming in light of the current cholera outbreak that has gripped our nation, reminding us starkly of the dire consequences that arise from inadequate access to clean water.

Until last weekend, residents from Kpeve, Goviefe, Woadze, Agate, Have, Peki, Bame, Akrofu, and neighbouring communities faced continual challenges in accessing clean water due to the malfunctioning Kpeve Water Treatment Plant since mid-December last year. However, this is merely a microcosm of a much larger national issue that threatens the health, safety, and livelihoods of countless Ghanaians. The statistics reveal an unsettling reality; one in five persons in our nation lacks adequate drinking water. In the Northern Region alone, this figure escalates to one in three, highlighting the glaring disparities in access to one of life's most essential resources.

Mr Speaker, we cannot overstate the importance of clean water, which is fundamentally linked to public health. Studies show that 80 per cent of diseases in Ghana stem from unsafe water and poor sanitation, fueling the alarming rise in water-related illnesses such as cholera, typhoid, and other diseases that disproportionately impact our vulnerable populations. Each attempt by families to secure fresh water, often leading them to

abandoned boreholes or unhealthy surface water sources, emphasises the urgent need for a comprehensive national strategy to confront this crisis.

In view of this, permit me to take this opportunity to commend the Volta Regional Minister for his commitment to addressing the urgent needs arising from the Kpeve facility's failure, as well as the efforts of my Colleague from South Dayi, Hon Rockson-Nelson Etse Kwami Dafeamekpor, who shares a passion for restoring the Kpeve Treatment Plant following its dysfunction. Nevertheless, let it not be forgotten; the struggles faced by our constituents in accessing clean water are mirrored nationwide. As such, it is imperative that we amplify our response and ensure a cohesive approach to restoring and improving our water treatment infrastructure.

Additionally, the looming threat of illegal mining activities poses a grave risk to our water resources and the integrity of our water supply systems leading to the shutting down of several treatment plants across affected areas. These illicit practices not only pollute our water bodies but also threaten the health and safety of communities that depend on these vital resources. The extensive damage inflicted by such activities must reignite our commitment to enforce regulations and safeguard our natural ecosystems.

Mr Speaker, in light of these pressing issues, I sincerely urge this honourable House to take a united stand for the health of our nation by adopting a robust plan of action that encompasses the following:

Nationwide Infrastructure Repair and Enhancement:

Let us prioritise urgent repairs and upgrades of existing water treatment plants across the nation, ensuring that they can meet the demands of a growing population. Additionally, we should expand our distribution networks to guarantee that communities have access to clean and safe drinking water.

Development of a Sustainable Water Management Strategy:

We must collaborate with the Ghana Water Limited and relevant stakeholders to create a comprehensive water resource management plan that prioritises conservation, efficient use of resources, and the implementation of best practices for water extraction and treatment.

Strengthening Regulatory Framework Against Illegal Mining:

We need to take immediate action to combat illegal mining activities that threaten our water resources. These

include strengthening enforcement mechanisms, collaborating with relevant agencies, and raising public awareness about the importance of protecting our water bodies.

Mr Speaker, as we engage with these critical issues, we must not forget the lessons of our current cholera outbreak, and from our experience with dried water hydrants, which have shown us how inefficient and inadequate access to water directly inhibits fire-fighting efforts and endangers public safety. We must promote safe water, good sanitation, and hygiene as fundamental rights for all Ghanaians. Time is of the essence, and we have a collective responsibility to put forth solutions that ensure reliable access to clean water for every citizen.

Let us unify our efforts to secure a better future for Ghana, a future where every individual can access safe water; a cornerstone for health, dignity, and national development. Together, let us courageously navigate this path to restoration, resilience, and sustainability for the health of all Ghanaians.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, for this opportunity to address such a pressing issue.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you Hon Member. The Statement has

been read and I would now take comments.

Yes, Hon Member for Hohoe?

Mr Thomas Worlanyo Tsekpo (NDC — Hohoe): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Let me first commend my neighbour and brother, Member of Parliament for Afadjato South for this very important Statement. Water not flowing through our taps is a problem that confronts every constituency and he being my neighbour, I would say I face more problems in my constituency than what he faces in his. Hohoe Constituency and the entire Volta Region have been faced with water shortage because no audit so far from my checks have been done on all our treatment plants.

Mr Speaker, when you come to Hohoe, our treatment plant was built over 20 years ago and no replacement has been done to the machines. The old machines are still being used and the number of people that were there before the plant was built have increased and it is the same treatment plant that is being used to supply water to the people in my constituency, Hohoe.

Mr Speaker, if you come to Hohoe Constituency today, water flows through our taps once a week, that is when we are lucky. The Volta Regional Hospital is located in Hohoe

and water flows through their taps once a week. I visited the hospital two weeks ago and visited the morgue, the mortuary attendants have to use the “Kufuor” gallons, walk miles to fetch water before they use it for their daily duties. Now, the wind of cholera is blowing all over and if we do not have water in our hospitals and morgues, I know the problem would be very devastating in the coming days. So, we would plead with the Minister for Works and Housing that they look at the treatment plants all over the country, especially the ones in my constituency in Volta Region, Hohoe, and replace those that need to be replaced and work on those that need to be worked on so that we would have free flow of water in our taps.

Thank you, Mr Speaker and thanks to the Hon Member for Afadjato South for raising this very important challenge facing not only his constituency, but Volta Region and the entire nation as a whole.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, Mr Kwame Twumasi Ampofo?

Mr Kwame Twumasi Ampofo (NDC — Sene West): Thank you, Mr Speaker for the opportunity. Water is very important in our lives and we cannot live without it and it is very challenging to have water in Ghana.

Mr Speaker, if we go to some areas, there is constant water flow for

24 hours but most especially during the dry season, there is a challenge in Ghana and if we do not drink proper water, we know what would happen.

12.06 p.m.

There would be health and sanitation related issues as well as diseases and sickness all due to lack of quality water that you get to drink.

Mr Speaker, I think it is about time we resourced or empowered Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA). The CWSA water serves a lot of rural areas, but, unfortunately, CWSA cannot get loan facility to serve these people. Only Ghana Water Company can access loan. The CWSA basically relies on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other funds, and they are serving masses of the rural areas.

Mr Speaker, if you go to some areas, some of my communities, during dry season, they struggle for water and share same with animals, which is serious, because if there is no water, definitely they would struggle with them. Therefore, it is important for us to pay attention to CWSA. Let us give them power to also access loan, so that they can serve most of our communities in the rural areas.

Mr Speaker, I think if you go to Sene West, there are so many rivers

around, but we have challenges to get quality water to drink. It is all about money issue, and the CWSA is also in charge of those areas. Therefore, it is about time we found a way of helping those in the community or rural areas to get proper and quality water to drink.

Mr Speaker, with these few words, I think it is about time we improved. Mr Speaker, if you check, the Ghana Water Company Limited always has power to go for loans and there are even challenges with Ghana Water Company Limited which supplies to urban areas and cities. Also, *galamsey* is also causing our water bodies—

Mr First Deputy speaker: Hon Member, conclude.

Mr Ampofo: It is affecting the CWSA and the Ghana Water Company Limited in the treatment of quality water for us to drink.

Mr Speaker, with this, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Hon Twumasi Ampofo.

Yes, Hon Member for South Tongu.

Ing Surv Maxwell Kwame Lukutor (NDC — South Tongu): Thank you, Mr

Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute to the Statement made by my respected Colleague, Mr Frank Afriyie.

Mr Speaker, I must say that almost all of us in this House would, in one way or the other, associate with this Statement because almost all of us have challenges with getting potable water running through our taps. The irony is that, particularly, for those of us from constituencies that lie along the Volta River from which treatment plants are built to treat water for our use— Unfortunately, for instance, Sogakope, the treatment plant is at Agodorme. The phase one and phase two were constructed, but water is being planned to be extended as far as to Togo.

Mr Speaker, but unfortunately for you and I whose constituencies lie along the main Aflao road, the system is not running along that line, so we have a challenge in Sogakope all the way to your constituency, Akatsi South. So, I would want to plead with the Minister for Works, Housing and Water Resources that they look at us. How can they be treating water in my constituency and those of us in that same constituency do not have water to drink? There is also another challenge between merging the systems the CWSA and the Ghana Water Company Limited.

Mr Speaker, for instance, currently there is a five-district water system in Adidome, the constituency of my Colleague, Mr Alexander Roosevelt Hottordze, and it runs along the boundary with me. But unfortunately, we cannot have access to that; that flows almost every day. But being the capital town of the constituency, Sogakope sometimes does not get water in the whole of the week, like other Colleagues have just ably articulated, so I have tried, as much as possible, to get these two units merged and to get the water from CWSA to run through the Ghana Water Company system, but there is always a problem with how to merge the systems and allow it to run.

I cannot sit without talking about the challenge I have had in my community, Kpotame, for over 10 years. Mr Jerry Ahmed Shaib knows so well about this. He was the CEO of Coastal Development Authority (CODA), and I had to call him on several occasions to get a system running for us. I would be very happy if whoever is taking over from him would take a cue from wherever he has left off to ensure that, in no time, my people in Kpotame get potable water to drink.

With these few words, Mr Speaker, I want to thank you so much for the opportunity to say that very soon we would want to ensure that the people at

Dendu, Sasekope, Avovi, Galekope, and Agorkpo get connected to the CWSA to serve them with potable water.

I thank you so much for the opportunity—*[Hear! Hear!]*

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minority Leadership?

Mr Boamah: No, Mr Speaker, I am not the Minority Leader; I am the available Leader.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: I said Leadership.

Mr Boamah: I would like to cede to the Hon Member for Mpraeso.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon Member for Mpraeso?

Mr Davis Ansah Opoku (NPP — Mpraeso): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I want to commend my Colleague Member of Parliament from Afajato South for bringing to bear issues that affect CWSA.

Mr Speaker, water, they say, is life, so if we have communities in our dear country which are being deprived of potable water, I think it is important that, as a state, we highlight these concerns and find solutions to same.

Mr Speaker, I served on the Committee on Works and Housing of Parliament of Ghana, and one of the major concerns that, on our usual rounds, we found out was that human activities continue to destroy most of our water bodies. In fact, encroachments along the Weija Dam is seriously affecting the provision of potable drinking water, even in the main capital, Accra. There have been several interventions by Ghana Water Company Limited to support institutions in providing clean water to communities that even Ghana Water Company Limited does not get to, and these efforts are worthy of commendation.

Mr Speaker, I wish to bring to the attention of this country that it seems that *galamsey* is on the rise. Now, people are engaged in *galamsey* with impunity. People are mining as if we do not even have a country running. Nobody seems to be talking about it, and it is important that—*[Interruption]*—Please, we are talking about Ghana Water Company—*[Interruption]*—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, order!

Mr Opoku: Mr Speaker, it is important that, as a country, we redirect our attention, just like what happened prior to the 2024 General Elections, to issues of mining and how it affects our water bodies.

Mr Speaker, just this weekend, I drove through some towns in the Eastern Region, and it is as if people have been released without break to engage in active mining; in fact, they are mining along river bodies, and I am happy that this House approved a Minister for Environment, Science and Technology—Now we have Minister of State responsible for Climate Change and Sustainability; we have Minister responsible for Works, Housing and Water Resources, Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, and I am praying that they put their acts together. I am praying that they put their acts together, because the very actions and things we saw prior to the 2024 election have tripled. Now, *galamsey* is everywhere. In fact, yesterday—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, be guided by Order 93(5)—

Hon Members, order!

Mr Opoku: Mr Speaker, I am not too sure I am generating a debate on this subject.

Mr Speaker, yesterday, a prominent farmer in my Constituency called me.

12.16 p.m.

In fact, I asked him to take pictures of what was going on but he said he

was afraid; people are now mining along river bodies and it is a challenge. Please, I have not blamed the Government. I have not said that the National Democratic Congress (NDC) Government is responsible for this so —

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member for Mpraeso, I recognise the Majority Leader.

Majority Leader (Mr Mahama Ayariga): Mr Speaker, our Standing Orders are very clear; when Statements are made, one may comment but must avoid generating a debate. When we asked him to produce evidence, he said a farmer from his community called him. How can a farmer's call to him be evidence? How do we know that a farmer called him? And if a farmer called him, how is that evidence that there has been a three-times increase in mining activities in his constituency? So, please, there is a genuine problem of water shortage around the country. The Budget is coming and Members of Parliament are encouraged to make statements about the challenges of access to water in their communities and call for it to be captured in the Budget so that greater allocations can be made to the Community Water and Sanitation Agency. This is the direction we should be going as a House but to start talking about how mining has increased threefold within a month—

How is that even possible? How is it possible for mining to increase threefold in one month? I plead with him to not generate debate.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Majority Leader, you are right. I even admonished the Hon Member from Mpraeso that he should be guided by Order 93(5), please conclude.

Mr Opoku: Thank you, Mr Speaker and I thank you for your guidance. I want to thank my respected Majority Leader for his admonishment. I seek not to generate debate on this matter, I am only highlighting a serious issue that is affecting the quality of water in our country. I am only saying and praying that the Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology; the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources; and the Ministry of Works, Housing and Water Resources in the coming Budget be given some allocations to fight issues of mining because they are on the rise and are affecting our river bodies.

Mr Speaker, this is all I seek to do and I am extremely sorry if it turned out that I wanted to generate debate, but I think that it is important for me to bring to bear the issues that are currently going on in our country. This is all I sought to do and I really would want to thank you and pray that in the 2025 Budget, the Minister for Finance

helps my Brother, the Minister for Environment, Science and Technology with more allocation.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for allowing me to contribute to this wonderful Statement from the Member of Parliament from Afadjato South.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Yes, Hon Member?

Mr Simon Kyeremeh Ampaabeng (NDC — Berekum East): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity given. I would like to associate myself with the Statement made by my able Colleague, Hon Frank Afriyie.

Berekum East is currently faced with serious water crisis. In 2014, my constituency was blessed with an Urban Water Project that brought finality to the water problem within my constituency. But just last month, scrap dealers and thieves have stolen 14 pumps out of the 21 borehole pumps that support the water system within the constituency.

Mr Speaker, I was in my constituency just last weekend. I went around and it is extremely worrying and sad that out of the 27 boreholes that were dug—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, I recognise the Available Leader.

Mr Patrick Yaw Boamah: Mr Speaker, we are commenting on a Statement made by the Hon Member for Afadjato South and our Colleague from Berekum East is veering into issues in Berekum East—Please, if you would allow me—This is a specific Statement and I want him to stay on track—He is talking about 14 pumps among others. What has that got to do with the Statement? This is not a personal Statement—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Available Leader, the heading of the Statement said “Attention Required to Address Water Supply Challenges Across Ghana” so Hon Available Leader, I think you are out of order, kindly resume your seat.

Mr Ampaabeng: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to continue to add my voice to the water crisis in the country.

Mr Speaker, just like some of my colleagues mentioned, water is life and I add my voice to the Statement by the MP for Afadjato South that water is a big problem across the country. My constituency, in particular, is blessed to have an Urban Water Project that brought finality to the water problem so coming here, I was only going to

concern myself with other things only to go back to the constituency to realise that out of the 21 boreholes dug, 14 of them have been stolen and as of now— Please, humble yourselves to learn.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, Order!

Mr Ampaabeng: We operate surface water and boreholes for the good people of Berekum—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, did I hear you say stolen or out of function? The boreholes are—

Mr Ampaabeng: The pumps that power the boreholes have been stolen.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: The pumps?

Mr Ampaabeng: Mr Speaker, I am saying that the pumps that power the boreholes have been stolen and this is extremely worrying because we were relying on surface water plus—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Ampaabeng: Mr Speaker, the 14 pumps which have been stolen were augmenting the supply of water to my Constituency and this was blessed by the late President, Prof Mills and then Vice President John Dramani Mahama under the erstwhile administration

during our first tenure. But unfortunately —

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, can we have some order?

Mr Ampaabeng: Mr Speaker, the pumps in the boreholes—Please, there are pumps in boreholes and these boreholes that supply us water, their pumps have been stolen and it has really resulted in serious water crises in my Constituency. We are rationing water such that, if we get water today, it might take us one week before we get water again.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, conclude.

Mr Ampaabeng: I seriously associate myself with the Hon Member for Afadjato South that water crises in this country needs urgent attention so that we can bring good relief to the good people of Berekum [*Hear! Hear!*]—

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Dominic Nitiwul, are you on a point of order? Hon Member, I recognise the former Minister.

Mr Ampaabeng: And some other constituencies across the country. Thank you so much, Mr Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to add my voice. — [*Hear! Hear!*] —

12.26 p.m.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon, the Member has ended his contribution.

Mr Dominic Bingab Aduna Nitiwul (NPP — Bimbilla): Mr Speaker, he has ended his submission so I would just offer him a point of information. The price of the head of a bore hole is GH¢15,000.00. He should use his Common Fund to buy it. It would help. If he comes to complain here, nobody would help so he should use the Common Fund to buy it.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Mr Nitiwul, that definitely cannot be a point of order. The fact that it is only GH¢15,000.00 does not mean it cannot be stolen.

Mr Nitiwul: Mr Speaker, I said that is a point of information and I thought he was going to get money for Common Fund so he should use it to buy it. It would help him.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: The sector Minister may decide to also help. Hon Deputy Minority Whip, what is the issue on the Floor in which you are—

First Deputy Minority Whip (Alhaji Habib Iddrisu): Mr Speaker, even though he has ended his submission, this is a House of records and we are guided by what a Member

says. That is what would be captured in the *Hansard*. I do not know how a bore hole can be stolen. Whether the bore hole was lifted—How does one steal a bore hole? He should explain how a bore hole is stolen.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Alhaji Habib Iddrisu, you are out of order! Resume your seat—*[Interruption]*—Order!

Hon Members, I urge all of you to resume your seats —*[Interruption]*—

Hon Members, we have come to the end of that Statement. We move to another Statement in the name of Mr Dickson Kyere-Duah, Member of Parliament for Berekum West, on football related violence in the Kumasi Asante Kotoko versus Nsoatreman Football Club match.

Hon Member, you have the floor.

STATEMENT

Football-Related Violence in the Nsoatreman FC versus Kumasi Asante Kotoko FC Match

Mr Dickson Kyere-Duah (NDC — Berekum West): Mr Speaker, I make this Statement as a result of the rising acts of vandalism and hooliganism at our various game centres and specifically, in relation to the Week 19 Premier League match

played on the 2nd February, 2025 involving Nsoatreman FC and Kumasi Asante Kotoko FC, which resulted in the brutal stabbing to death of a Kotoko fan, Francis Nana Yaw Frimpong (a.k.a. Pooley).

Mr Speaker, football is a sport that unites us as a people. It is a game of passion that brings joy to millions of people across our nation. However, when that passion is tainted by violence, it ceases to be the beautiful game we all love. The events that unfolded before, during and after that Ghana Premier League game are not only despicable but a stain on the integrity of Ghanaian football and on our national character.

Mr Speaker, this tragic loss of life is not an isolated case but a part of a worrying trend of violence in our sports. About 24 years ago, on May 9, 2001, as a young sports journalist working at the University of Education Radio station, Radio Windy Bay in Winneba, I was in Accra Sports Stadium to cover a Ghana Premier League match between Accra Hearts of Oak and Kumasi Asante Kotoko. On that fateful day (Wednesday, May 9, 2001), Ghana recorded one of the most tragic events in its history when 127 football fans lost their lives as a result of football violence.

Mr Speaker, in the wake of this national calamity, the then President of

the Republic, H.E. John Agyekum Kufour constituted a Commission of Inquiry (Accra Sports Stadium Disaster) Instrument, 2001, C.I. 34 to investigate the matter and made appropriate recommendations. Notwithstanding the far-reaching recommendations made to forestall future occurrences, football violence continues to plague the nation.

Mr Speaker, for example, Ghanaians were left dumbfounded when one of Ghana's top-rated female referees, Theresa Bremansu who officiated in the 2019 Women's Special Competition between Prisons Ladies and Ampem Darkoa Ladies was beaten to a pulp by football fans who claimed she did not add injury time after the 90 minutes elapsed.

Again, in 2020, a Kumasi Asante Kotoko fan, Augustine Oppong was shot in the eye when violence broke out in a game between Kumasi Asante Kotoko and Berekum Chelsea. Also, just two years ago, my very good friend, Mr Edmund Ackah, the General Manager of FC Samartex and other officials and players of FC Samartex were brutally assaulted in a Division One League match in Dabobase against Skyy FC.

Mr Speaker, despite all the education, reminders, sensitisation and sanctions aimed at eradicating hooliganism, the act continues to be a

part of the Ghanaian game with many casualties frequently recorded.

Mr Speaker, the situation calls for urgent action from all stakeholders—as Members of Parliament, we have a role to play, Government, football authorities, security agencies, clubs, and supporters—To work collectively to eradicate such barbaric acts from our game.

Mr Speaker, I am very happy to note that the new indefatigable Sports and Recreation Minister, Hon Kofi Adams has already swung into action. In his first day in office, he met the officials of the Football Federation to fashion out action plan to prevent future occurrences of such barbaric incidents in our stadiums. I am very confident, with Hon Kofi Adams, this canker will be dealt with once and for all.

Mr Speaker, I am also aware of the high-profile meeting the Inspector General of Police (IGP) held with the stakeholders of the football industry which produced 33 action points for implementation to curb hooliganism at our stadiums. Furthermore, I urge the Ghana Football Association (GFA) and the National Sports Authority to put in place stringent security and safety measures to prevent such occurrences in the future. This includes enhanced security at stadiums, strict enforcement of

disciplinary actions against violent conduct, and intensified public education on sportsmanship. In our beautiful game of football, there are only three results, either one wins, one loses or draws. A good sportsman would accept whatever results that comes their way.

Mr Speaker, at this grieving moment, permit me to extend my heartfelt deepest condolences to the family of the deceased. No family should endure such pain over a football match. I also call on all stakeholders to remain calm as the Ghana Police Service continues with their investigations to get to the bottom of the matter. Violence has no place in our football, and it has no place in Ghanaian society.

Let us all stand together to condemn this act and work together to ensure that our stadiums are safe for all.

I thank you for indulging me, Mr Speaker. [*Hear! Hear!*]

12.36 p.m.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Hon Member.

The Statement has been presented, and before I allow Members to comment, let me bring to the fore that I am very much aware that the criminal

aspect of the matter is before a court of competent jurisdiction. Therefore, Members should be circumspect in commenting on this Statement and accordingly limit their comments to violence at our football matches.

Some Hon Members — rose —

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon Member for Akuapim North.

Mr Samuel Awuku (NPP — Akuapim North): Mr Speaker, I rise to contribute to the Statement made by the Hon Member for Berekum West. I would like to, first of all, extend my deepest condolences to the bereaved family and the deceased.

Mr Speaker, there are four things that excite and inflame passion within our society. These four things, for me, are football, religion, ethnic issues, and political issues. What is before us today is associated with football. In contributing to the Statement made by the Hon Colleague, I would like us to also situate the matter.

We cannot separate these acts of vandalism, hooliganism, and riotous behaviour of fans from poor officiating. If we cast our minds back to many of the issues around the world, any time there has been a huge disagreement among fans, at the heart of it has been a refereeing decision made in one way or the other.

I would like us to get the Referees Association of Ghana (RAG) and the football administration to also pay keen attention to bad or questionable officiating. I say this because in today's football world, it is no longer what it used to be under the good old days of Mr Wilberforce Mfum; “The Golden Boy”, Mr Abdul Razak, and others, where football was played just to excite or entertain people.

This time around, it has become a very commercial venture, and people get into these stands knowing very well and working out their odds on what they intend to achieve at the end of the day. I believe these acts of hooliganism are despicable, and it is about time we did not just pay lip service to these matters when they are raised, but also got the law enforcement agencies to also enforce the laws.

For me, one of the main issues that continues to agitate my mind has to do with the issue of siting drinking spots and bars around these stadia and sports facilities. The first issue is that one cannot enter the stadium with alcohol, but the people take it just before they enter; so, by the time they reach their peak, that is when the match is also at its height. We have to be clear on the modalities, guidelines, and what we can also have around the various sporting facilities.

Today, we have a colleague down. I am a non-repentant fan of the Asante Kotoko Sporting Club, but I also believe that in helping protect lives within the various precincts of our sports facilities, we have to look at the very things that are sited around it. Yes, we can have food joints, but the siting of some of these drinking bars is also a disturbance.

The second issue has to do with enhanced security within the stadium. In the various stands, apart from having people wearing security badges and uniforms, we can also have plainclothes security, and that is what many countries are using within their stadiums. Football is the passion of the nation. Wherever we have even small teams playing within our communities, we can see that the tension is always high. How much more when it has to do with league standings and the position of these teams on the various league tables?

Mr Speaker, while I commend my Colleague, with your kind direction, I would like to get the Minister for Sports and Recreation to pay keen attention to the issues of security, officiating and refereeing, and the siting of these drinking bars around the various stadia.

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

Some Hon Members — rose —

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, let me give the opportunity to the Lady.

Ms Millicent Yeboah Amankwah (NDC — Sunyani West): Mr Speaker, I would like to contribute on the Statement made by the Hon Member for Berekum West on the unfortunate situation that happened in Nsoatre between the Asante Kotoko Sporting Club and the Nsoatreman Football Club. It happened in Nsoatre which is in my Constituency. I would like to extend my condolences to the entire family of the deceased.

Mr Speaker, on this note, we need to be very careful and put in better and proper measures when there are matches like this because we have supporters with different views and different levels of excitements. People communicate or express their excitements in different ways. With this unfortunate situation which happened in my constituency, which I believe should not happen in any constituency, the entire Ministry of Sports and Recreation, heads or owners, and management of football clubs should take this seriously and ensure that this does not happen again.

Mr Speaker, before any match takes place, I believe that we should have a risk assessment. This is because we need to make sure that the park or wherever they play these football

games are well kept. There should be Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras in cases of emergency, and proper security personnel. In addition, even military personnel could be added. I believe that if much concentration and monitoring is put in place and the situation is monitored well, I do not believe that these things would happen.

When this issue happened in my Constituency, it caused a lot of emergencies. If we look at where the Ghana Ambulance Service is located in Nsoatre—We could not even get an ambulance in this particular situation because the ambulance had gone far.

It is rather unfortunate that my good Brother, father, and the former MP for Sunyani West—I was really worried because he is a senior Colleague of mine, and I share with him in this particular situation. I wish him well because this can happen to anybody. I pray that if measures are put in place, all these matters would reduce.

Mr Speaker, on the point of medical aid, we need to ensure that we have first aid in situations and places like this, so that measures can be taken as early as possible. Looking at the supporter of Asante Kotoko Sporting Club, if they had first aid available, it means that we could have found a way to save him as early as possible.

Mr Speaker, again, I would like to plead with the entire security and medical professionals as I did earlier, to have an emergency plan with sports teams in case such a situation happens.

12.46 p.m.

So, that we will be able to help save lives and educate our fans on matters and how they should jubilate. Even the terrain that supporters need to—If we have to give them tickets and monitor the number of people in the stadiums so that there would not be a stampede at the park or the stadium, it would go a long way to help us. Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity given to me.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: I will give the floor to Hon Kinglsey Nyarko.

Prof Kingsley Nyarko (NPP — Kwadaso): Mr Speaker, I am extremely grateful to you for the opportunity accorded me to make a brief comment on this sad Statement made by our Hon Brother. Mr Speaker, it is so sad and painful for a life and a precious soul to be lost when that person was enjoying the sport or football.

Football is supposed to unite us. It is a source of enjoyment for most of us. If a person gets to watch a game of football, he would expect that his team wins. It beats my imagination how

somebody, in the attempt to watch the beautiful game of football, should lose his life through violence. Mr Speaker, violence should not be allowed to fester in our society. We must understand that as human beings we cannot all belong to the same group or association. We cannot also think alike. Society would be of no fun if we all belonged to the same society. There should be diversity in terms of ideas and belonging to associations. That is when we can see growth and progress.

What has happened is so sad, we need to condemn it and insist that an investigation into this barbaric act is expedited so that the culprits will face the full rigours of the law.

Indiscipline in this society is becoming one too many and we must halt it. Indiscipline anywhere is a threat to progress everywhere. We must come to the realisation that Ghana can thrive and be stronger when we understand that we have to be tolerant in all that we do. I am an Asante Kotoko Football club fan and I have been seeing images of this gentleman, Pooley, and it can be seen that he is a vibrant supporter of Asante Kotoko. He loves the team; it is in his blood. He went to support his team but could not come back, and left behind a widow and children. This is so sad and I am urging those who are heading sports in this country to be proactive in providing security, so that when a person goes to watch football or any

sporting activity, the person would have at the back of his mind that he is safe and protected. This should not happen again. I want to console the widow and the children. This supporter should find solace in the bosom of his maker.

I also want to plead with our supporters to understand that in a game of football or any sporting activity, we cannot always expect to win. We can win, lose or draw. A game of football or any sporting activity is not a must win. When a team wins, they thank God and make merry. When they lose, they take it in their strides and understand that tomorrow might be an opportunity for them to also win. I know that Asante Kotoko will come out of this stronger and better. I also hope that this unfortunate incident would serve as a bitter lesson for sports in Ghana moving forward.

Football and soccer should unite us. Let us educate each other to promote football and sports to bind us, not to kill us; bring us together, not to separate us because after all, we are the same people. Mr Speaker, thank you for indulging me and may the soul of our brother, Pooley, and other sports loving persons who have lost their lives in such manners rest in perfect peace.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon Isaac Adongo?

Mr Isaac Adongo (NDC — Bolgatanga Central): Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity. I want to commend the maker of the Statement.

Football is the passion of this country but this is just one too many. Today, we are discussing this unfortunate situation because it involves Asante Kotoko but, there have been series of such events in our country where supporters think that when they disagree, they must take the law into their hands. This should bring finality to such incidents in our football. Nobody should die following their passion. I understand the man left behind six children. This is a difficult situation for his family.

We need to take football a lot more seriously. The rules of football are not just the rules on the field. What are the protocols for making a football field fit for purpose? Not everywhere is fit for purpose. Where football is played in Ghana are what we call parks; they do not qualify to hold football matches. We must take the licensing of stadia important so that we will tick all the boxes to ensure that when people go to a stadium or football field, it is fit for purpose. So, we must begin to license our football fields. When we begin to do this, we would realise that many places, such as Nsoatreman, will not qualify to host football matches let

alone for us to die the way we are dying.

I was sad to hear my Colleague mention that they were struggling to get basic first-aid. If there are no ambulances, people have no business playing football in such a field; that is a death trap.

I was sad to hear my Colleague mention that they struggled to get simple first-aid. If there are no ambulances, people have no business playing football in such a field; that is a death trap. But because when we go there nothing happens, we think that is a football field. No! What was the police situation at the football field? Where were the Police? What was the security requirement that was supposed to be upheld in the stadium. In this particular instance, the information we have is that this young man had been threatened prior to the match.

11.46 a.m.

The security agency should have known that what happened to the young man could happen because he was accused of having made comments that did not go down well with the other club ahead of the match, and he was threatened. Yet, we allowed the football match to happen without security to protect this young man.

Mr Speaker, I would like to call on you to direct the Ministry of Sports and Recreation to take this matter very seriously, and if the Ghana Football Association (GFA) cannot follow rigorous protocols for licensing our football stadia, we should not play football as a country because football is a serious business and it is about life. Whether we like it or not, some people would be dissatisfied and may take the law into their hands. Whether we like it or not, if we do not license stadia, we would have football fields that we play on that do not even have ambulances. Where the protocol requires over 40 policemen, a person may arrive at the stadium and only two policemen are there guiding and protecting scores of spectators. The end result is that people die needlessly, and we must not die following the passion of football.

Mr Speaker, I would like to call on this House to take on the GFA to properly make sure that before football returns, we are prepared in all respects and our football fields are fit for purpose. Currently, what we call football fields are just parks. They are just behaving like we do in our area, where one just calls neighbours across the road, when playing football. That is what is happening, and we cannot be doing that for people to die needlessly.

Mr Speaker, I commend the maker of the Statement, and I thank you for indulging me; except to say that this

must not end with a talk show. We must see some action being taken to sanitise football in our country and ensure that our football fields are safe for purpose, so that we would not hear this conversation again any time soon.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Yes, Minority Leadership?

Mr Shaib: Yes, Mr Speaker, respectfully, I want to cede to—

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

Col (Rtd) Kwadwo Damoah (NPP — Jaman South): Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity given me to make a contribution to the Statement made by my Brother, the Hon Member for Berekum West.

Mr Speaker, what happened was an unfortunate incident and it is very regrettable. I also want to add my voice to express our condolences to the bereaved family and the Asante Kotoko fraternity.

Mr Speaker, the earlier contributors have said various things and I wish to just add a few things. I want to look at the issue from the point of view of education, sensitisation, and capacity building for the various stakeholders in the management of

football in our dear country. Now, football has rules, and people need to be educated on those rules. As the maker of the Statement said, there are only three results that we can expect after any football match, that is either you win, draw, or lose, and the various teams know about this.

The supporters know about that, but because of the passion we have for football, in some cases, people find it difficult to accept defeat. But if we effectively sensitise and educate the various stakeholders and have leadership by way of football administrators and management of the various teams that play the football matches, and leadership by way of supporters, so that at any stage in the match, they take responsibility and make the appropriate appeals to their supporters and to their members, we may be able to prevent some of these unfortunate incidents.

Now, we are talking about security. Security is a shared responsibility. It is a shared responsibility between the teams that would play the matches, National Sports Authority (NSA), the Ghana Football Administration (GFA), and the supporters as well. I may want to recommend that, before matches are played, the various teams would plan the security arrangements for these matches and agree, depending on the expectations of attendance at these matches.

We have categorised our teams and there are matches that are categorised as category A. Of course, whenever Asante Kotoko S. C. or Accra Hearts of Oak S. C. is playing any match against any other team, the expectation is that there would be more spectators than the other teams and, therefore, security arrangements would have to be beefed up.

Now, I also think that we have to emphasise on capacity building. We need to train and continue to train our referees. We need to train and continue to train our sports administrators, the leadership, and everybody, so that as the rules of the game change, we would be abreast of them and accept that, during football matches, it is only the referee whose decisions are final.

The referee is a human being and is fallible, so he may make mistakes, but once he takes a decision, whether it goes in a team's favour or against them, they have no option than to accept it. When that happens, that is where we want leaders to take responsibility. They should appeal to their teams, players, and supporters that, once the decision has been taken by the referee, they cannot change that decision unless through an appeal. We need to do that continuous training and capacity building for the various stakeholders in football administration.

Once again, I also want to make a recommendation on the need to have well-resourced medical teams at the various stadia when football matches are being played. Depending on the categorisation of a particular match, the appropriate and well-resourced medical team should be available. So that, in the event of unfortunate incidents of this type that happened at Nsoatre, we would have professionals with appropriate resources to deal with the matter; so that, we may do our best by way of first aid before we convey the victims or casualties to the appropriate medical facilities.

On that note, I wish to highly commend the maker of the Statement. I know he is a football administrator and he really knows and understands sports in general, and would help the various stakeholders to find solutions to this unfortunate incident and make appropriate recommendations.

Mr Speaker, I would also like to thank you for the opportunity given me to make this little contribution towards this unfortunate incident that happened in my region and in the constituency of my Sister at the other Side.

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

Majority Leader?

Majority Leader (Mr Mahama Ayariga): Mr Speaker, I thank you very much.

Mr Speaker, I think that, as a Parliament, we should, at all times, condemn all forms of violence at our stadia during football matches. Colleagues have already indicated strongly that these matches are for pleasure and entertainment, and they are to bring us together. So, they should not end with people losing lives, limbs, and properties being damaged. That is not the objective.

1.06 p.m.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, we should appreciate that sports, beyond just being entertainment, has become a major economy contributing enormously to the GDPs of some countries. Here in Ghana, on weekends, when you see the number of people who troop home to watch the European League, the Spanish League, and all these foreign leagues, it is amazing. When one sits with business people and have conversations about leisure, it would amaze us the number of people who fly to Europe and the United Kingdom just to watch a match. And these matches become meeting places where major deals are concluded.

Mr Speaker, if we see the extent to which the media has developed in

those countries and sports coverage has become a major source of revenue for those countries, then we would know that it is not a place to throw stones at each other. It is not a place where we go intending that at the end of the match, we would beat the referee. It is not a place we go planning that we would scatter the place at the end of the match if our team does not win. It is a place where as a district and region, we must plan for it because the transport sector would benefit from the people who would travel there.

When they get to the place, those who would be selling food and other items and the women in our regions and districts would benefit. The hotels that would host them would benefit, so the regional, municipal, and district security councils must accept these as major important events they must plan for and make sure that no match results in violence in their municipality. They should also encourage those matches to take place so more can be earned, we can entertain the people and keep them happy.

Mr Speaker, indeed, if we observed early on, I was sitting with the Minister for Sports and Recreation. He was hoping to be here to comment on this Statement because I had given him some indication, but he had to run back to his Ministry to defend his budget because the Minister for Finance is putting together his budget.

In our discussions, he indicated that as part of the 24-Hour Economy strategy, sports is going to be a major cornerstone—[*Hear! Hear!*]

Mr Speaker, the Minister for Sports and Recreation has a major agenda to revive sports, to revive football from the district to the regional level, and at the national level.

Mr Speaker, the Minister is already holding meetings with the media to see how we can project sports. Indeed, he has revealed to me that he is looking to negotiate for Super Sports and others to begin to cover our local leagues—[*Hear! Hear!*]*—*This is because when the local leagues are covered by Super Sports, what it means is that people in South Africa can see our boys and girls play from there, and they can begin to identify and scout for those people. When the footballers see that their tournaments are covered on Super Sports, they know that a global platform is being provided them to showcase their skills, so that scouts all over the world can view and try to recruit them to their various countries.

Also, he is going to invest and get support and sponsorship for the various teams in the regions, so that they can have good coaches and support to be able to compete effectively, train, recruit and retain very good footballers, buy very good players, and upgrade the quality of our

local league, so that people would really like to go and watch our leagues, instead of choosing to sit at home to watch the European leagues.

Mr Speaker, when this happens, I believe our people would begin to appreciate the fact that football is a big thing. It is not a place to throw stones or fight at the end of a match because when we do that, we are destroying the economy of the district, municipality, and, ultimately, the region. The Regional Ministers and Municipal Chief Executives would begin to see that football is a major enabler of their economies and, therefore, they must pay attention. The entire governance framework within the district, municipality and the region would be geared towards ensuring that any match that is being played every weekend, ends up successfully and does not end up with the image of the municipality or district being dented.

Mr Speaker, let me conclude by saying that with the 24-Hour Economy strategy—[*Hear! Hear!*]*—*football is going to be a major enabler, and very soon, we would see it. Very soon, our local leagues would replace the European leagues.

I thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much.

Hon Members, let me add my voice by commending the individuals who run football teams. Hon Members, it is not easy to run a football team. Football itself should be a game of peace, so a situation where football is characterised by violence is an idea that is not welcome, and we have to do everything possible to avoid it.

I would direct that the Statement be transmitted to the Minister for Sports and Recreation.

Hon Members, there are two Statements on local governance. One is by Hon Faustina Elikplim Akurugu captioned, “Deepening Local Governance in Ghana: Addressing the Challenges of Unit Committee Members”. The other Statement is captioned, “Local Level Stakeholder Participation in Local Governance”, and it would be delivered by Hon Dominic Napare, MP Sene East Constituency.

Hon Members, I crave your indulgence to have these two Statements taken jointly. I would give the floor to Hon Faustina Elikplim Akurugu.

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

STATEMENT

Deepening Local Governance in Ghana: Addressing the Challenges of Unit Committee Members

Mrs Faustina Elikplim Akurugu (NDC — Dome-Kwabanya): Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to address this august House on the critical role of local governance in Ghana's democratic development, particularly addressing the challenges faced by unit committee members in our various local government units.

Mr Speaker, local governance continues to form the bedrock of Ghana's participatory democracy, ensuring that governance is brought closer to the people. Ghana's decentralisation system, established under Chapter 20 of the 1992 Constitution and the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936), provides the framework for grassroots governance with district assemblies as the highest political and administrative authorities at the local level. The unit committee, as the lowest structure of the local government, is essential in engaging communities, mobilising citizens for development, and implementing policies at the grassroots level.

However, Mr Speaker, despite the importance placed on the unit

committee, it continues to face challenges that hinder its work. A couple of days ago, I met with representatives of Unit Committee Members Association of Ghana. The membership, according to them, is 43,500. They asked me to present their challenges on the floor of this august House. In a petition presented to me, they requested an urgent intervention in addressing the following issues:

1.16p.m.

1. Lack of empowerment

Mr Speaker, the unit committee members feel disempowered due to insufficient authority and participation in the decision-making process. They, therefore, want to urge the Ministry for Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs to provide clear guidelines that would enhance their role in the decision-making process.

2. Low Recognition and Compensation

Again, Mr Speaker, the unit committee members state that there is a noticeable low, if not absent, recognition and compensation for them. According to them, this lack of acknowledgement demotivates them and undermines their commitment. They propose that a structured compensation framework be put in place to reward and motivate them for their time and efforts.

3. Neglect by Central Government

Mr Speaker, there is a growing concern among Unit Committee members for neglect by the central government. According to them, this neglect is made manifest in limited communication, inadequate funding, and lack of involvement in policy formulation that affects local governance. As a result, they seek amendment in the Act to promote inclusiveness and participation in the decision-making process and more engagements with the central government regarding local issues.

4. Capacity Building and Training Needs.

Mr Speaker, the unit committee members reckon that there is an urgent need for capacity building through training programmes tailored specifically for committee members. Such training should be tailored to enhance their skills in governance, project management, conflict resolution, and community mobilisation.

5. Misunderstanding with Zonal Councils.

Finally, Mr Speaker, the unit committee members complained of rising misunderstanding with zonal councils, which disrupts collaboration and effective planning for community development. They recommend the

establishment of regular dialogue sessions to foster understanding and cooperation.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, addressing these challenges will go a long way in strengthening the effectiveness of the unit committee in the local government and ultimately, lead to improving the local governance system and community development.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, for this opportunity. [*Hear! Hear!*]

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Very well. Hon Members, let me at this juncture invite Hon Dominic Napare, Member of Parliament for Sene East Constituency to read his Statement which is of the same content.

Hon, you have the floor now.

STATEMENT

Local Level Stakeholder Participation in Local Governance

Mr Dominic Napare (NDC — Sene East): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to make a Statement on local level participation in local governance in the district assemblies in Ghana.

Mr Speaker, decentralisation and local governance, which are considered important elements of participatory

democracy, over the past three decades, have seen an increasing devolution of political and economic power to local government. Decentralisation can be said to be the process of bringing public sector decisions closer to the people, in order to empower local communities to actively participate in the prioritisation, implementation and monitoring of government's development programmes to the benefit of these communities.

Mr Speaker, this process should encourage more accountable and responsive governance to improve public service delivery efficiency at the local level, and bring government closer to the governed.

Mr Speaker, it is in the light of the above that Article 240(1) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, makes decentralisation mandatory and provides that this country (Ghana) puts in place "... a system of local government and administration which shall, as far as practicable, be decentralised." In furtherance of that, the Constitution tasked Parliament to enact appropriate laws to ensure that functions, powers, responsibilities, and resources are at all times, transferred from the central government to the local government authorities in a coordinated manner. Parliament operationalised this by the passage of the Local Government Act, 1993 (Act

462), which was later replaced with the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936), with the aim of enhancing local participation and consolidating all local government laws into one legislation.

Mr Speaker, it is interesting to note that until the promulgation of the new Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936), the previous Local Government Act of 1993 (Act 462), did not have any elaborate provisions on participatory governance for citizen's engagement with the district assemblies. This gives rise to the absolute need for serious sensitisation of the public and also local government practitioners on participatory governance at the local level under Act 936. This I believe will enable us to achieve the promotion of popular participation in local level decision-making.

Mr Speaker, the crux of the matter is that if decentralisation and local governance is for participation and ownership by the local level stakeholders, to what extent are these stakeholders, who have stakes and roles to play, as enshrined in the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936), aware of and play these roles and take these responsibilities?

Mr Speaker, the Act 936, in Sections 40 to 48, has given elaborate and extensive opportunity and

guidelines to local level stakeholders to effectively participate and provide oversight to ensure efficient service delivery, but unfortunately, to a large extent, this is not the case. The Act 936, under Section 234, defines district level stakeholders to include: chiefs and traditional authorities, opinion leaders, community leaders and civil society organisations. Civil society organisations are defined in the same Section to include community-based organisations, faith-based organisations (religious bodies), non-governmental organisations, professional or vocational associations or similar organisations.

Mr Speaker, the above is fortified in the constitutional indications for rulers to be defined for ordinary people in local government in Ghana, as given in Chapter 20, Article 240(2)(e) of the Constitution, where it states as follows:

“to ensure the accountability of local government authorities, people in particular local government areas shall, as far as practicable, be afforded the opportunity to participate effectively in their governance.”

In operationalising this, the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936) provides for the assembly member to consult with their electorate before and after meetings of the assembly. The

question is, how far is this carried through?

Again, Mr Speaker, the provisions on participatory revocation of the mandate of an assembly member who has lost the confidence of his people; those on decentralised participatory planning and budgeting; and the Section that requires that chiefs and traditional authorities be consulted in the process of the President appointing the 30 per cent to district assemblies, give effect to participatory local governance at the assemblies.

Mr Speaker, Sections 41 and 42 of the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936) provide the procedure to enable a resident and other local level stakeholders participate in activities of the district assembly and its sub-structures, and identify the modalities and platforms for participation.

1.26 p.m.

In particular, the two sections provide for the participation of local people in the enactment of by-laws and draft fee-fixing resolutions by the district assembly.

Mr Speaker, citizen participation in the preparation of District Assemblies By-Laws and Fee-Fixing Resolutions is very important in increasing Internally Generated Funds (IGF), for local development at the

assemblies. But unfortunately, there is very limited involvement of stakeholders in this direction by district assemblies as noticed by your Committee on Local Government and Rural Development in its previous reports to the Plenary.

The extensive involvement of stakeholders in the determination of how much rate, fees and fines they would be paying during the fee-fixing formulation stage will reduce the assemblies' cost of sensitisation and education of citizens on tax obligations. I think this will also reduce the usual confrontations between taxpayers and revenue collectors, and increase revenue generation for local development at the district assemblies.

Mr Speaker, information and technology-based platforms are among the many platforms specified in Section 42 of the Act, for stakeholder participation, and it also includes: town hall meetings, budget preparation and validation fora, notice board announcements on jobs, appointments, procurement awards, and other important announcements of public interests. Sections 43 and 44 of the Act provide for the general public to make petitions to the district assembly on issues of concern. Section 44 makes it mandatory for a district assembly to respond to petitions made by citizens.

All these are measures put in place to address issues of stakeholder involvement and participation. This is so important that the Act compels the District Chief Executive (DCE) of every Assembly, to report on stakeholder participation in the activities of the district assembly as stated in Section 45 of the Act. This will ensure that district assemblies make conscious efforts to involve the local people.

Mr Speaker, it is curious to note that even before the passage of the Right to Information Act, 2019 (Act 989), Section 47 of the Local Governance Act 2016 (Act 936) had provided the public, access to information from the district assemblies. It provides that every resident in a district assembly shall have access to or request information held by the district assembly or a department of the assembly, subject to limitation imposed by law.

Mr Speaker, it is strange that this provision was not being employed by the media and the general public, but we were only waiting on the passage of the Right to Information (RTI) Act. Perhaps this justifies my earlier call for a serious sensitisation of the public on the provisions of the new Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936).

Mr Speaker, the requirement of the assemblies to observe the principles of

inclusion and integration of minorities and marginalised groups in society is so important that Section 48 of the Act compels district assemblies to observe the following principles:

- (a) Protection of marginalised groups from discrimination of any kind, including discrimination based on language, religion, culture, national or social origin, gender, birth, descent or other status.
- (b) Equality of treatment in the area of economic, educational, social, religious, political and cultural life of marginalised and minority groups.
- (c) Special protection to vulnerable persons, who may be subject to threats or acts of discrimination, hostility, violence, and abuse, as a result of their ethnic, cultural, religious or other identity.
- (d) Special measures of affirmative action for marginalised and minority groups to ensure their enjoyment of equal rights with the rest of the population.
- (e) Respect for, and promotion of the identity and characteristics of minorities.
- (f) Promotion of diversity and inter-cultural education; and

- (g) Promotion of effective participation of marginalised groups in public and political life.

Mr Speaker, if district assemblies were to implement these principles to the letter, by instituting programmes of pro-women and pro-marginalised affirmative actions, the issue of abysmally low participation of women in governance, particularly local governance, would have improved.

Mr Speaker, as a way forward, the relationship between local government and the governed, should be strengthened to reverse this situation of mistrust and disillusionment. Both the local people and the district assemblies need to work together to rebuild and strengthen this relationship. By this, the citizens need to be more active and engaged, while the assemblies be more responsive and effective. These provisions must be operationalised and practicalised for popular participation to become a reality—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, can you summarise it a bit? Six pages is too much.

Mr Napare: Mr Speaker, I am almost done.

Again, I think we need to rethink participation in the political process towards an engagement that is more

deliberative, and which can be understood as a right in itself, to call for certain pre-conditions to be created, targeting the fulfilment of local needs.

I wish to suggest that the Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy, and Religious Affairs and by extension, the district assemblies, engage in elaborate sensitisation on the provisions of the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936), particularly, Sections 40 to 48. The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and the media who are into advocacy on local governance, even though they are themselves stakeholders, should also champion the advocacy of participatory local governance.

Finally, Mr Speaker, in order that the district assemblies will be more responsive to issues on stakeholder participation and report appropriately, as contained in Section 45 of Act 936, I suggest that the Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy, and Religious Affairs includes participatory governance at the local level as a qualifying criteria for the District Performance Assessments Tool (DPAT), emphasising their responsiveness to issues of inclusiveness and integration of minorities and marginalised groups.

Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity. [*Hear! Hear!*]

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Thank you very much.

Hon Members, I think we have made this admonishment in the House before. We normally have so many Statements, so if you are bringing your Statement, please, make it brief. It should not be more than two pages, so that we can accommodate more Statements.

Hon Member for Sene East, yours was six pages, and that is too much. Please, let us take note of that. We discussed this at the pre-Sitting this morning, so the Whips should please ensure that the Statements received from Members are not more than two pages, so that we can accommodate more.

Some Hon Members — rose —

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Yes, let me start from the Majority; I will come back to you.

Yes, Hon Member for Amenfi West?

Yes, Hon Member for Amenfi West?

Dr Eric Afful (NDC — Amenfi West): Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to add my voice to the two Statements on the Floor. I would like

to commend the two Hon Members who made the Statements.

Mr Speaker, actually, when we look at the organogram of the local government structure in this country, we would realise that the unit committee members are at the units, which is at the downturn of the organogram. It starts from the Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy, and Religious Affairs, and then we come to the Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) being led by the Regional Ministers. The Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) are led by chief executives, then the assembly members, the zonal councils, and finally, the unit committee members.

1.36 p.m.

Mr Speaker, when one looks at the organogram, the unit committee members are the people who are not motivated in any way by the organogram, which I think we need to do more. They work assiduously at the various units that they find themselves, but they are not being motivated. Adding to the point on assembly members, how can an assembly member travel about 30 kilometres to the district capital, have a meeting, and be given GHC150 as sitting allowance without transportation. Some do not get it at all.

Mr Speaker, it is something we have to look into, they are working for the country, and therefore we need to do something about it. I would urge the Chief Executives to make sure that they increase their Internally Generated Fund (IGF) at whatever level they find themselves, Municipal, District, Metropolitan, so that they can use some of these funds to motivate them to work and work well.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you so much. Let me come to Hon Member for Damongo.

Mr Samuel Abdulai Jinapor (NPP — Damongo): Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this Statement ably made by my Colleague, the Mrs Faustina Elikplim Akurugu, on deepening Local Governance in Ghana.

Mr Speaker, this is a very important subject, and indeed, it is just as well that the Hon Member has brought it on the floor of Parliament, since the President is just about announcing and appointing Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Chief Executives. One of the biggest problems we have as a country, which has become a stumbling block to our development, is that, we say we practise decentralisation, but when you

look at it critically, we really do not practise decentralisation, and we are not deepening local governance in our country.

Mr Speaker, I would begin with the first example, being Common Fund. The administration of Common Fund, as it was originally conceived, was to have a Common Fund, which will be the fund where we will tap into to resource district assemblies, resource electoral areas, resource unit areas, so that the development will take place at the district assemblies.

Mr Speaker, but we all know that across the political divide, governments after governments, the Common Fund, which is supposed to be decentralised, which is supposed to be disbursed to the Local Government Structures, is mostly centralised, where procurements are done at the centre and then payments are done directly from the Common Fund, and the assemblies are given the procured items. Whether they need them or not, nobody asks any question.

Mr Speaker, if you go to my Constituency, Damongo, the needs of my Constituency of Damongo would be different from the needs of the Constituency of, say, Zebilla, or Fomena, indeed, Mr Speaker, which is why, if you would allow me, the story is told of an Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) which built a

borehole in the centre of a village and believed that they had built a borehole to alleviate the sufferings of the women so that the women will not trek long distances to fetch water, only for the women to abandon the borehole and continue to go down the stream to fetch the water. When the investigation was done, that was the only time they also got the opportunity to escape from homes to chat and gossip about their husbands and so on and so forth and therefore, to tell them to fetch the water from the centre of the village was problematic for them.

That is why, we have to have tailor-made development. When one goes to the United Kingdom (UK), there is a department called the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, (DEFRA), is a very powerful department in the United Kingdom which is responsible for rural development and rural affairs. Mr Speaker, you are familiar with Council Homes. That is how many people came to own homes in the UK. These are all decentralised structures and also the question of getting our Local Government structures to be able to generate their own revenue and generate their own resources. Then the issue of capping, when the assemblies engage in internally generated funds, then we have capping formulas and so on.

Mr Speaker, it is a very important subject. I am not too sure we can do

justice to this particular subject on one occasion. But I want to conclude, to say that, at the very least, let us make the effort to decentralise healthcare, education and agriculture. I dare say, Mr Speaker, even roads, in terms of not so much, in terms of not the expenditure, but in terms of the prioritisation of the roads, the assemblies have to be—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: And maintenance.

Mr S. A. Jinapor: Then maintenance as well. The assemblies should be given the authority to determine which roads are their priorities. And indeed, rural economy. The major problem we have in our country is rural economy. Almost every town or village of significance or substance in our country has a market. It tells you how driven, how entrepreneurial our people are and so, we are hoping that the new Minister for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, the Minister for Health, the Minister for Education, the Minister for Food and Agriculture, the Minister for Roads and Highways, and the Minister for Finance and Economic Planning, of course, would put in place a formula and the right policies to ensure that we deepen local governance in our country and ensure that we take development to the grassroots of our people.

Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you so much. Let me go to Mr Sanja Nanja.

Mr Sanja Nanja (NDC — Atebubu/Amantin): Mr Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to contribute to these two Statements ably made by other Members.

Mr Speaker, citizen participation in general is a good way of making public sector policies, laws, and regulations acceptable to the citizens. It also makes the public sector services effective and efficient. But, unfortunately, the main objective of Ghana's decentralisation was to enhance citizen participation in governance. But unfortunately, it is either the local authorities are not affording the citizens the opportunity to participate, or the citizens themselves are not interested in participating and this is manifested in the district-level elections. As compared to the general election, the voter turnout for district-level elections has always been very, very low. In some instances, we get up to as low as 30 per cent voter turnout. Mr Speaker, the rate of voter turnout in an election gives credence to the subject under consideration. The citizens sometimes do not have interest in

participating in the district-level elections.

1.46 p.m.

For instance, in the district level elections, sometimes apart from the assembly members, the five members of the unit committee members—Some electoral areas are not even able to file five members for the elections because people are not interested in it. The lower structures are also not given the capacity to function. The assemblies I know are supposed to cede some percentages of its revenue to the sub-structures. These percentages are not ceded to them. How do we expect them to function? For instance, during Fee-Fixing Resolution, citizens are invited to come and participate, and the number of people you get leaves much to be desired. People do not come; they are not just interested, and the local authorities also—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Please wind up.

Mr Nanja: The local authorities also take advantage of the non-interest of the citizens and do their own thing.

Mr Speaker, I think we have to sensitise the people and do more publicity, especially during the district level elections; the publicity is normally very low.

Mr Speaker, on this note, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Statement.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Yes, let me now go to—Hon Member, now that I know your intentions, you would not catch my eye.

Yes, Hon Member for Ahafo Ano North.

Mr Eric Nana Agyemang-Prempeh (NPP — Ahafo Ano North): Mr Speaker, thank you very much, for giving me the opportunity to contribute to what the makers of the Statements have said.

Mr Speaker, to ensure effective local governance and decentralisation in Ghana, I think we should look at how to resource the actors of local governance in Ghana in the discharge of their duties, be it the executive, the legislative and deliberative functions of the various assemblies.

Mr Speaker, let me zero in to the consultations of the assembly members before and after assembly meetings. But members in the various assemblies—

Dr Eric Afful: — *rose* —

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, hold on.

Dr Afful: Mr Speaker, thank you.

I think the seats there are for Leadership.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: What?

Dr Afful: The front seats there are for Leadership. Therefore, I do not know why they keep sitting there. We have a convention in the House —

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: What convention?

Dr Afful: If they have changed their Leadership, they should tell us.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: What convention?

Dr Afful: That we should not sit at where the Leadership sits.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Were you in the House yesterday?

Dr Afful: Mr Speaker, I suffered the same thing.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, the mere fact that you suffered—

Dr Afful: Mr Speaker, they made me leave the same Leadership seats that I occupied to my own seat.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

But as you speak, there is nobody seated at the front seat. All those seated there are Leaders. Hon Member, yesterday, I think we delved into this. Your issue came up, and the First Deputy Speaker ruled, and we expatiated that the front seats are reserved for Leaders. Members can occupy when there is nobody seated there. So, we normally term them as available Leaders. Please, allow me to explain. But when there is a Leader, it does not mean that nobody can come and discuss a matter with the Leader. So, I saw Hon Adelaide Ntim come to the front seat; she came to confer or take information and that is allowed. But sitting there permanently is what we can raise an issue about. Yesterday, we delved into this matter.

Hon Eric Afful, your issue has been dealt with, and I think we do not need to revisit this issue again.

Yes, Second Deputy Majority Whip?

Mr Richard Acheampong: Mr Speaker, thank you very much for the explanation.

Yesterday, I heard the First Deputy Speaker ruled on this matter, but how he was treated was unfair. That is why Hon Nyindam raised the issue again

yesterday for a better explanation. Because, like you said, Leaders may occupy the Frontbench, but Members may walk in to have a discussion with them. But the Minority Side raised the issue, and the First Deputy Speaker sacked the Hon Member from the Frontbench. It was not a pleasant situation. That is why he is still in pain and wants to bring the matter up.

I think this explanation will settle things with him. Going forward, let Members understand that they can still walk to the Frontbench, have their discussion and walk back to their seat. This is the explanation he wanted, so that when there is clarity, Members would feel free to also reach out to the Leaders. Leaders are here to work for the Backbench, so, if there is a denial, then we are not here to serve them.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: You are perfectly right.

Dr Afful: Mr Speaker, let me thank you, and the Second Deputy Majority Whip. On that note, I would need an apology from the Frontbench.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Oh, why?

Dr Afful: An unqualified apology from their people—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Afful, this thing is over.

Dr Afful: Mr Speaker, they should render an unqualified apology for what they did to me the last time.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Personally, I was not happy about what was done to you, but it is over, please. We learn from these things as we move on. So, please, it is over. We do not need to demand or request an apology.

Yes, Hon Second Deputy Minority Whip?

Mr Shaib: Mr Speaker, I understand my Friend's pain very much. But one would also agree with me that it was a comment made by the Minority Chief Whip, and the First Deputy Speaker made a decision. It was the First Deputy Speaker who made a decision, and not the Minority Chief Whip. I still understand his pain and why he wants to retaliate. But we are Brothers, so he should not retaliate. Let us move forward. It is for God and country; I love him, and he loves me, so let us move on.

Mr Speaker, I thank him very much for loving me.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon Agyeman-Prempeh—

Mr Agyemang-Prempeh: As I was saying, to ensure an effective local government and decentralisation system in the country, the nation ought

to look at how to finance the key actors of local government and decentralisation in Ghana, especially the unit committee members and assembly members.

Mr Speaker, I want to zero in to the Statement on the consultation before and after assembly meetings, by the assembly members. Successive governments have been providing motorbikes for assembly members to go about their normal duties. But sometimes, the motorbikes would come at a time when assembly members are exiting, and that does not help. For instance, how does an assembly member of Maabang in the Ahafo Ano North, go around to visit his people at Kwabeda and Kwafokrom before he goes to the assembly meeting to deliberate on the issues concerning their plight?

I want to take this opportunity to appeal to the Minister for Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs, and the Ministry itself, to make sure they expedite action on providing motorbikes to the assembly members, and I believe that would help.

Then, looking at the relationship and other things between the traditional authorities and the unit committee members. I am happy today that the Ministry Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs has been merged

with the Ministry of Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development have been merged. So, the Minister should take note and take action on that.

1.56 p.m.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion during the last elections, that is the 2024 elections, the two major political parties, the NDC and NPP in their manifestos, promised assembly members that when they come to power, they will see how the Ministry can allocate some funds to assembly members to aid in their work. Today, the NDC is in power so, I want to appeal to the Government to make sure they look at the regular distribution of the Common Fund and how some portion would be given to assembly members to aid in their work, as promised in the manifesto. With this, I thank you Mr Speaker.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: I understand you are the president of the assembly members.

Mr Agyeman-Prempeh: Former president of the National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana (NALAG).

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: I can now understand why you are speaking for them. Yes, let me go to Mr Andrew Dari Chiwitey, Hon Member for Sawla/Tuna/Kalba.

Mr Andrew Dari Chiwitey (NDC — Sawla/Tuna/Kalba): Finally! Mr Speaker, I appreciate you for the opportunity to comment on the Statement delivered by these two Hon Members. I happen to reside in the constituency of the Hon Lady, Ms Faustina Elikplim Akurugu. I thank her for accommodating me in her constituency.

The district assembly concept is a good concept that is supposed to bring development to rural areas. Mr Speaker, I have often told my assembly members that if we have a strong assembly system, the work of an MP would be limited. This is because the assembly members and the unit committee members live with the people day in, day out, so they know the people and their needs better than the MPs. Like the Hon Akurugu said, what we have to do to empower them is to resource them. We who come from the rural areas can testify to the importance of the unit committee members.

In my constituency for instance, we have electoral areas that are scattered. There are some of the electoral areas that have as many as 20 communities making up the electoral area. This makes it very difficult for the assembly members alone to function and that is why we think that the unit committee members should be seen as important persons when it

comes to helping send development, carrying information to the people and helping solve the needs of the people.

Mr Speaker, the Hon Akurugu indicated the need to empower Unit Committee members by way of training or developing their skills. It is necessary for us to do that because in some of the communities, they serve as teachers, and in other communities they serve as medical officers and as everything to the people. So, if they are empowered financially and technically, they would play their role to the expectation of the community members who elected them.

My Colleague, Hon Sanja Nanja in contributing, indicated that there is low patronage at the Unit Committee level. It is a fact because they do not have any benefit. They spend money to get the forms completed and go round to campaign. On election days, Mr Speaker, you would be surprised to hear that people have to be transported to voting centres and unit committee members and assembly members have to do that from their pockets.

Meanwhile, they do not have any allowance. So, it only takes a person who is dedicated and committed to the service of his or her community to volunteer to contest as assembly member or unit committee member. So, Mr Speaker, calling for resource is important.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Chiwitey: Mr Speaker, I know there is no time, but let me conclude by touching a little on Hon Napare's Statement. It is a fact that, constitutionally, we are supposed to consider stakeholders in the formation of the district assembly, especially when it comes to the appointments by the President. We need to consider carefully the people who are selected in the President's appointment. We need to get people who have the skills. We do not just have to pick party members, but people who have the know-how like traditional leaders, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) faith-based organisations, in fact, people with the expertise to serve as government appointees. This is so that, at the end of the day, we would carry home the development that government wants to send to the people. I thank you, once again, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity.

With the presence of H. E. John Dramani Mahama, he promised assembly members, and I know he is going to deliver on his promise. We are going to send development to the doorsteps of the people. We are not going to award contracts from Accra or award just road grading—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, thank you so much.

Let me go to the Hon Member for Akim Oda.

Mr Alexander Akwasi Acquah (NPP — Akim Oda): Thank you, Mr Speaker for this opportunity to make a comment on the two Statements that have to do with local governance in Ghana.

Indeed, the Member for Dome-Kwabenya would have to put herself together and form an association of MPs who reside in her constituency because I just heard the Hon Member say that he lives there. We have quite a number of Members who also live in Dome-Kwabenya, so, at least, we can have development coming to our area.

Mr Speaker, I am excited to take a bite on this all-important topic, local governance. All the contributors to this Statement have talked about the fact that we need to empower our local governance system. Looking at the structure of our local government, it is only assembly members and MMDCEs who are seen. We do not have the Unit Committee and other structures performing. This is because they do not have empowerment. How do we talk about empowerment without looking at financial capacity or a system that would allow them access to finance?

I want to crave your indulgence, Mr Speaker, to share an experience. In

my constituency, the usage of Common Fund was a major campaign issue during our primaries. So, I promised my constituents that, in order for them to have full access to the use of Common Fund, I was going to disburse the Common Fund to the 18 electoral areas in my constituency. When I got elected, every Common Fund that is released was disbursed to the 18 electoral areas. We had the various electoral areas, led by the assembly members, opening electoral area accounts. These moneys were disbursed directly into that account from the District Assembly. It made it easier for me to account for the Common Fund for every quarter.

Even though I do not have any major project standing in my name, for every electoral area a person goes to, there is something they can point to that attests to the fact that this is what the MPs Common Fund has been used for. I think it becomes easier to account for the Common Fund because it is one major area that, as MPs, if we are not careful, it would be definitely used to campaign against us—No, I am not concluding; you have to learn from my experience.

2.06 p.m.

Mr Speaker, it is the reason during the campaign of Dr Mahamudu Bawumia, he promised that portions of the District Assemblies Common Fund

were going to go to the electoral area. We did not vote for him. We are quietly waiting for NDC's promise that they were going to pay assembly members. Because if assembly members are going to be paid, it would entice people to volunteer to become assembly members and to be voted for. After they are paid, let us ensure that we have resources that would go directly into the electoral area because we know that when the District Assemblies Common Fund goes to the District Assemblies, they get into major projects and the electoral areas do not benefit.

Mr Speaker—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Acquah: Thank you very much for this opportunity.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: No, let me go to the first timer.

Yes, my Brother, where are you from where?

Mr E. K. Addo: Asutifi North Constituency

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Asutifi?

Mr E. K. Addo: North

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: All right

Mr Ebenezer Kwaku Addo (NDC — Asutifi North): Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment on the two Statements. However, my interest is rather going to be on the Statement by our Colleague, Member of Parliament for Dome-Kwabanya.

With the plight of unit committee members, having been an assembly member and a presiding member before, I have had a personal encounter with them. I think it is right that, as Hon Members of Parliament, we look at how our Unit Committee members are treated. In fact, the district election is designed to bring democracy and governance to the doorstep of Ghanaians. And if one looks at the structure of our local governments, the Constitution and the Local Governance Act provide the framework for such structures to exist between the assembly and the unit committee.

These such structures are composed mainly of the unit committees and the elected assembly members. We have the town councils, the zonal councils, and the area councils. If one goes to the area councils, they are composed of elected assembly members within that area and then not more than 10 members of

the unit committee. That is, the composition is 15. So, one would realise that the unit committee members have majority numbers in terms of the composition of these area councils. However, at the end of the tenure of these unit committee and assembly members, it is only the assembly members who provisions have been made for, concerning their emoluments. But these unit committee members are the focal point for local engagements.

Mr Speaker, if one looks at the functions of the unit committee, one would realise they are to assist the area or urban councils to enumerate and keep records of all rateable persons and properties. It is as a result of this that the assembly can generate internally generated funds (IGF). But in the disbursement or the usage of this IGF, the unit committee members do not even see how they are used. So, I think this is the right time for us to look at how these unit committee members are treated, especially when their tenure of office is getting near. The assembly members are given motorbikes, but the unit committee members do not even have bicycles to even go to the various areas.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr E. K. Addo: And so, I think the Hon Minister for Local Government,

Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs should look at this and consult in getting some of these concerns addressed.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Thank you very much.

Should I come to Leadership?
Yes?

Mr Cletus Seidu Dapilah (NDC — Jirapa): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, do I have the floor?

Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to contribute to these two noble Statements made by our Colleagues.

Mr Speaker, listening to our Colleagues and the makers of these two Statements, it all boils down to inadequate funding for our assemblies: the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs). Mr Speaker, we pretend to be releasing the District Assemblies Common Fund to the assemblies, and the assemblies too are pretending to be working. All of us know the cost of a three-unit classroom block; how much do we send to the assemblies from the District Assemblies Common Fund Secretariat?

So, all I want to say is that we are pretending to be supporting or making payments to the assemblies by way of the District Assemblies Common Fund. All the contributors and the makers of the Statement indicated that the challenges of the assemblies are that they are not adequately resourced, so they cannot actually bring the governance that we want to the doorsteps of the people. We have to look at the funding. How do we fund the assemblies? I am talking as a former District Chief Executive (DCE).

Mr Speaker, there were times one sits in the assembly for three months and cannot even get money to buy fuel to run the DCE's vehicle, let alone to send staff to go for monitoring.

Mr Speaker, we approve this District Assemblies Common Fund formula in this House. Moneys that are supposed to be sent to the assemblies are not sent. We sit at the Common Fund Secretariat and procure equipment and logistics to the assemblies when the assemblies do not even need this equipment.

Mr Speaker, let us also look at the IGF—The law that should enable the assemblies to generate IGF is moribund.

Mr Speaker, if one goes to collect poll tax, at the end of the day, the cost

of collection is higher than what is to be collected. So, we need to look at the laws too, so that we can empower and fortify the assemblies to generate more IGF.

Mr Speaker, political interference is one of the challenges that most of our assemblies face. As a DCE, you are protecting your seat, so you dare not even go to say that people should pay property rates, and do A, B, C, D to generate enough money for the assemblies. This is because your party would come after you. Your party chairman would not understand why you are asking them to pay property rates.

Mr Speaker, we need a holistic discussion on this matter; it is a very good Statement; let us not just talk about it and throw it to the dogs. Mr Speaker, refer this Statement to the Committee on Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs, so that we can discuss it and make serious recommendations, particularly to the District Assemblies Common Fund Secretariat. They should stop deducting moneys that are meant for the assemblies. We should not—If we continuously do that, we would be pretending to be working and governing the people; meanwhile, we are doing nothing.

Mr Speaker, how on earth can they send GHC400,000 to the assembly

when they know the cost of a three-unit classroom block? When I was a DCE, we were guided that, any time District Assemblies Common Fund is released, we should be embarking on at least physical projects, such as the construction of Community-based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) compound and the construction of three-unit classroom blocks. So, any time payments were made, they wanted to see the DCE making payment or allocation for the construction of physical projects. Now, go and check the assemblies; the moneys that are being sent to them are just used for the day-to-day running of the assemblies. No assembly can physically show that this is what they have used their District Assemblies Common Fund for over the period. So, Mr Speaker, we cannot be pretending to be developing our people.

I thank you.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Thank you so much. I have enjoyed your submission. Indeed, you were a former DCE.

Let me come to Leadership. You did not take your time.

Minority Leadership.

2.16 p.m.

Deputy Minority Leader (Ms Patricia Appiagyei): Mr Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank the maker of this Statement. I know that he is somebody who has been on the Committee on Local Government and Rural Development for quite some time, and all the observations and monitoring that has been made has necessitated the maker to come up with a view of strengthening local governance in our country.

Mr Speaker, I tend to agree with the last contributor to this Statement that we are pretending to be working. As a country, we pride ourselves in the fact that we have a very strong local governance system and structures, and I would admit that, yes, that is so. But as a country, I do not think we have looked back at the need to review a number of things.

Mr Speaker, a number of countries have paid benchmark visits to Ghana to learn of our local governance systems. The interesting thing is that they have gone back to improve on what we have. I would cite the case of Zambia, which learnt of our 1 Million, 1 Constituency system. In order to progress development, what Zambia has done is to set up a development committee which include the MP of the area, representatives from the district assembly executives, and representatives who are stakeholders. They all come together to plan what

has to be done within the municipality or the district and ensure its implementation and execution.

Mr Speaker, because of that we can visibly see development taking place in Zambia now. It has been devoid of a chief executive undermining the MP, and it is devoid of the MP quarrelling with the chief executive for non-release of funds. It is one good structure which is enhancing development within Zambia, and it is something we should pay attention to and try to improve on what we have. We cannot always sit down, pride ourselves by saying we have the best when we do not review. It is important that we review the structures and systems we use to operate.

Mr Speaker, one thing I would want to discourage, I do not mind how people look at it, is to look at the system of paying unit committee members. Please, they work within a very small area where they are the monitors of how the communities develop. It is important that these people do not incur any cost. I have never been for the idea that we should buy motorbikes and pay *ex-gratia* to assembly members. It is something I do not subscribe to.

It is important that we look at systems that would help us to develop faster than we are. It is also very good that we devoid ourselves of the clashes that are within the system that does not

make us grow. The chief executive of that particular municipality has the singular responsibility to ensure that funds are mobilised to undertake other responsibilities of the municipality and not for development. The development has its own committee that pursues the development agenda.

Mr Speaker, with these few words, I thank you for the opportunity.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Yes, Second Deputy Majority Whip?

Second Deputy Majority Whip (Mr Richard Acheampong): Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity, and I would like to thank the makers of the Statement. I think it is important that they have brought these issues to the fore. We cannot exhaust it today, so going forward, we need to advert our minds to the issues raised in those Statements, so that we can start implementing some of the proposals put before us.

Mr Speaker, before I touch on the Statement, I would comment on the issue raised by the Deputy Minority Leader in respect of the payment of unit committee members, assembly members, and others. In the NDC manifesto, we promised that we would give some allowances to the unit committee and assembly members. The issue is that we are now tasking them to collate data, that is birth and

death from their communities. So, even if they are to forward this information through text messages, who would take care of the data they would use to send this information? If they are to travel to the assemblies, who would pay for the fare? At least, if there is some form of motivation, it would make people give out their best.

When assembly members attend meetings, the DCEs would tell them there is no release from the Common Fund, so even the allowances of about GH¢100 or GH¢150 due them cannot be paid. Some run into three or four months before they find the money to be given to assembly members, so when assembly members are invited for the next sitting, they would not attend.

Mr Speaker, these are some of the issues that we need to have a better understanding of and put before all of us, especially after the presentation of the Budget, the formula would be presented to us, and we would approve the formula. Hon Leader, you are aware. Even in the formula, about 50 per cent of the allocation is disbursed here in Accra to cure lepers, youth development, school feeding, among others.

So, in the Constitution, Article 252 tells us that we should transfer not less than five per cent to the local assemblies for development. The

question is, do they get the 5 per cent? Even from the point of view of the Ministry of Finance, sometimes, they transfer 3.5 or less than the 5 per cent. We have promised to transfer 7.5 per cent; it is in our manifesto. Help us to walk the talk, and let us make sure the 7.5 gets to the assemblies, so that they can use these moneys for local development.

Mr Speaker, I was a member of the Committee on Local Government and Rural Development and we were assigned to tour the whole country to monitor projects. That was about four or five years ago. We went to the Volta, Eastern, Ashanti, and Western Regions. When we go to the assemblies and identify a project, we ask them who the contractor is and they do not know who the contractor is. Who is the consultant? They do not know the consultant. What is the project cost? They do not know, and the DCE told us that they have invited them for a meeting, but they do not want to attend. So, who is supervising the work? Meanwhile, the structure is being developed at his municipality, but he does not know the contractor. So, if there are defects, how do we correct it?

Mr Speaker, we are embarking on decentralisation but are holding back the activities of the local assemblies. We sit in Accra, award contracts and make payments, but the people at the

assembly, sometimes, do not even need the projects. They have their own needs, so we need to review it. We need to sit with them, and let them give us their priorities, so that we invest the money in those areas.

The Deputy Majority Leader mentioned the 1 million per constituency policy that Zambia came to tap into and have enhanced and how it is helping them. Who can tell me that he or she is aware of a transfer of \$1 million to a constituency? So, on paper, we are doing well, but if we go to the ground, we are not walking the talk. It was propaganda that we did. Unless she has evidence to prove that, in Bia East, for the past eight years, they transferred GH¢8 million and these are the projects they used the money to execute.

So, Mr Speaker, we do propaganda with everything, enough of the talking. Let us stop the propaganda and make sure that what we are saying is what we are doing on the ground. We cannot announce to the whole world that every constituency has received GH¢8 million worth of projects; meanwhile, they have not transferred even GH¢500,000.00 to the assemblies. What kind of local governance are we talking about here?

2.26p.m.

Mr Speaker, the Local Government Service sit in Accra, do recruitment, transfer or post these officers to the local assemblies. The District Chief Executives (DCEs) are not aware; they do not know their background. You go to some assemblies and they have about three deputy coordinating directors sitting idle, with no space to even work. But every month, they draw salaries from the Consolidated Fund. Are we not wasting resources? So, these are some of the issues we need to come together as a House and deal with them. If we do all the computation, you come to the conclusion that GH¢5.3 billion is transferred to the local assemblies for let us say 2024. What is the impact? One should check from 2023 to 2024, and he or she would see that Common Fund is still owing the assemblies, including Members of Parliament here. Our project fund has not been paid.

The year has ended. A new Government is in power now. They are going to put together a new formula for approval. What about the arrears? But on paper, it is written we have transferred this money to the assemblies for development. Where is the money? Where is the project? So, you see projects springing up at various communities. Contractors have abandoned sites because of non-payment of certificates. So, these are some of the issues we need to avert our

minds to so that we come together as a House and deal with them. But 7.5 per cent will be released in this 2025 Budget because we have signed a social contract with the people. We have promised the people and we will deliver.

Mr Speaker, with these few words, I thank you very much for the opportunity. [*Hear! Hear!*]

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Jerry Ahmed Shaib, do you want to speak?

Mr Jerry Ahmed Shaib: It is just a matter of information. It is a point of information.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Point of information?

Mr Shaib: Yes

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: But I gave you the floor, but you did not speak.

Mr Shaib: No, it was because of what he said.

Mr Atta-Mills — rose —

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hone Members, please—Yes, Leader, the point is you wanted to raise a point

of Order whilst he was speaking. I gave you the opportunity, but you sat down. You did not observe me. I gave you the opportunity.

Mr Shaib: Mr Speaker, with all due deference to you, I actually thought that you were asking me to sit for him to finish.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Oh, then you did not get it.

Mr Shaib: Mr Speaker, you know I respect the Chair, so I did so. It was just a point he made with reference to the fact that one million is paid into accounts. But you said, so if you would check —*[Interruption]*—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Members, please. So, what was it?

Mr Shaib: Mr Speaker, I am saying that those amounts of moneys are not paid into accounts. They are given to the agencies that work and when contractors are done working, they are paid. That is all.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Very well

Your information is well noted.

Hon Member for Komenda /Edina/Eguafo/Abrem, why? Is there an issue?

Mr Samuel Atta-Mills (NDC — Komenda/Edina/Eguafo/Abrem):

Yes, he is misinforming the House. It was supposed to be US\$1 million to the Assemblies. I was in Cape Coast when the former Vice President came over there and told us that those assemblies should run to Accra and that the money was there and if you do not go and collect the money, they will spend it in Accra—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Hon Member. It is all right, and your point is well noted.

Hon Members I think these are red herrings, you do not need to—The Statement has been made. It has been contributed to and you do not need to move outside the jurisdiction.

So, Hon Members, let us take the next Statement from Hon Member for Old Tafo, Hon Vincent Ekow Assafuah. He is going to talk about education at crossroads: safeguarding progress in Ghana's educational sector.

Hon Member, before you begin, let me acknowledge our children from Amasaman. They are Viscila International School. They are led by Richard Kay Mireku, who is a teacher in the school, and the school is located in the Amasaman Constituency—**[An Hon Member:** The MP is not here]**—**Where is the MP for Amasaman? Yes,

the MP is here—[*Mr Sedem K. Afenyo waved*—[*Hear! Hear!*]]—Yes, that is their MP. Yes, we are happy to see you here. I believe you are monitoring and studying what is going on here. We want you to study it well and that will urge you to study so that tomorrow, if your uncles, your aunts and your fathers, if we are no more here, you would come and take over from us. Right? So, study hard so that tomorrow you take over from us. You are welcome. I hope the Hon Member will welcome them well on behalf of the House.

[Pupils from Viscilla International School were acknowledged]

Yes, Hon Assafuah, let us hear you.

STATEMENT

Education at Crossroads: Safeguarding Progress in Ghana's Educational Sector

Mr Vincent Ekow Assafuah (NPP — Old Tafo): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for this opportunity.

Education remains the most powerful tool for national development, shaping the minds and skills of future generations. Around the world, nations celebrate various milestones in education whether it be

International Day of Education, Teachers' Day, or the commemoration of ground breaking policies that have transformed learning. These moments serve as reminders that education is not just a policy area but a fundamental pillar upon which societies build their progress.

In Ghana, our educational journey has been marked by reforms and innovations designed to ensure access, equity, and quality. Policies such as Free Senior High School Education (Free SHS) and the expansion of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education have played a transformative role, empowering the youth and securing the country's future. It is within this context that we approach the recent decision by the Government to establish an eight-member committee to organise a National Education Forum.

Mr Speaker, the National Education Forum is not a novel concept. It has historically served as a platform for engaging policymakers, educators, civil society, and stakeholders on critical issues affecting Ghana's educational landscape.

2.36 p.m.

However, the value of such a forum is ultimately measured by the

quality of its recommendations and, more importantly, the Government's commitment to implementing policies that uplift rather than destabilise the sector. We must also be mindful of the history, purpose, and outcomes of such engagements, particularly when they are convened under an Administration whose track record in education policy has, at best, been inconsistent.

Under the previous Administration, education was not merely a subject for discussion but was a priority for transformational action. Our Government took bold, decisive steps to expand access, ensure equity, and improve quality, leading to some of the most significant educational reforms in Ghana's history. Some key policies implemented include:

Free Senior High School (Free SHS): A Revolution in Access to Education. The Free SHS policy, implemented in 2017, broke financial barriers that had long prevented thousands of Ghanaian children from pursuing secondary education. This policy significantly increased enrollment, particularly among students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, ensuring greater access to education for many. The impact of the policy is evident in the record number of SHS graduates progressing to tertiary education, affirming its role in shaping the future

of our workforce and national development.

Mr Speaker, expansion of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education: Positioning Ghana for the Future. Recognising the importance of equipping students with 21st-century skills, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) Government made significant investments in STEM education. The establishment of STEM-based senior high schools, modern science laboratories, and training programmes have enhanced Ghana's capacity to produce world-class engineers, scientists, and innovators. By prioritising STEM, the previous Government laid the foundation for a technologically driven economy, ensuring that youth of Ghana can compete on a global stage.

Mr Speaker, Ghana Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Service: Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education. The NPP Government established the Ghana TVET service to improve the management and delivery of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Several TVET institutions were upgraded, and new centres of excellence were built to enhance hands-on training and industry relevance. This move positioned TVET as a viable alternative to traditional academic

routes, equipping students with employable skills.

Mr Speaker, there was the transformation of the school infrastructure landscape. The Government launched an aggressive school infrastructure expansion program to accommodate the growing number of students under Free SHS. New classroom blocks, dormitories, and science laboratories were constructed across various senior high school

Also, there was the introduction of the National Standardised Test (NST). To track and improve learning outcomes at the basic school level, the Government introduced the National Standardised Test (NST) to assess Primary 4 and 6 pupils. This policy ensures early intervention for struggling students and provides data-driven solutions for improving literacy and numeracy.

Mr Speaker, with these undeniable achievements, it is imperative that the President Mahama-led Administration provides clarity on the true intentions behind this National Education Forum. The Government must unequivocally assure the people of Ghana that this initiative is not a smokescreen for reversing or diluting these landmark policies. We will not countenance any attempt to:

Tinker with the Free SHS policy under the guise of a review, leading to cost-sharing that undermines accessibility.

Reduce investments in STEM education, which would slow Ghana's progress in technology and innovation.

Weaken TVET reforms, reversing the strides made in equipping the youth with employable skills.

Use this committee's report as a justification for policy reversals that serve political expediency rather than national progress.

Mr Speaker, education is not a partisan experiment; it is a national imperative. The reforms we undertook were not accidental; they were deliberate, strategic, and backed by evidence of their necessity and success. Any government that seeks to build upon these reforms must do so with a commitment to expand and improve, not regress and erode.

Mr Speaker, we, on this Side of this House, will vigilantly monitor the proceedings and outcomes of this forum. We would hold this Government accountable for any decision that threatens our future, especially the future of our students, teachers and the broader education sector. The people of Ghana will not forgive any administration that seeks

to roll back policies that have lifted millions out of educational disadvantage.

With this remark, Mr Speaker, I welcome the committee and encourage them to work with transparency, foresight and a firm commitment to national progress. However, let it be known that any attempt to use this forum as a back door to undo the transformative educational policies of the NPP would be met with firm resistance.

Thank you so much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity granted me.

Alhaji N. M. Mumuni — *rose* —

Some Hon Members: Sit down!

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Why should he sit down?

Yes, Hon Member?

Alhaji Nurideen Muhammed Mumuni: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, I rise on Order 64(1) of the Standing Orders and fortified by Article 102 of the 1992 Constitution, and I read Article 102: “A quorum of Parliament, apart from the person

presiding, shall be one-third of all Members of Parliament”.

Mr Speaker, if you look at the Members in the House, we are not up to one-third of the number required to carry on with Business of the day. So, I would want to plead with you to adjourn the House to tomorrow.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Order!

Leader, our Brother has raised an issue of quorum, so I would ask the Clerks-at-the-Table to ring the bell, and while the bell is being rung, I would invite the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources to read his Statement. [*Hear! Hear!*]

Hon Members, we would discuss them together. I thought the Hon Member was going to comment on the Statement rather than raise a quorum, so—

Mr Assafuah: Mr Speaker, the rules of this House do not allow this. As soon as there is a Statement, per the rules, there should be comments.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Assafuah—

Mr Assafuah: Mr Speaker, the rules of this House do not allow that, and the Standing Orders do not allow that. When there has been a Statement, respectfully, there should be

comments coming from the Hon Members.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: I am saying that I would give you time to discuss it.

Dr Abdul Kabiru Tiah Mahama

— rose —

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Mahama, I will give you time to make your contribution. Let us listen to him.

STATEMENT

The State of Ghana's Forest Reserve and Water Bodies

Minister for Lands and Natural Resources (Mr Emmanuel Armah-Kofi Buah): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to give a Statement on the State of Ghana's Forest Reserve and Water Bodies.

Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to address this august House on the pressing issues facing our nation, particularly the devastating scourge of illegal mining, commonly known as *galamsey* and its catastrophic effect on our precious forests and water bodies. I stand before you not only to provide an update on the dire situation but also to outline the solutions we have identified and the expedited actions we are taking to address this national emergency.

Mr Speaker, I am also here to solicit the unwavering support of this House and Hon Colleagues to join me in this fight.

This is not a battle for one individual but a collective struggle that demands unified effort to achieve meaningful and lasting solution.

2.46 p.m.

Mr Speaker, Ghana boasts of a total land area of approximately, 23.8 million hectares. Of this, about 3.6 million hectares, which is 15 per cent of our total land area are designated as either forest reserve or wild life protection areas managed by the Forestry Commission. This includes 288 forest reserves and 21 protected areas scattered across the country. As we know, our forest and wildlife resources have long been major contributors to Ghana's economic development. They provide formal and informal employment, sustainable livelihood, offer rich bio-diversity for eco-tourism and generate foreign exchange through timber export. Beyond their economic value, our forest plays a critical role in climate regulation, serving as nature's base solution to mitigate the impact of climate change.

Mr Speaker, despite the numerous benefits we derive from the forest and our increasing knowledge about the importance of forest to our eco-system

Statements

and well-being, Ghana's forest continues to be under serious threat of deforestation and forest degradation due to factors known to all of us. Ghana is currently faced with an unprecedented threat to our forest resources and water bodies due, largely, to illegal small scale mining activities. This situation has assumed crisis proportions with dire national security and public health consequences that require immediate attention.

Mr Speaker, it would interest you to note that, out of the 288 forest reserves that I have mentioned, a whopping 44 of these forest reserves are under serious attack by illegal miners. An estimated area of over 5,000 hectares have been devastated, and to put it pictorially, about 7,500 standard football fields is what I am talking about. This is mostly occurring in these specific areas in the Ashanti Region: Bekwai, and Nkawie; in the Western Region, Tarkwa, Daboase; and in the Western North, Bibiani, Enchi and Juaboso.

Mr Speaker, the approach adopted by the illegal miners is quite alarming and frightening. They are heavily armed with sophisticated weapons and very violent with large numbers of excavators, making it extremely difficult for forest guards and rapid response team to control them since they have no such sophisticated

weapons to control them. Over 9 out of the 44 forest reserves— And Mr Speaker, this is very important; over 9 out of the 44 forest reserves have been completely taken over by these illegal mining thugs with impunity and the Forestry Commission no longer has access to these forest reserves. This situation is dire and must be condemned by all citizens of Ghana.

Mr Speaker, the impact of illegal mining on our water bodies, which is the second phase, is critical and equally alarming among the three water basin systems in Ghana, which are the Volta, South-Western, and the Coastal Water Basin systems. The South-Western Basin System is most impacted. The rivers that form the South-Western Basins are the Ankobra and Pra, which are made up of Offin, Birim and Oda; and the Tano and Bia. According to the Ghana Water Company, the normal turbidity levels for water for treatment should not exceed 500 Nephelometric Turbidity Unit (NTU). However, the current turbidity levels of these water systems are between 5,000 and 12,000 NTU. The Ghana Water Company had to shut down some treatment plants in Tarkwa at a point due to over pollution from *galamsey*.

Mr Speaker, the pollution does not end with turbidity. These water bodies are also contaminated with toxic chemicals such as cyanide, mercury,

hydrocarbons and used recklessly by these illegal miners. This is utterly unacceptable. We cannot afford to reach a point where access to clean potable water becomes a daily struggle for the citizens.

Mr Speaker, this is the grim reality of the state of our forest reserves and our water bodies. This is, indeed, what we have inherited. It is a legacy of environmental degradation that we must confront head on as part of H. E. President John Dramani Mahama's Reset Ghana Agenda—*[Hear! Hear!]*—The outlook is undoubtedly bleak, but we are resolute in our commitment to reversing these crises with your support.

In line with this Reset Agenda, I wish to provide highlight of some short-, medium-, and long-term measures that we have embarked upon to address this situation. In the short term, we want to clear all water bodies from illegal mining activities through the use of river guards on our Blue Water Initiative. Details of this initiative will be provided during the launch of this initiative in the coming weeks.

Two, engagement of stakeholders at all levels—Among other things, the intention is to strengthen our regulatory and law enforcement regime and get the buy-in of stakeholders on measures being pursued. The stakeholders must include

our traditional authorities, municipal and district authorities, civil society groups, our Members of Parliament, security agencies, state regulators, the Judiciary, and here we will talk about the numbers. In the last few years, the numbers for prosecution for illegal mining is not very encouraging. Out of over 800, the number we had for people who have been persecuted was less than 40. So, we need to look at that area as well. This is the reason I am here today.

Mr Speaker, I wish to seek your commitment and the commitment of the leadership at all levels, including all political parties including my friends on this Side and my friends in the Majority as well. We have to collectively fight this. Another short-term measure is that I inaugurated a working group of experts on Wednesday, 12th February, 2025, to undertake a review of the mining sector and licensing regime and recommend immediate radical reform to sanitise illegal mining activities within our forest reserves and water bodies. Our committee is expected to submit its report by the end of the month.

Mr Speaker, we are also collaborating with the Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology and actively discussing modalities for revoking Environmental Protection (Mining in Forest Reserves)

Regulations, L. I. 2462 to establish a responsive legal framework for small-scale mining in ecologically sensitive areas. Our short- to medium-term approach is to roll out the Government's Tree for Life Reforestation Initiative. This ambitious initiative aims to restore degraded landscapes by transforming areas ravaged by illegal mining and other drivers of deforestation into ecologically functional landscapes. We intend to promote sustainable forest management, conservation and reforestation to combat diversity loss, water pollution, climate change and environmental degradation, threats that, now, pose an existential threat to our very existence. We recognise that many young people tend to engage illegal mining activities due to lack of sustainable employment opportunities.

2.56 p.m.

As part of our long-term strategy, we are also exploring a lot of other alternative sustainable livelihoods to reduce dependence on *galamsey* and other illegal mining activities.

Mr Speaker, I conclude with a heartfelt appeal to all of our Colleague Members of Parliament and Ghanaians to join in this fight against *galamsey*. Let us unite to support the measure outlined today. We owe it to ourselves, our children and future generations to safeguard our environment and secure a sustainable future for our beloved

nation. The time to act is now. Together, we can and must prevail.

I thank you. [*Hear! Hear!*]

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Thank you very much.

Hon Members, we would come to this topic later. But I would invite Hon Abdul Kabiru Tiah Mahama to make his earlier comment on the first Statement; then we would move on to this one.

Dr Abdul Kabiru Tiah Mahama (NPP — Walewale): Mr Speaker, thank you very much.

I rose substantially to seek Mr Speaker's direction on two major issues that he had given directions on. Mr Speaker asked us to discuss the Statement made by my Colleague, the Hon Member for Old Tafo. However, a Member raised an issue of quorum. Substantially, it put the issue on hold, and Mr Speaker gave directions according to Order 64(4), where he said the bell would have to be rung and discussion would go on for 10 minutes. Then, a head count would be done by the Clerk-at-the-Table, and we would determine whether *quorum* had been formed.

Mr Speaker, I do not want to risk a discussion that would not be captured as part of the official proceedings of the House.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, I have given you the floor. I want you to comment on that Statement—

Hon Members, please, why?

Dr Mahama: Mr Speaker, I would comment on that, but I feel it is procedurally right to bring that to your attention.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Mahama, if you do not have a comment, I would give the opportunity to somebody else.

Dr Mahama: I have a comment.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: You have?

Dr Mahama: Mr Speaker, I have a comment to make.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: So, make the comment. Leave the rest of the procedure to the Chair. I have given you the—

Dr Mahama: Mr Speaker, thank you very much for that direction, but I was just trying to help guide the Chair.

Mr Speaker, the maker of the Statement brought to the fore the issue about education and education at the crossroads. He highlighted some of the teething issues regarding Ghana's

educational system. He also brought to our attention some of the sterling, most innovative and cutting-edge educational initiatives that were initiated by the former President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo. But the most important thing in that Statement to me that should engage our minds, is his comment on the flagship programme of the previous Government that is, the Free Senior High School (FSHS) Programme.

Mr Speaker, I have had the opportunity of writing some papers on education. I remember when I was reading my second degree, I wrote about gender inequalities in primary school enrolments and the factors that probably would necessitate or determine whether a person would enroll a female or a male student in school. One of the findings was the financial status of the parents. The FSHS basically took away this burden and made education accessible to every Ghanaian, irrespective of where one was born or the financial status of their parents.

I think that this Programme would have to be safeguarded. It is in tandem with the provision of Constitution of the Republic that states that education should be progressively free. Any attempt by any government to introduce any impediment to the access to education by way of parents paying, would not be in furtherance of

the Constitution of the Republic of the country.

Mr Speaker, there are recent talks about parents having to pay for some part of Parent-Teachers' Association dues. There are recent talks about engagement with institutions to ensure that education is actually being contributed to by parents. The FSHS legislation could not be passed by in the previous Parliament. This Parliament would have to pass it, ring-fence funding sources for education and make sure that it is accessible for everyone.

Mr Speaker, thank you.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Thank you very much.

I would take the last comment. So, I would give it to either the former Minister or—

Prof Nyarko: Please, I am indulging you to indulge the two of us, with respect to your office.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Please, we all know that the Statement that has been read is a very important Statement that we need to discuss. But our own Colleague raised the issue of quorum. So, with the ten minutes I have, I have to make sure that—Please, I am going by my own time.

So, Prof Kingsley Nyarko, let me hear you.

Prof Kingsley Nyarko (NPP — Kwadaso): Mr Speaker, you are a nice man. Thank you for the opportunity you have given to me.

My Hon Friend, Mr Vincent Ekow Assafuah has made a profound Statement and I commend him for the Statement he has made.

Mr Speaker, education is the core of societal development and progress. Between 2010 and 2020, the erstwhile National Democratic Congress (NDC) administration introduced an education strategy plan that spanned between 2010 and 2020. When the New Patriotic Party (NPP) took over, we also had a strategic plan by reviewing what the NDC had put in place because it was ending in the year 2020. We also came up with a plan that spanned the period between 2018 and 2030. Because this document is there, I was expecting the current Government to at least examine this document and see the positives, strengths, and where there are weaknesses, they can revise them so that we move forward. For me, that is how we need to proceed as a country. We do not have to reinvent the wheel.

Mr Speaker, if one looks at the document we have right now, that was overseen by Dr Matthew Opoku Prempeh and Dr Yaw Osei Adutwum,

it is a comprehensive plan. In the year 2017, we did what we call the Education Sector Analysis based on some of these documents. We came up with gaps in those existing documents. We had some suggestions moving forward. That is why we were able to introduce the free technical education intervention. The point I am making is that, through the gaps, we realised that we needed to pursue technical education and we have done that through the free education.

But as we speak, this Government is having a stakeholder engagement in the Volta Region, and the idea—

3.06 p.m.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Prof Nyarko: Mr Speaker, please, give me just a second to conclude. The idea is to come up with a new paradigm. But, I am saying that what we have right now is enough to help this country to move forward. They cannot reinvent the wheel. They should follow the innovative interventions that the NPP Government put in place. My good Friend, Alhaji Haruna Iddrisu, whom I respect so much—[**Some Hon Members:** Eii!]
—Please, respect me; I am your friend—[*Uproar*]
—I know Alhaji Haruna Iddrisu, the new

Minister for Education, will do the right—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Order! Hon Members, please, do not do that. Allow him, please.

Yes, Hon Member, conclude for me.

Prof Nyarko: Mr Speaker, my point is that I know the current Minister for Education. I know he is capable and will do right, but I would just advise him, as a very good friend, to look at the innovative interventions that we rolled out and just add on to it. That will benefit this country and our children.

I thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you so much.

Hon Member, initially, you said you would not contribute. Yes, I want to finish that one, then I come to you.

Yes, Hon former Minister for Education? You would not catch my eye again.

Dr Yaw Osei Adutwum (NPP — Bosomtwe): Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity. I would like to commend the maker of the Statement, Mr Vincent Assafuah, Hon Member for Old Tafo, for commenting on what is going on in Ghana at this time, in

terms of the committee looking at the future of education in our nation.

Mr Speaker, developing a country requires a certain kind of educational regime. Other nations have done it, and Ghana can do same. It is not by accident that China set a goal of producing 50,000 engineers, moved it up from 50,000 to 200,000, and now, they have 800,000 engineers coming out of their colleges and universities every year.

The purpose of education is so critical. It is not just education, but education must be a system that moves us from point A to B in terms of socioeconomic transformation. Education must be done in such a way that we meet the requirements of the fourth industrial revolution. That is why I am proud of what Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo was able to do in education. [*Hear! Hear!*]

When we realised that our nation was paying lip service to the so-called 60:40 ratio, where we had always said that we were going to produce 60 per cent of our graduates in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) related fields and 40 per cent in humanities in the universities. Then we looked at the number and realised that in the Senior High Schools (SHS), we have only 12.5 per cent of our students studying Science. How do we change 12.5 per cent to 60 per cent when they move

from one level to the other? That is what led to the innovation of the pre-engineering programmes. As I speak, University of Mines and Technology (UMaT), Tarkwa, has been able to create a pre-engineering programme.

This year, over 300 students were admitted to the pre-engineering programme. These were students who studied General Arts, Visual Arts, and Home Economics, but have a desire to change and add to our STEM-related numbers. They could not even admit all the students. This innovation is working. We have model Junior High Schools (JHS) focused on STEM. We have the Accra STEM Academy educating students from kindergarten to high school; many things have been done. Government is a continuum, so I pray the new Government to look at the innovation and creativity in education, and continue that trend to move Ghana forward. So that, what we have not been able to do for over 60 years, we can do in our generation.

I think the legacy for us all should be that during our time, we took on education, changed it and made it better for our nation, and transformed our fortunes.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Thank you very much.

Hon Members, please, let me turn to the Statement made by the Minister

for Lands and Natural Resources now. Let me start from Prof Beyuo. Yes, let us hear you.

Prof Titus Kofi Beyuo: Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity. I wanted to correct something for the purpose of the *Hansard* that—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Are you commenting on the Statement?

Prof Beyuo: Mr Speaker—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Please, if you are not commenting, let me give the opportunity to somebody else because we have already gone past that.

Alhaji Sulemana — *rose* —

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon Member for Bole Bamboi, the Deputy Minister-designate, responsible for the same Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources.

Alhaji Yusif Sulemana (NDC — Bole Bamboi): Mr Speaker, I am grateful for this opportunity. Mr Speaker, let me thank the Hon Minister for Lands and Natural Resources for the brilliant Statement that he has just made this afternoon. I am not thanking him just for the Statement, but, also, for the speed at which he has started his work. In less than a month, one

would agree with me that he is moving at such a speed, and if we would support him, the challenges that we are being confronted with in this sector will be a thing of the past. He has demonstrated preparedness and competence to resolve the issues confronting that sector.

Mr Speaker, these problems that we are all faced with are problems that have been there for a very long time, but we must get them resolved at a point. To get them resolved, we will need all hands to be on deck, and that is exactly what he is doing. He is calling for stakeholder engagements; he is calling on other political parties to come on board; he is calling on MMDCEs to come on board, and he is calling on all Ghanaians to come on board; that is the way to go. I doff my hat for my Hon Minister for this laudable approach he is using in solving such problems.

Mr Speaker, as for the challenges, they are clear. The data exists to show that our forest cover is being depleted. Like he said in his Statement, as we speak, 44 of our reserves are gone to, if we like, illegal mining. Again, if we read the reports everywhere, the Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL) is suffering because of the way our water bodies have been destroyed. We cannot wait, even for a moment. We need to act and act speedily, and that is what my Minister is doing. Today, I

am a very happy person because if we have such an action-oriented person at this strategic place, then we are assured that we are getting solutions. [*Hear! Hear!*]

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you. He is not supposed to comment for more than five minutes, please.

Alhaji Sulemana: Mr Speaker, I am yet to start.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: You are yet to start?

Alhaji Sulemana: Yes—
[*Laughter*]—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Your time is up. Let me give the opportunity to the Member for Takoradi.

Alhaji Sulemana: Mr Speaker, I just want to conclude.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: All right, in conclusion?

3.16 p.m.

Alhaji Sulemana: In conclusion, the Hon Minister spoke about the use of water guards to ensure that our water bodies are protected.

Mr Speaker, he discussed something with me, and I think it is important to mention it here. He said that he is going to use the 24-Hour Economy to ensure that these water guards are going to run the concept of one-three-three; one job, three shifts, three people.

Mr Speaker, thank you for this opportunity.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Let me come to the Hon Member of Parliament for Takoradi.

Mr Kwabena Okyere Darko-Mensah (NPP — Takoradi): Mr Speaker, thank you for this opportunity and I also thank the Hon Minister for coming to this House to solicit the support of Parliament for this fight.

Mr Speaker, this fight is not an easy fight. He knows it. In his own Constituency, he knows that it is a very big fight. And when one starts fighting them — I still remember when President Mahama was in power and the Frimpong-Boateng Report came, they said the President, who was the custodian of all the gold in this country, had a *galamsey* site. They also started touting that the President, Nana Akufo-Addo, is involved in *galamsey*.

The Minister for Lands and Natural Resources and then, my good self —

Mr Speaker, the reason I am saying this fight — Mr Speaker —

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, please, I want us to be guided. [*Uproar*]

Hon Members, please, resume your seat.

Hold on!

Hon Members, please, let us be guided by our own Standing Orders. The Hon Minister came with a Statement and our duty is to comment. We are guided by Order 93(5). I mean, we do not have to comment in such a way that it would degenerate into something else.

Mr Darko-Mensah: Mr Speaker, I was only giving a precedent.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Let us be guided, please.

Mr Darko-Mensah: To support the fight against *galamsey*.

Mr Speaker, I still remember I was in the Region when the Chairman for the Journalists against Galamsey sent a message to the Hon Minister for Lands and Natural Resources and it was passed on to me to go and fight at a *galamsey* site on the river in Mpohor.

After I finished the fight, within three days, the man was recorded on tape saying that I had collapsed in a hospital and my 17 million had been taken away by my driver. — [*Interruption*]

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, please, let us listen to him.

Mr Darko-Mensah: The fact of the matter is that the Hon Minister should be guided. That this big fight is restarting. It is a big fight. And it is going to come with a lot of challenges. And therefore, we all need to support him.

Mr Speaker, we all buy the water we drink from outside so, if the water is destroyed, it affects all of us. That is why we need to be strong to support him to fight it.

Mr Speaker, the Minister has also made mention of setting up a committee that he expects to report back to him by the end of this month. I think it is a good idea. But I want to promise him, any licensing regime that starts and stops in Accra would not solve this problem. Because most of the times, the districts do not own the process and therefore, do not know where all the mining sites are. But we know that in the law, we have the district mining committees where the chief is a member, the district police commander is a member, the district

chief executive is a member, the Minerals Commission is a member and then the association of small-scale miners or miners in the district are also supposed to be members. I believe that henceforth, when they get the recommendation, they should insist that it should be the committee or the body issuing these licenses and then Accra can then top it up. Because if we do not do that, there is not going to be any community ownership. And even the fight itself also has to be owned by the community and the district. Otherwise, we are going to have a big challenge in fighting it when we continue our method of fighting everything from Accra. In fact, by the time soldiers even move into the district, the galamsayers would have been informed and they would run away.

In fact, when we were fighting it in those days, they would not be there when we went in the morning or afternoon. When we returned the next morning, we would realise that they had come to do operations in the night. And this is very difficult for our agencies to be able to stop them.

He also made mention of the river guards. I believe that it is a good thing. In fact, we trained a lot of river guards. We only deployed them for a few periods because of morality issues. Because along the lines, what we realised was that those fighting

galamsey, from the police to the army to immigration — it became a different story altogether. I believe that now that we have digitalisation—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Thank you.

Mr Darko-Mensah: Mr Speaker, I am concluding. Now that we have digitalisation, it would be important if we could implement and invest in solar closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras along the rivers so that we could use that to check the river guards and also to check the *galamseyers*.

Mr Speaker, with these few words, I believe that it is time we support him to succeed – and now it has come back to him to get it resolved.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Thank you. I enjoyed your contribution and that is why I allowed you to go beyond.

Yes. Thank you very much.

Mr Sebastian Fred Deh (NDC — Kpando): Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity. I realised that so many people were competing for your eye so, I am thankful that you caught mine.

Indeed, I just want to make a short comment, and I am guided by Order 93(4) that I should not go beyond five minutes. I am also guided by the fact

that I am actually making a contribution to the education part of what was presented. I am not going to talk about *galamsey*. The part that was done by Hon Assafuah.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, that one is over. My Brother, let me hear you.

Mr Worlase Kpeli (NDC — Kwahu Afram Plains North): Mr Speaker, thank you.

The hour is now, and the time is now. It has been decades since Ghana has been making efforts to eradicate illegal miners from our water bodies and our forests. But what is the action? Our actions always stay in the armchair. We say it like poets, but when it comes to the action, we are divided on how to curb this menace. We even started commenting on this beautiful Statement by going politically. How then would a divided house be able to train its children?

Mr Speaker, my little advice to us all, including myself, is that until we become one and frown upon the activity itself, we cannot curb it. This is because it is us who are admitting the very people there. The youth we see there are the people who are unemployed. They would find every means, and they cannot be restricted from going there. If we start making conscious efforts to pull out

the youth from those sites by giving them something to do—I can give the House a typical example. The youth we see in the trenches, muddying the waters, most of them might have come from Afram Plains North. This is because they have the experience with the waters, and because they have nothing to do in their constituencies, and nothing is going on well with them, they end up trying to look for quick moneys. The machines that dig the holes do not muddy the waters like the young ones who go inside to turn it over again. I urge us all, the Ministries—Youth Development and Empowerment; Sports and Recreation; Food and Agriculture; Lands and Natural Resources; and Environment, Science and Technology to come together and withdraw the youth from the sites. Then we can know the masters who put the youth there.

3.26 p.m.

That is only when we can stop *galamsey* from our side.

Thank you, Mr Speaker. [*Hear! Hear!*]

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much.

Let me come to Okaikwei Central.

Mr Patrick Yaw Boamah (NPP — Okaikwei Central): Mr Speaker,

thank you very much, and I would like to add my voice to the comments on the floor on the Statement ably made by the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources.

Mr Speaker, I believe *galamsey* issues or issues with regard to mining in our forest reserves, in our water bodies and what have you, have become a serious national security issue. It requires serious political will on the part of the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary to stem this canker.

Mr Speaker, people in our communities are seriously trading off cocoa farms for the *galamsey* menace to continue there. Why would they do that? It is because of our quest for money. In this country, we hail people who hold money without even asking the source of the money. We have all benefited from cocoa money; it has taken us through scholarships, education and what have you. But now, one goes to his or her village and the chief, elders and family heads are ready to cede off the farms that took care of them to illegal miners.

Mr Speaker, if we read paragraph 4.3, page 110 of the 200 page manifesto of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), it has about 18 policy interventions on the extractive sector. It is in their manifesto, and I am asking myself how long it would take

Mr Emmanuel Armah-Kofi Buah and his team to implement those schemes or measures?

Mr Speaker, it is not going to be easy. It requires a serious hand with a tough skin to go after these illegal activities. The Hon Minister would be tempted, and his Colleagues on both Sides would be involved. They would come to him to plead with him. He would be tempted with *nolle prosequi* having gone after people.

We talked about only 40 people being prosecuted. Yes, the courts are there to protect the liberty of the individual. Majority Leader will tell us; it takes a long time to convict an individual. It is part of our criminal jurisprudence, so if he has come here to read this beautiful Statement, we would be watching the space for the implementation. This is because Hon Member is talking about decentralising illegal mining, setting up small, medium, and large scale—I have read it. But our own Members from both Sides would go to Hon Minister to ask for favours. He has to take a very strong step on suspending the issuance of licensing, make sure that the proper demarcations are made, and make sure he visits almost all the sites.

Mr Speaker, we are talking about over 3,000 illegal mining sites. How would it be patrolled? We do not have the technology. We would be listening

to the Minister of Finance on the 10th March, 2025 on budget of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources. We would be looking at the budget lines to support the Ministry in this fight. We do not want the Hon Minister to come here for his Ministry's budget approval and say that the Ministry requested for half a billion, and it has been giving 100 million. We would be listening to him.

Mr Speaker, we pray for him. I know him; he has the heart, but he should get the resources and the tough skin to fight this. The Hon Minister went to Asantehene, Otumfuo, and he gave him good advice. All the chiefs—He went to the Western Region with the President. We monitored him, and we know some of his constituents are involved. How is he going to fight it? He would be thinking about his seat, and he would be thinking about how the NDC wins the next elections, God forbid—*[Laughter]*

Mr Speaker, I believe the House and the country are solidly behind the Hon Minister because he mentioned about turbidity levels; from 500, it is now over 12,000. The Water Resources Commission would give him all the data. If we drive from Cape Coast on the Pra River to Ankobra River, crossing to the constituency of Mr First Deputy Speaker, we all see the water levels. The Minister should get the right people to work with.

Otherwise, he would come here and weep one day and say little did he know that Hon Sulemana and his commentary did not help him. *[Laughter]*

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr First Deputy Speaker: Thank you so much.

Yes, Hon Mohammed Adams Sukparu?

After giving you the platform, I hope you would not make unnecessary—So, let us hear you.

Mr Mohammed Adams Sukparu (NDC — Sissala West): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, I was only trying to catch your eye, so if I had not made the noise, I believe you would not have given me the opportunity. So, let me thank you for recognising me this time around. Let me also thank the Hon Minister for this great initiative; this is what we call the resetting agenda—*[Hear! Hear!]*—Because this is the first time, we have a Minister come to this House to let us know that all of us here are stakeholders, and it is time for us to come together to dialogue to find a lasting solution to the challenges that we are confronted with. As far as our forest reserves and the mining sector are concerned.

Mr Speaker, the challenge that we are faced with as a country has nothing to do with anybody outside the political class, and I repeat it: I am also part of the people. We all sit here, and most of the time we pretend and blame an ordinary youth who is walking in Sissala West. The youth living in Sissala West does not know where a forest reserve in the Western Region is and that particular youth, Mr Speaker, does not know which of our lands contain either gold or diamond. It is we, the leaders in this country, who recruit these unemployed youth and task them—We give them all the necessary equipment to go and destroy the forest reserves in our country.

Mr Speaker, we were all in this country when the media reported that the driver of a certain Regional Minister took a huge sum of money—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, please, do not go there.

Mr Sukparu: Mr Speaker I did not say it—*[Interruption]*—I said the media reported. I am not the one saying it.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, please—

Mr Sukparu: Mr Speaker, I am only making reference to a media report—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: All right, conclude.

Mr Sukparu: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

We were all in this country when the media reported that the driver of a certain Regional Minister, who is now former Regional Minister, took huge sums of money, which runs into millions of cedis, and absconded. We were told that those moneys were proceeds of illegal mining or *galamsey*.

Mr Speaker, but when we give opportunities to ourselves to come up with solutions, we dance around the issues and rather try to blame innocent youth who are looking for employment.

Mr Speaker, I would want to thank the Minister for bringing up this issue.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Hon Supkaru—

Mr Sukparu: I would want to thank the Hon Minister for bringing up the issue and, this time around, engaging all stakeholders, including the Members of Parliament, our chiefs, the District Chief Executives (DCE), so that we all come together and see this as a national issue and address it as such.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much.

Mr Sukparu: In conclusion, Mr Speaker, I want to conclude.

3.36p.m.

In conclusion, I want to call on you and our political class, including the New Patriotic Party's 88 Members of Parliament. They should join us. They are now 87. This time around, Mr Speaker, we have a very humble Minister who is in charge of the sector, who is ready to listen to everybody. His doors are open, Mr Speaker—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, please —

Mr Sukparu: He is ready to listen to the solution that we will propose to him. So together, we can all address this matter.

Thank you very much once again, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity.
[Hear! Hear!]

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, we keep on saying that let us make our comment in such a way that it will not attract—Like what you have said now that we have a very humble Minister. Humility is subjective. You may see Mr Emmanuel Armah-Kofi Buah as humble and somebody may also see the former Minister as humble.

That is my assessment. So that is why I am saying—Hon Members, please, the Statement that was made is very important, and I do not want us to make certain comments that will throw away the important issues raised in the Statement.

Yes, Hon Member for Tarkwa?

Mr Matthew Nyindam — *rose* —

Please, I will come to you. Hon Matthew Nyindam?

Mr Matthew Nyindam (NPP — Kpandai): Mr Speaker, thank you very much for—Please, Mr Speaker—Hon Members, can you please—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Suhuyini, I will give you the opportunity, please.

Yes, Hon Nyindam.

Mr Nyindam: Thank you, Mr Speaker for the opportunity to also contribute to the Statement made by the Minister. Mr Speaker, we all agree that *galamsey* is an enemy to all of us. It is an enemy to this country and for that matter, if we are condemning it, we must all come together as a nation to condemn it.

Mr Speaker, people have lost their lives to *galamsey*. Cocoa farms have

gone because of *galamsey*. Mr Speaker, water bodies that people used to survive on as their drinking water, today, if one goes to most of these *galamsey* areas, all the beautiful rivers are gone. For that matter, *galamsey* is an enemy to all of us. So, in fighting *galamsey*, we need to collectively do it.

Mr Speaker, the Ghana Water Company has always complained that if we do not take time, if we do not manage *galamsey* seriously, we would end up importing water into this country. It tells us how dangerous and inhuman this particular act is. So, if we are fighting it, politics should be taken away.

Mr Speaker, under the NDC and under the NPP, people have gone into the forests to destroy them because of the huge appetite they have for money. For that matter, if we decide to do politics with it, that under one regime, this has happened, under another regime, this has happened, Mr Speaker, we can all point to facts that nobody can dodge; that under the NDC, people practiced *galamsey*, people died and it is same under the NPP too.

I expected that the Minister would have made his Statement without giving any room for any of us to punch any hole. I know he came under Order 91 of the Standing Orders to give a

Statement as a Minister, but if he says that that is what he inherited, Mr Speaker, I know very well and there are media reports out there that after the December 7 elections, people have gone to take over *galamsey* sites. Mr Speaker, among us here, they have even banned somebody from coming to his constituency because he is involved in *galamsey*. I want to find out from the Minister whether that is also part of his inheritance — *[Hear! Hear!]*— because if he says that is what he has inherited, it means that that is the past but we are talking about current matters. Mr Speaker, current matters—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Matthew Nyindam, please hold on. Let me listen to Hon Richard Acheampong.

Mr Richard Acheampong (NDC — Bia East): Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Mr Speaker, like you earlier ruled, the Hon Member is contributing to a Statement, but he is trying to introduce other matters— *[Interruption]*—Mr Speaker, on the very issue he raised, the journalist who did the story just three days ago has come out to apologise to the Hon Member and has retracted that statement, so he cannot repeat the same here. The journalist who aired that story has come out to apologise to the Hon Member. So please withdraw that statement because whoever made that

statement has apologised—
[Interrupted]— I did not hear what anybody said.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Member?

Mr Acheampong: No, no, no, I did not hear that —[Uproar]—

I heard him say this. I heard Mr Nyindam mention an Hon Member's name. I did not hear that. We do not have any man called "the man in the dark"—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Richard Acheampong.

Mr Acheampong: So, Mr Speaker, that Statement should not stay in our records.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Richard Acheampong, when Mr Sukparu was speaking, he was making reference to a Minister. I tried to halt that but you said reference can be made and that it is allowed. So, I do not think this is—Personally, I also read from the papers.

Mr Acheampong: But Mr Speaker, there is a report going round that the journalist himself came out and apologised to the Hon Member in question, so that statement can never be repeated here.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Richard Acheampong—

Mr Acheampong: Because he said the statement was unfounded—
[Interrupted]—My attention was not drawn to that. My attention was not drawn to that—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Sukparu, please.

Mr Nyindam: Mr Speaker, I am surprised the Deputy Majority Whip —

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Nyindam?

Mr Nyindam: Mr Speaker, I do not want you to listen to me in silence, I beg you.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: No, no.

Mr Nyindam: With all respect.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Mr Nyindam, I am not saying that you should withdraw—But please, all of us should be guided. It is very important.

Mr Nyindam: Mr Speaker, I think that – I do not know what my Leader is complaining about.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Hon Nyindam, go on.

Mr Nyindam: Mr Speaker, I will go on. I have never mentioned any Hon Member's name. I have never said here that there is a report from any journalist. I have never said that. Mr Speaker, I said that one of us has been banned by the chiefs from going to his constituency. That is what I said and I have never mentioned anybody's name so, if my Colleague here is trying to tell us the one involved, that is his problem. Mr Speaker, what I said was that the maker of the Statement, which is the Minister, said that is what he has inherited. And at the back of that Statement, I was just telling him that after the December elections, these complaints have come and for that matter, in fighting *galamsey*, it is up to all of us as a nation to do away with politics. I want to urge the Minister because it would be a dangerous fight for him if he journeys on the partisan line. It is not going to help any of us because I have never seen raw gold before. I am not from that area.

3.46 p.m.

I do not even intend to go into this venture, because it kills all of us. So, I want to urge the Minister to see each and every one of us here as team players, so that in dealing with this canker, we can get good water, get back our cocoa, and get back our lands, so that tomorrow we can all celebrate as a nation.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, for your opportunity.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Very well, Hon Suhuyini?

Alhaji Suhuyini Sayibu Alhassan (NDC — Tamale North): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute to the Statement ably made by the Hon Minister for Lands and Natural Resources on the "State of Ghana's Forest Reserves and Water Bodies".

Mr Speaker, indeed this is a very important Statement and it could not have come at a better time. We live in a country where in 2019, we were told that about 60 per cent of our forest cover was going down due to illegal mining. Mr Speaker, at one point in time, Global Forest Watch (GFW) put our rate of deforestation at 1.13 per cent a year. We are also in a country where we are told by managers of our water resources that if care is not taken, very soon we are going to have to import water for potable use. That is dangerous and risky, and that should be worrying to every patriotic Ghanaian.

Mr Speaker, that is why I am excited about the Minister's call on all of us to come together, to see ourselves as partners in this fight and to share ideas where necessary, to support the

Ministry and by extension, Government in waging a war that would ensure that we preserve our own lives and preserve the future of this country. I am excited again, that the Minister is talking about the need to introduce what he termed “Tree for Life Restoration Initiative”.

Mr Speaker, we have many of our lands devastated by this illegal mining and these miners, when they are done with their destruction, just move to the next location. It is important that as we deal with the menace, and also reclaim some of these lands that have been destroyed already. So, I am excited about this initiative and I think that in line with the Government’s agenda, especially if we take lessons from what we used to do termed as “Green Ghana”, where the impact has been less than impressive, we would be able to reclaim these lands that have been destroyed by illegal miners.

Mr Speaker, it is also important that we improve enforcement and that again is the reason I am excited about the Minister's assurance that we would see a retooling and the introduction of many of these regulatory bodies at our district level. We also need public awareness and the Minister's Statement is one of the ways of ensuring that we create awareness for this fight. The stakeholder engagement has to be tight and again, the Minister has highlighted it.

We in this Chamber must see ourselves as partners in this fight and contribute however and whatever we can to ensure that we succeed against these nation wreckers who are putting all of us at risk.

Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Thank you very much.

I will take one from each Side and come to the Leadership. Let me give it to the Hon Member for Odotobri because Odotobri is one of the areas that *galamsey* is very entrenched.

Mr Anthony Mmieh (NPP — Odotobri): Mr Speaker, a while ago, the Hon Member from Nalerigu /Gambaga raised the issue of the quorum of this House. Looking around, it is very evident that we still do not form a quorum. I have taken account myself.

Mr Speaker, I would like to refer the House to Order 64 (4)(c) of our own Standing Orders. It has been a while and the rules say that after 10 minutes, the Speaker would direct the Clerks-at-Table to conduct a head count of the Members present. It further says that: “if there is still no quorum, suspend the sitting of the House for a period of not more than one hour.”

Respectfully, I am drawing your attention to this. I am respectfully pleading that we go strictly according to our own rules. Thank you.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: I thought I was giving you a platform because — In any case, that is true, but I am going by my own time. The 10 minutes is about catching up, so let me give way to Leadership. Yes, Minority Leadership?

Second Deputy Minority Whip (Mr Jerry Ahmed Shaib): Mr Speaker, I thank you very much for this opportunity.

Mr Speaker, I want to once again thank the Hon Minister for making this very important Statement. I want to take a cue from Hon Patrick Boamah on looking at the very important arms of government and how we can collaborate to ensure that *galamsey* becomes a thing of the past. It starts with the Executive and the kind of powers the President has, the kind of powers the Ministers have, the Municipal Metropolitan District Chief Executives (MMDCEs) and even chief executives within Ghana and what they can do within this period.

Mr Speaker, this is not to say that the Legislature, the lawmakers, do not have the capacity to deal with the issue of *galamsey*. We have a few laws with reference to how people should be

punished when they go wrong or are found foul of the law. Then we link it to the Judiciary and how prosecution should be dealt with or how fast we should deal with issues of prosecution.

Mr Speaker, within this Chamber, the issue of *galamsey* is so politicised and I am so worried as to how we can take a leap. One could see the passion on the face of the Minister when he was delivering his Statement, but do we even see that beyond Members? As we are even here, people are finding reasons to say that one was once found doing serious *galamsey* and all manner of blame. If one sees himself as being labelled a *galamseyer*, is the person even going to come on board to support, either to reduce or eliminate *galamsey*?

Mr Speaker, it is devastating and our water bodies are getting contaminated by day. We are facing or being confronted with serious health issues; people are dying. We are giving birth to stillborn children. Our forests are all getting eliminated. In my Constituency, Weija Gbawe, the water is getting damaged and contaminated just because of *galamsey*. If we do not take certain serious steps and move away from politics, we will not be able to buy water to drink. If we do not move away from politics, whether one is in the Executive or Legislature or Judiciary, and do not see the need to stand by the Minister and stand by each

other to help take care of this menace, tomorrow we would wake up and not have a reason to come to this Chamber. *Galamsey* is killing people.

3.56 p.m.

Let us stop being political—*[Interruption]*—Well, if Members want to go into that domain, then they should understand that people started giving caution. Even as I speak, people are still being political about it. If we want to get into this, the Hon Minister is not going to have a solution. Ghana is not going to have a solution. Let us depoliticise our brains for once. Let us understand that we are Ghanaians first. *Galamsey* is killing people, and they do not want to see it—*[Interruption]*—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Order! Hon Members, can we not—He is making sense; please, let us listen to him. No, he is talking to all of us.

Mr Shaib: Mr Speaker, there is the need for us to consider the correctional methods. There is the need to empower—It has actually become a national security issue. People are arrested and there is an intervention. From where ever the intervention comes from, we should learn to understand that we need correctional measures.

We, first of all, need to empower the Ministry. Like the former Regional

Minister said, they go in the morning and afternoons to chase people, but they go back at dawn and the whole place has been excavated. Some excavators were burnt; did it give us the solution? Are we looking at the real ways to find a solution? Fortunately, the political will is here.

Political will does not mean it has to come from President Mahama. Political will has to come from all of us, and it does not matter which party one belongs to. Political will must be you and I. Let us show leadership. I am not going to stand here and say that because President Mahama said that he would give amnesty to those who were once incarcerated by Akufo-Addo, so that is the way to go. No.

The way to go is that whether it is President Kufuor or President Mahama or President Atta Mills, whoever it is, let us come together to fight the menace. It deals with cash. A lot of youth unemployment can be resolved when we have taken care of *galamsey*. A lot of health issues can be resolved when we have taken care of *galamsey*. If one does not want to take care of *galamsey*, it is up to them. Maybe, they have not faced it yet; it is coming closer to them.

Mr Speaker, I thank you for allowing me to make this contribution.
[Hear! Hear!]

Mr Second Deputy Speaker:
Thank you so much.

Yes, Leader of the House?

Majority Leader (Mr Mahama Ayariga): Mr Speaker, we must all thank the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources for coming to the House to make this Statement. I believe it is barely two weeks since he took his seat at that Ministry. I am amazed that he is already thinking very seriously about the *galamsey* menace, and has already put together a set of ideas regarding how that can be done.

Mr Speaker, I want to use this platform to announce that the Minister approached me and has already scheduled a conference for Members of Parliament to meet and discuss *galamsey* or small-scale illegal mining in our various constituencies, so that together, we can fashion out a solution to the problem. This is because it is a problem that confronts all of us, and it is a problem that all of us must be involved in solving.

Unless we work together, we would not be able to resolve this problem. This Minister appreciates that and has organised this conference; so, I urge all Sides of the House to attend the conference. What the Minister wants to do at the conference is to get us all to honestly declare the activities in our various constituencies

and individually, as parliamentarians, provide strategies and proposals on how the problem can be dealt with in our constituencies, so that he can consolidate that into a national strategy. This is because all of us represent constituencies and the constituencies put together, cover the whole of Ghana.

So, we believe that the problem will be effectively solved if every Member in this Chamber comes with a proposal on how to deal with it in our individual constituencies, he then consolidates that, and that becomes the framework guiding his actions and inactions. This is because it is the Members of Parliament and the District Chief Executives (DCEs) working together who can solve this problem.

Mr Speaker, when I was the Minister for Environment, I made it a point to visit *galamsey* sites. I visited sites where I saw huge excavators excavating. I saw hundreds of young girls carrying the material in pans on their heads. Most of them spoke languages that I understood; they were mostly from the north. There were girls who were between 15 to 17 years, and they carried the pans the whole day, and the excavators were there. I had conversations with them. Some of them were in secondary schools and had come there during the vacation to

work and earn something, and go back to their communities, among others.

Our people say that when one tumbles and falls, they should not look at where they fell; they should look at where they hit the stone. That is where the problem is. To solve this problem, we must look at creating alternative livelihoods in the less developed regions of our country. We must invest in irrigation in the north. We must invest in large scale commercial farms in the north, so that when they have alternative livelihoods, they will not be tempted to go and carry pans from morning till evening.

The solution to the problem does not lie only at the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources. The solution to the problem lies with all the other Ministries: Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, and Ministry of Trade, Agribusiness and Industry. These Ministries need to upgrade their games and create alternative livelihoods that will attract these young people, instead of they wanting to engage in the risky business of *galamsey*.

Mr Speaker, I went to some sites, as Minister for Environment, and one would see them dig holes in forest reserves. They used to attract and deceive small boys that they had enhanced their spiritual powers and

encouraged those children to go deep down the holes to dig and come out with material for them to process. These children were basically primary school children, who had abandoned their families and their schooling and were now engaged in this very risky business. They then created shanty communities around them where they used plastic bags, and created homes for themselves. It was deplorable to see things like that. So, it is a real problem.

Mr Speaker, I see the problem as a crisis of law and order. Why do I say this? The Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (Act 703) has very beautiful provisions that if we just followed and implemented it, it will deal significantly with the problem. What are the provisions? One, when people realise that there is gold somewhere, they will go and dig, no matter what we do. It is not just in Ghana; anywhere in the world. When people hear that there is gold anywhere, whether it is in America or Australia or Europe or South Africa—If we hear that there is gold beneath this Chamber, by the time we come back tomorrow morning, we will see some people who will find ways and means of digging underneath this Chamber to extract the gold. That is gold for you, and that is how gold has attracted people over the period in history. So, we cannot stop gold mining. What we should do is to legalise gold mining.

5.06 p.m.

The Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (Act 703) says that when the Minister identifies an area that could become a small-scale gold mining site,—He should so designate it as a small-scale gold mining site. When he designates it as such, it gives the regulatory authorities the powers to now intervene. As the Minister for Environment, Science and Technology, when I went to the illegal gold mining sites, I noticed, I did not see my Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officers. When I asked them why they were not there helping them to do it properly? They said, because it is an illegal activity, they at EPA could not come and supervise but when the Minister designates it as a small-scale mining area, then the EPA would now be able to move in and also provide them with technical support as to how to do it properly.

At the same time, the EPA would monitor the purchase of mercury and the use of mercury at that location. EPA would monitor the purchase and use of explosives and then all the other processing activities.

Mr Speaker, I spoke to a number of illegal miners, and they said, that if they can rent an excavator and bring it this far and keep it here to excavate, what makes you think that they cannot use the services of the EPA? What

makes you think that they cannot use the services of a proper mining engineer? I asked them why they are not using them. He said, they were not using them because what they were doing there was illegal and at any time, the soldiers could move in and take whatever equipment he has brought there. So, he has to dig as fast as possible, scoop as much as he can, process it as quickly as possible and get out of the place. So, this is what is driving them. It is not that they cannot make the investments to legalise it. Some of them even told me that they make payments to their assemblies.

My concern about reclamation—They expect that when the assemblies take their money to come and do reclamation after they have left. In some cases, some even showed me receipts of some payments that they made to assemblies, I am talking about eight years ago.

This is a problem that I think if we sit as Members of Parliament (MP) and we marshal the relevant political will—We have both the legal framework for resolving the problem and the political commitment to dealing with it.

As for those who mine in forest reserves and along water bodies, these are no-go areas. We cannot allow that to happen and the Minister has spoken about the levels of pollution of our

water bodies. So, if our water bodies are polluted to this extent, we as a country must appreciate that mining in water bodies is totally unacceptable, and we must stop it. We have the capacity to stop it. Because every river passes through a political district, and that political district has a district security committee. There is a district police station there with police officers. Some of them fall within a region with the regional police security committees and others even fall in regions that even have military bases.

I think so far across the country, in almost every region, there is some military base or the other. So, I do not understand how the Ghana Armed Forces, the military, would convince me that they do not have the capacity to police our water bodies. The point is that there is an allegation and a claim that even those who are supposed to enforce the law to monitor it are also involved. That is where political commitment and the commitment of all of us come into play.

Mr Speaker, let me thank the maker of the Statement. Let me assure the Minister that this House would attend the conference that he is organising for MPs and that we would honestly assist him identify the operations in our various constituencies and sit with him individually to see how —if there are aspects of operations in our constituencies that

can be legalized, then the small-scale miners assisted, technical support provided, involving the EPA, so that where we can legalise it, formalise it, and supervise it to be conducted in an environmentally friendly way, we do so. Where we need to enforce the law and ensure that the military and the police move against them, we give them the political backing so that they move and stop all those operations from taking place.

Mr Speaker, I really want to thank the Minister and Colleagues for such a non-politicised contribution and commentary to the Statement that has been made. I want to thank the available Leader because he has been very fair and honest and I think that if he continues along those lines, he would easily become the Leader of the Minority Side.*[Laughter]*—

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Leader, this insinuation—Anyway, Hon Minister, would you like to round up?

Mr Buah: Mr Speaker, I just want to take the opportunity to thank Hon Members for their contributions. I ran to this hallowed Chamber, the people's Chamber, where representatives of over 35 million people are and my message was that we are in crisis. Our water bodies are gone, our forests are completely on their way. I even made a point that we have some forest

reserves that are not-go areas because armed gangs have taken over. I gave you numbers about the seriousness of the situation.

Let me state that I almost became emotional when Hon Shaib was speaking. Because really that is the spirit with which I came here. It is time for us as a country to stop the politics when it comes to this fight against *galamsey*. The politics must stop at the weather's ridge because this is now about life and death. This is now about the future of our country. Let me state that when I stated that this is what we have inherited, that is what I meant—I meant that this is what—The title of the Statement was “the state of our forest reserves and our water bodies.” I meant this is the heritage of our country and what we collectively have now. This is the inheritance we have. It was not meant politically at all. The whole essence of that Statement was that we have a collective responsibility now to find the solutions. I am happy that the Leader of the House graciously accepted my proposal for a conference.

Mr Speaker, having been in this Parliament for 17 years, I believe that when it comes to our various districts and constituencies, there is nobody who has the interest and commitment that the Leadership of our constituencies and districts than the MP. That is why I believe that this campaign must start with our

Colleague MPs. The message is that they take leadership and support us. I was very clear in my mind that this fight is not about the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources. I came to say that we need every Ghanaian, including chiefs, including all stakeholders. We must collectively say that enough is enough. These bad guys can no longer put our lives at risk.

I thank you, Mr Speaker. [*Hear! Hear!*]

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Thank you Hon Minister. We wish you well. I believe from the discussion going on, most of the Members would not envy your job. God be with you.

Leader, any indication?

Mr Shaib: We are in your hands.

Mr Second Deputy Speaker: Very well.

Hon Members at this juncture, I would thank all of you for your cooperation. We would bring proceedings to a close and adjourn the House to tomorrow, 10 o'clock in the forenoon. Hon Members, the House stands adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

The House was adjourned at 4.12 p.m. till Thursday, 20th February, 2025, at 10.00 a.m.

Editor's Note

This *Official Report* was corrected by the House on 4th March, 2025, as follows:

- a) Column 42, paragraph 3, line 4,
“to” was inserted after “not”
- b) Column 91, paragraph 7, line 8,
“Assembly” was corrected
“Assemblies”