

# PARLIAMENTARY NEWS



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## Parliamentary Prayer

**A**lmighty God, we humbly beseech Thee to look with favour upon this Parliament of the Republic of Ghana. Grant that it may perform its high duty as in Thy sight. Give Divine guidance to the President of the Republic; endow Members of Parliament and Ministers of State with discernment and vision, integrity and courage that through the labours of government this land and people may be well and truly served, and Thy good purposes for the common human life be realised in our midst.

**O** God, grant us a vision of our country, fair as it might be, a country of righteousness, where none shall wrong his neighbour; a country of plenty, where evil and poverty shall be done away with; a country of brotherhood, where all success shall be founded on service, and honour shall be given to the deserving; a country of peace, where government shall rest on the will of the people and the love for the common good.

**B**less the efforts of those who struggle to make this vision a living reality. Inspire and strengthen our people that they may give time, thought and sacrifice to speed the day of the coming beauty of Ghana and Africa.

AMEN



## I Will Not Contest for President If...

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**sitting On Wed 15**



Speaker of Parliament, Rt Hon. Prof Aaron Mike Oquaye

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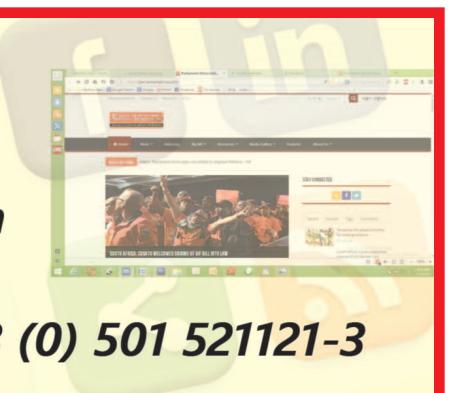
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# Clear your name over extortion claims, Jubilee tell Prez Odinga



Majority leader Aden Duale (centre) flanked by Jubilee party head of secretariat Raphael Tuju

**K**enyan Jubilee leaders have dared Opposition chief Raila Odinga to come clean over corruption claims made by Dominion Farms.

National Assembly Majority Leader Aden Duale and head of Jubilee secretariat Raphael Tuju yesterday said Raila was quick to call for press conferences to accuse the Jubilee administration of corruption but was slow to respond when he faced similar allegations.

ODM leaders, on the other hand, accused the ruling coalition of using American investor Calvin Burgess to taint Raila's reputa-

tion as a way of hampering his presidential bid.

Mr Duale and Mr Tuju now want the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC), Director of Public Prosecutions and Directorate of Criminal Investigations to investigate the matter.

Raila cannot continuously talk about corruption but fail (to address) corruption claims touching him. We want Raila to speak about this scandal. I challenge him to call a press conference and answer to the allegations," Duale said.

The Garissa Township MP added that the National Assembly would compel Mr Burgess to

appear before its Lands committee.

"The committee has written to him and we want him to bring documents of what transpired between him and Raila," he said.

Burgess has accused Raila and politicians associated with him of frustrating his business through extortion, violence and eviction threats.

He alleges that his troubles began when he refused to fund Raila and his ODM party.

... Raila began demanding for me to support him politically with large sums of money. I explained that the US law called "The Foreign Corrupt Practices Act" did not allow me to do this and would result in the end of the farm, my imprisonment and a \$2 million (Sh207 million) fine in the US," he said in a statement last week.

Tuju challenged Raila to respond to allegations that Sh105 million allegedly paid to an Indian company to conduct a feasibility study ended up in the pockets of ODM leaders.

"This week, the Siaya county government removed reference to this company from its website. Such removals do not alter the facts. Similar corrupt deals are written all over ODM-controlled counties, including colos-

sal amounts of money spent on trips abroad ostensibly to woo foreign investors," Tuju claimed. He said the claims were grave and should be dealt with because they could lead to "enclaves where some people are a government unto themselves extorting money from investors and employing thuggery against anyone who disagrees with them".

The former minister claimed there was an extortion ring in Nyanza that had continued to feed into the region that lags behind in development because it has been profiled as hostile to investors.

"The leaders from this region and the general public should know one economic truth – capital is shy. When investors are convinced that a region is hostile and full of extortionists it will impact negatively on Kisumu and the greater Luo Nyanza," he added.

The Jubilee leaders also want the investor to be accorded the opportunity, protection and immunity to make statements with EACC, DCI and Parliament.

But ODM's top leaders claimed yesterday that Burgess, the owner of Siaya-based Dominion Farms, had fallen prey to Jubilee's campaign propaganda, adding that they had evidence Jubilee Party operatives had been

meeting the investor to plot against Raila.

"His script does not add up. He is forcing a poorly written story to convince the world that Raila is corrupt. We challenge him to table evidence to back his wild allegations," said ODM Director of Political Affairs Opiyo Wandayi, who is also the MP for Ugunja.

Burgess, who has been farming rice and maize in the expansive Yala Swamp since 2003 when he signed a 25-year lease with the now defunct Siaya and Bondo county councils, accused the Opposition chief and his political associates of trying to extort campaign money from him.

He claimed they frustrated his business following his reluctance to yield to their demands – by harassing his workers and destroying his property.

Siaya leaders who included Gem MP Jakoyo Midiwo, his Bondo counterpart Gideon Ochanda and Kisumu Deputy Governor Ruth Odinga, who are also mentioned by the investor in his 22-page statement, have rubbed the claims.

Yesterday, ODM chairman John Mbadi claimed Burgess was being used by Jubilee to taint the party's reputation for political reasons.

*Source: standardmedia.co.ke*

## "No amount of abuse" will force me out of Parliament – Australian Liberal defector Bernardi

**L**iberal defector Cory Bernardi has declared "no amount of abuse" will remove him from parliament but says he understands why people feel "very uncomfortable" about his decision to quit his former party.

In an interview on Sky News's Sunday Agenda program, the newly independent senator also insisted he was on "cordial terms" with Tony Abbott at the same time he accused some of his more "trusted" colleagues of leaking conversations about his concerns over the Liberal Party and "paths forward" to the media.

"It's clear some didn't honour those conversations and I learn a lesson from that," Senator Bernardi said.

The Australian revealed in December Liberal concerns the outspoken senator was set to formally split from the party to spearhead a new conservative

force.

The South Australian defended his commitment to his former party amid calls from ex-colleagues for him to resign from parliament and recontest as an independent, which would give the Liberals back his Senate seat, which comes with a six-year term.

Senator Bernardi said he invested "a lot of money" into the federal election campaign in his home state and even contributed to the purchase of a bus for former Liberal MP Jamie Briggs in the seat of Mayo – a seat Mr Briggs subsequently lost to the Nick Xenophon Team's Rebekha Sharkie.

"I'm staying in parliament, no amount of abuse is going to change that," Senator Bernardi said.

"My motives for this and my conscience in this is clear but yet I do understand why people

feel very uncomfortable about this and feel they want to give me abuse or get stuck into me. "They're emotional decisions and I hope when that emotion subsides they'll recognise that this could be a positive step for many conservative voters."

Senator Bernardi said some of his "smarter" Coalition colleagues had offered to work constructively with him following his defection this week but hit out at Defence Industry Minister Christopher Pyne, also a South Australian, who was among those calling for his resignation from parliament.

"He's brutal but at least he's put his name to it this time, normally he's just sniping from behind the scenes in the paper with anonymous smears," Senator Bernardi said.

"I'm not interested in the insults, they can do what they want, that's what turns people off politics."

Senator Bernardi also claimed he was "not a person who demands a lot of attention" as he confirmed the last conversation he had with Malcolm Turnbull before last Tuesday – when he announced his defection – was

in September 2016.

"I can only presume that people thought Cory is of an independent mind and he's going to do what he's going to do," he said.

*Source: The Weekend Australian*



Former Liberal Senator Cory Bernardi says he understands why some people would be upset about his defection



## Editorial

### We Support Full-Scale Inquiry Into Bribery Allegation

**I**t is with a heavy heart that we have to write about an alleged bribery scandal against the Appointment Committee of Parliament which is one of the foremost Committee's of Parliament.

What is even more worrying to us is the news that the allegations and counter allegations of bribery against the Chairman of the Committee and other Members on the Leadership structure of the House is coming from among Members of Parliament.

We are so worried about the implications this development could have on the image of Parliament as a whole. This may go a long way to damage the trust of the people for Members of Parliament to whom have been entrusted the national purse.

Given the fact that Parliament is the fulcrum around which our democratic experiment revolves, it would be in the best interest of the whole country to establish the veracity of the allegations as soon as possible.

We therefore support calls by the Chairman of the Committee, the Ranking Member and other stakeholders in the matter for a full scale enquiry into the matter.

This will ensure that the image of the Parliament is not dented beyond the negative publicity it has already suffered.

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Speaker of Parliament, Rt Hon. Prof Aaron Mike Oquaye

## Speaker Bemoans Ghana's Hybrid System Of Governance

By Christian Kpesese

**T**he Speaker of Parliament Rt Hon Prof Aaron Michael Oquaye has bemoaned Ghana's hybrid democratic system where Members of Parliament become members of the Executive which he said does not encourage good and qualitative governance.

Given the fact that the constitution has given the opportunity to the president to appoint not less than 50 percent of his Ministers from among Members of parliament, there is always some conflict of interest issue when it came to the consideration of government policies and programs in the House.

He has therefore advocated for an amendment to the 1992 constitution to check the anomaly.

Prof Aaron Michael Oquaye made the observation when he held an interactive session with the media with a call on members of the fourth estate of the realm to exercise its watchdog role effectively to guard the public purse.

The novelty christened ``The Speaker's Forum'' is expected to further open the frontiers of Ghana's parliament to the public and eventually help entrench Ghana's parliamentary democracy as a shining example on the African continent and beyond.

He charged the media to hold Members of Parliament (MP) ac-

countable to their constituents who elected them to serve their interest and that of the country describing parliament as ``a house of accountability''.

The forum afforded members of the inky fraternity the opportunity to enquire about the Speaker's vision for the 7th Parliament of the fourth Republic of Ghana.

Prof Oquaye who spelt out his vision said he will work to uphold the independence of the parliament in the exercise of its oversight responsibility over the executive arm of government and assured that he will lead a responsive parliament that will be proactive to the Ghanaian public through regular Regional and District Town Hall meetings to enable citizens better appreciate the legislature.

In a response to a question on the lack of resource allocation for MPs to perform their representative roles, the Speaker strongly advocated for a duty vehicle for all law-makers to enable them perform such function more effectively through constant engagements with their constituents.

The Rt Hon Speaker also assured that he will champion the introduction of private members Bill to help address the many challenges facing citizens across the country.

The former lawmaker who represented the People of Dome/Kwabenya disclosed that Parliament would not wait on Ministers of state before it initiates measures to address social ills such as illegal mining (galamsey), gender

and children issues among others.

The Speaker also indicated his desire for Ghana's parliament to have a well-resourced library comparable to international standards to aid effective research by legislators.

He called for an investment into the security of MPs during their tenure of office to ensure their safety at all times.

First Deputy Speaker and MP for Bekwai, Joseph Osei Owusu called for regular engagement with constituents to enable them better appreciate the works of the MP which are not primarily development agents.

The second Deputy Speaker and MP for Nadowli/Kaleo, Alban Kingsford Sumana Bagbin emphasized the need of the media to help educate the citizenry to understand the work of Parliament and Ghana's multi-party system.

He noted that partisanship in the express of views is the prize Ghanaians have to pay for opting to practice multiparty democracy.

Deputy Majority Leader, Sarah Adwoa Safo pledged her outfit's willingness to support the Speaker to implement his brilliant ideas for the good of all.

Minority Leader Haruna Iddrisu on his part assured of his side's commitment to support parliament in the fight against corruption, ensure value for money evaluation and help to have a decentralized Ghana.

## General News

# Agenda 2020: Namoale for President

By Clement Akoloh

**H**aving lost his Parliamentary seat in a painful defeat during the just gone by general elections in 2016, one would have thought that the 55 year old politician would have called it quits but rather the Former Dade Kotopon MP, Nii Amasah Namoale has served notice to bounce back unto the political scene with a higher ambition of vying for the presidential slot of his party for the next general elections in the year 2020.

He is ready to contest the primaries of his party once the nominations are opened and he is leaving no stone unturned in achieving his set target of the presidency.

He made his intentions known to Clement Akoloh of the Parliamentary Newspaper in an exclusive interview in Parliament. He told this reporter that he was ready to contest anyone who decides to contest that position including the immediate past President of the Republic of Ghana, John Dramani Mahama, under whom he served as a Minister.

According to Nii Amasah

Namoale, the only condition that would prevent him from contesting for the flagbearership position of his party is when a personality such as the Former Rector of the University of Professional Studies, Professor Joshua Alabi decides to contest for the same position.

The former Member of Parliament for the Dade Kotopon constituency in the Greater Region, believes that he holds the keys to unlock the prosperity of all Ghanaians and the total development of the country. He is therefore preparing to make his intentions known to the hierarchy of the party at the various levels to give him a chance to make a difference in the life of Ghanaians and the fortunes of the country.

The National Democratic Congress MP who lost his seat to the New Patriotic Party candidate in the 2016 elections is optimistic about his chances to annex the Presidential seat in the next general elections should the National Democratic Congress give him the opportunity to stand as the party's flagbearer in that election.

Mr. Namoale is not the least perturbed by his recent defeat at all and he would not allow the ambition he has been nursing for some time now to be destructed by an election which he believes

he won in the first place but he was cheated.

"It is not a big deal to lose an election. Look, if I had protested for a recount I would have won but I didn't want to because I failed to prevent it." He indicated.

He wants to run an open door policy and to place the welfare of the ordinary people at the center of his policy development despite the setback he has suffered.

"I know that there are ups and downs in every vocation that one chooses. This is my down but I know I will rise again to be the President of the Republic and I will bring a paradigm shift for this country to move forward. The country must change direction." He observed.

Some of the policies he wants to pursue include free education from primary to the university level and set up a fund to give every graduate from the university an amount ranging between 2,000 to 10,000 Dollars to start up a project.

He observed that even though the immediate past President, John Dramani Mahama did a great job for the country during his tenure in office as president, there are a few areas which he thinks he could have done better and he thinks that he stands a

better chance to correct those wrongs.

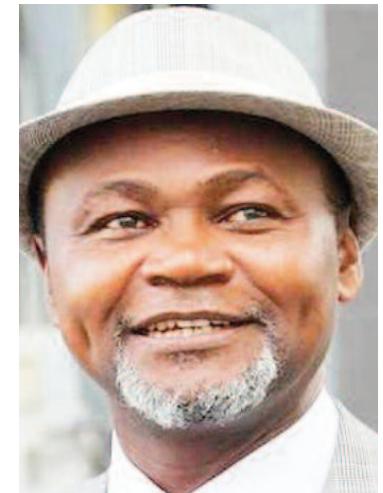
He for instance complained about to accessibility to the President by party Members and the grass root members who could have advised him on certain things that were going on during his tenure in office that were inimical to his administration.

He indicated the entourage of the President at the Presidency and his home created a wall that was almost impervious to any other personalities from outside who wanted to have access to him to give him feedback.

The Former Minister for Fisheries and Aqua Culture also decried the posture of the Former First Lady, Laudina Mahama, in galvanizing the women of the country behind his husband.

He was of the view that although she did her best with her humanitarian foundation known as the Laudina Foundation that assisted some vulnerable families in the country, it was not enough to secure the loyalty of the people to the president and the course of his government.

According to him, the Former First Lady could have been more effective in her role to rally the women of behind the president, if she had channeled her effort



Former Dade Kotopon MP, Nii Amasah Namoale

and her humanitarian work into training and empowering them to be self-sufficient; by helping them to set up micro industries in their various localities in every part of the country. In that way, she would have earned the loyalty of the women for a particular course that is of a direct benefit to them and the livelihood of their families instead of the handouts that are given to them through the foundation.

He wants to provide a free education throughout the tertiary level and set up a fund to be given to all students at the completion of their education to set up their businesses.

## Parliament completes vetting 36 sector ministers



Chairman of the Appointment Committee of Parliament, Hon Joseph Osei Owusu

By Priscilla Anum-Noi

**T**he Appointment Committee of Parliament has completed the vetting of 36 sector ministers nomi-

nated by President Nana Akuffo Addo.

The vetting started with the former Finance Minister and Senior Minister Designate, Hon Yaw Osafu Marfo and ended with the Spokesperson and Minister Designate for Information, Mustapha Hamid; Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture, Hon Elizabeth Afoley Quaye; and Minister for Foreign

Hamid.

All the 36 sector ministers have been approved and sworn in by President Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo Addo

### Here are the list of appointed sector ministers approved and sworn in are as follows:

Senior Minister, Hon Yaw Osafu Marfo ; Minister for National Security, Hon Albert Kan-Dapaah; Minister of Interior, Hon Ambrose Derry; Minister for Railway Development, Hon Joe Ghartey; Minister for Monitoring and Evaluation, Hon Anthony Akoto Osei; Minister of Inner Cities and Zongo Development, Hon Abubakar Sadique Boniface; Minister for Business Development, Hon Ibrahim Mohammed Awal; Minister for Information, Hon Mustapha Hamid; Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture, Hon Elizabeth Afoley Quaye; and Minister for Foreign

Affairs and Regional Integration, Hon Shirley Ayorkor Botchway

The others are: Minister for Local Government and Rural Development, Hon Hajia Alima Mahama; Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Hon Gloria Akuffo; Minister of Defence, Hon Dominic Nitiwul; Minister of Trade, Hon Alan Kwadwo Kyerematen; Minister of Finance, Hon Ken Ofori Attah; Minister of Education, Hon Dr Matthew Opoku Prempeh; Minister of Water Resources, Works and Housing, Hon Samuel Atta Akyea; Minister for Sanitation and Water Resources, Hon Joseph Kofi Adda; Minister for Regional Reorganization and Development, Hon Dan Kweku Botwe; and Minister of Lands and Natural Resources, Hon John Peter Amewu.

The rest are as follows: Minister of Aviation, Hon Cecilia Dapaah; Minister of Chieftaincy and Reli-

gious Affairs, Hon Kofi Dzamesi; Minister for Special Development Initiative, Hon Mavis Hawa Koomson; Minister of Transport, Hon Kweku Ofori Asiamah; Minister for Employment and Social Welfare, Hon Ignatius Bafour Awuah; Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Hon Osei Kyei Mensah Bonsu; Minister of Communication, Hon Ursula Owusu-Ekuful; and Minister for Planning, Hon Prof Gyan Baffour;

The finale list includes: the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts, Hon Catherine Ablema Afeku; Minister of Sports, Hon Isaac Asiamah; Minister of Energy, Hon Boakye Agyarko; Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection, Hon Otiko Djaba; Minister for Food and Agriculture, Hon Owusu Afriyie Akoto; Minister of Health, Hon Kwaku Agyeman Manu; Minister for Roads and Highways Hon Kwesi Amoako Attah

## General News

# Ayariga's Bribery Allegation: Special C'ttee to begin sitting On Wed 15

**By : Gily Sparks**

The Public will have the opportunity to ascertain the veracity of the issue concerning the alleged bribery scandal that has rocked the Appointment Committee of Parliament in the past few weeks as the investigative committee starts sitting in public in an attempt by Parliament to uncover the truth as has been alleged.

The Special Committee set up by Parliament to investigate allegations against the Chairman and some Members of the Appointments Committee has scheduled Wednesday February 15, 2017, to commence its public hearing.

The event which will take

place at the Speaker's Conference Room at 11:00am each day is expected to last for three days.

Majority Leader, Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu who announced this on Friday, February 11 said the sitting has become necessary following the reconstitution of the Committee tasked to investigate the matter and the absence of one of the witnesses, Mahama Ayariga.

According to the Majority Leader, the reconstitution of the committee was necessitated due to the fact that the Ghanaian MPs attending the ECOWAS Parliament will spend two weeks in Abuja and also taking cognizance of the fact that the Committee has within thirty (30) days to submit its report.

Per the new changes, Ama

Pomaa Boateng, MP for Juaben who is currently in Abuja, Nigeria attending the ECOWAS Parliament, has been replaced by Abena Doruwaa Mensah, MP for Assin North.

Among the witnesses to appear before the Committee are Mahama Ayariga, a member of the Appointments Committee, Joseph Osei Owusu, 1st deputy Speaker and Chairman of the Appointments Committee, Sampson Ahi, member of the Appointments and Samuel Okudjeto Ablakwa, also a member of the Appointments Committee.

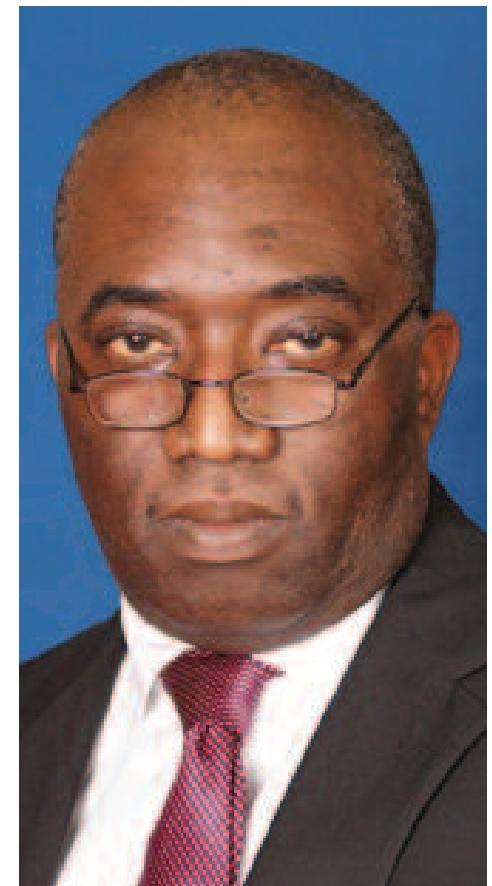
The rest are Alhassan Suhuyini, member of the Appointments Committee, Alhaji Mohammed Mubarak-Muntaka, deputy Ranking member of the Appointments Committee and Eric Opoku, a member of the Appointments Commit-

tee as well as Mr. Boakye Kyeremateg Agyarko, Minister for Energy.

Mr. Mahama Ayariga, a member of the Appointments Committee, accused Mr. Agyarko of attempting to bribe Minority MPs, ostensibly to have his nomination approved.

According to allegations, Minority MPs had been offered GHc 3,000 each by Mr. Agyarko, to facilitate his approval, a claim Mr. Ayariga further stressed on Accra-based Radio Gold.

But Mr. Osei Owusu, Chairman of the Appointments Committee, said a confession had been made to the effect that the allegation was made by some Minority members to settle scores, following prior claims by the Majority side that former President John Mahama was corrupt.



Chairman of the Committee headed Hon. Joe Ghartey and MP for Esikadu Ketan

## The Gender Agenda of the Seventh Parliament On Course

**By Clement Akoloh**

The Seventh Parliament of the Fourth Republic is poised to make gender issues a priority in the weeks and months it pursues its legislative duties in the service of the nation within the four years of its mandate.

In order to make this a reality, the Speaker of Parliament, Rt. Hon. Prof. Mike Oquaye has promised to begin a process that will eventually make public the records of Members of Parliament including their voting records on issues that come on the floor of the House. In that case, those who may vote against gender and women right issues would be fished out by the public so that they may face the consequences.

According to the Speaker, in this way Parliament would once again be playing a center role in expanding the frontiers of democratic governance in the country in enhancement of women's rights. Adding that it will also help to properly integrate women into the governance of the nation

for a better democratic governance.

"Politicians must be checked and there many ways in checking them. So if a bill is brought and you don't support it, it will be known."

"If you look at countries which have done well in certain specific things the challenge is thrown into the public realm and very soon people will know the good from the bad. Remember me talking about the Parliamentary record of MPs being shown."

So if you are the man who has been voting against issues concerning women, you will come and meet us at the next election." He indicated.

Rt. Hon. Speaker Professor Mike Oquaye told the Parliamentary Newspaper in an exclusive interview that he was embarrassed by the number of women compared to men in the country's Parliament. Ghana's Parliament currently has only 35 women MPs out of the 275 Members of Parliament. Meanwhile other countries that whose democratic credentials do not much up to Ghana are doing far better.

"I have said so and I have illustrated it and

I kept on saying that those countries which were ahead of us, they are not the countries which Ghana should be emulating, and indeed they should be learning from us. We were the first African country south of the Sahara to gain independence."

"I am convinced that there are a lot of lapses in our system and if we don't take care, Ghana would be rejoicing in past glory and before we say jack we are behind most of Africa. This sad position of Ghana in the rankings can only be reversed by an Affirmative Action Law. That Affirmative Action Law will not take anything away from public purse. It will enhance the Rights of women and improve qualitative governance." He observed.

The Speaker has already hinted about his resolve to take the lead in moving a Private Member's Bill for the first time in Ghana's Parliament by introducing a bill to be passed into an Affirmative Action Law that will go to enhance the rights of women and children among others.

"For example, matters regarding the rights of women. You may want to say that women should have six months maternity leave and this doesn't only affect public

but private workers as well.

Because you are going to justify it by way of the effect on children, the effect on mothers and so on and so forth."

According to him, it is a matter of some people taking the initiative and if there is such a bill and people are arguing and they have records of MPs who will support and those who won't support it, "very soon there would be elections and they would go and meet the women out there and that is how you develop democracy."

Speaker Mike Oquaye further expressed the view that it did not make sense for the majority in society to be marginalized by the minority and expect to experience progress.

"I like to say that if you don't respect women's right or promote it, it is like a man who is running a race and has decided to run his race on only one leg when he has two legs."

That man would not win any race. The society is 51% women 49% men and you say you want to keep the women down. That Ghana society won't go anywhere."

## General News

# The Facts About Ghana's Embarrassment At The ECOWAS Parliament



Hon Osei Kyei Mensah-Bonsu, Majority Leader

By Kwaku Sakyi-Danso and George Wilson Kingson

**M**ajority Leader Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu's decision, to reconstitute delegates on the majority side of Ghana's Legislature, to the ECOWAS Parliament without consulting his colleagues is what has resulted in the international embarrassment that met the Ghanaian delegation last Friday January 10, 2017 in Abuja, Nigeria during the 2017 Extra Ordinary Session of ECOWAS Parliament.

The alleged confusion occurred, when it was realized that Ghana had sent nine representatives instead of the eight that it was entitled to.

It was widely reported on Friday that an unprecedented embarrassment and confusion rocked Ghana's delegation to the ECOWAS Parliament following the alleged refusal of Mr. Frederick Opare Ansah MP for Suhum, to step down as a Member of the regional legislature.

He has been a member of the ECOWAS Parliament since the life of the Sixth Parliament and according to the ECOWAS Protocol a member is entitled to a four year tenure unless he or she loses his seat in his home country or becomes a member of the Country's Executive.

It has become necessary for Ghana to reconstitute

its delegation following the outcome of the 2016 general elections. Also, Dan Botwe and Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey have become Ministers of State and therefore had to resign their positions in the Community Parliament.

However, in reconstituting the delegation the Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu led majority leadership failed to take into consideration the fact that Mr. Opare Ansah is still eligible to continue his membership-haven won his seat again during the 2016 elections. Instead, he formed a new set of delegation to the Community Parliament led by Kwasi Ameyaw-Cheremeh.

The delegation also include the MP for Akwapim South, O.B. Amoah, MP for Juaben, Ama Pomaah Boateng Andoh, MP for Effutu, Alexander Afenyo-Markin and MP for Akrofoum, Kwabena Appiah-Pinkrah representing the majority side, while MP for Anlo, Clement Kofi Humado, MP for Bawku Central, Mahama Ayariga and MP for Bodi, Sampson Ahi form the minority side.

Upon reaching Abuja, the eight member Ghanaian delegation met Frederick Opare Ansah, a sitting member who has neither resigned nor taken any appointment in the Executive and that was when the confusion started. Both Opare Ansah and Afenyo-Markin insisted they had the mandate to represent Ghana.

The Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, His Excellency Honorable Moustapha Cisse, at the commencement of the Meeting on Friday refused to swear in the Ghanaian delegation insisting that they must properly sought themselves out as to who among them has the right to represent the country.

Sources within the corridors of the ECOWAS Parliament reveal to these reporters that, Alexander Afenyo-Markin finally pulled out of the delegation, but authorities in Abuja insisted on further clarifications from Accra before swearing in the Ghanaian delegation.

According to the Hansard of Ghana's Parliament for January 25, 2017, Mr. Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu, in presenting the report of the Selection Committee on the composition of members to the ECOWAS Parliament explained that the "the tenure of a Member in the Community Parliament is four (4) years starting from the day the Member is sworn-in.

In the period of transition, representatives at the Community Parliament who are not re-elected into their respective country's Parliament still remain in office until new representatives are elected by the respective country Parliament to take up their positions".

Contributing to motion on the floor of the House, the MP for New Juabeng, Dr. Mark Assibey - Yeboah drew the attention of the leadership of the majority side to a possible brawl since the ECOWAS Parliament had already has one old member whose

tenure is still valid per the regulations of the regional legislature.

Dr Assibey-Yeboah argued that "in one breath, we are saying that because the Sixth Parliament has elapsed, we have to re-compose an entirely new membership to the ECOWAS Parliament. However, if you are a Member of the ECOWAS Parliament and you have been sworn-in and you have not resigned, then our Parliament here cannot forcefully take you out of that Parliament".

He said "Mr. Speaker, I was making the point that in the year 2001, we would recall that the late Hawa Yakubu, who was a Member of the ECOWAS Parliament who was nominated and approved as a Minister of State for Tourism.

The ECOWAS Protocol also state that you cannot be part of the Executive in your Country and also belong to the ECOWAS Parliament. At the same time, she opted to stay in ECOWAS and so gave up her position as Minister for Tourism," he said.

He noted that, "I have seen the old ECOWAS membership had Hon Dan Botwe, Hon. Shirley Ayorkor Botchway and Hon Frederick Opare-Ansah.

As we know two of them have been nominated as Ministers. If they do not resign, our Parliament cannot forcefully take them out of the ECOWAS Parliament, that is my interpretation of paragraphs 1.0 and 3.0 which I read.

"So, I am only asking Leadership if the necessary consultations have been made, so that we do not have a situation where our eight new Members go to the ECOWAS Parliament and the old ones insist on staying there.

It's going to be embarrassing for our Country. I am only drawing the attention of leadership to this situation which has happened in the past," he stated.

The New Patriotic Party (NPP) MP for New Juaben South made a case for Ghana to consider putting its best and experienced foot forward when it comes to sending members to represent the country in the international circles.

"We complain here in Ghana that our Parliament suffers from high attrition. I see here eight new Honorable Members nominated to the ECOWAS Parliament. In the last ECOWAS Parliament, we had a Member, who had served for a longer period, for which reason, he was elevated to the position of a Deputy Speaker in the ECOWAS Parliament. Today, we are sending Hon Members and there is no experience being carried over from the old membership of the ECOWAS Parliament," he lamented.

Majority leader, Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu declined to speak to the issue on Friday when he was reached for an interview after adjournment of the House. "Thank you," he said.

# Chocolate Day SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT



## Chocolate-Valentine Adventure in Ghana: free chocolate for visitors at Kotoka Airport

By Gily Sparks

The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts and the Ghana Tourism Authority, in collaboration with some chocolate producing companies in the country, will today distribute free chocolates to inbound visitors to Ghana at the arrival hall of the Kotoka International Airport.

The move forms part of efforts to encourage the consumption of Made in Ghana chocolates and cocoa based products and to give a healthy orientation to the celebration of Valentine's Day in Ghana.

This year's National Chocolate Day celebrations across the country is themed "Love Chocolate, Love Adventure". The day is being celebrated under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Creative Arts and it is geared towards the promotion of Agro-tourism.

The day which is celebrated alongside Valentine Day is to promote the local consumption of chocolate and other cocoa based products. Included in this year's program line-up is a social media trivia campaign on the theme which will be run to award winners with prizes such as overnight adventure trips across the country. In addition, inbound passengers to Ghana on the day will receive Golden Tree Chocolates.

As part of this year's celebrations, the Ghana Tourism Authority intends to hold a groundbreaking event to kick-start a process to re-organize the Tetteh Quarshie cocoa farm, which is the first cocoa farm at Akwapim-Mampong, into a major Agro-tourist site.

This year's activities also include a donation of chocolate and cocoa based products to the Christ Faith Foster Home at Frafraha in the Adentan Municipal Assembly by officials

from Ghana Tourism Authority and Cocoa Processing Company (CPC) led by the sector Minister, Hon. Catherine Afeku.

There will also be the distribution of chocolates to inbound visitors to Ghana at the arrival hall of the Kotoka International Airport from morning to evening as a way of encouraging the consumption of Ghanaian chocolates and cocoa based products.

The day is being celebrated in partnership with Cocoa Processing Company, Appointed Time Screen Printing, Cocobod and Niche Cocoa.

National Chocolate Day was instituted by the GTA, in collaboration with Cocoa Processing Company, Ghana Cocoa Board and Ghana Chef Association Ten years ago, to create awareness on the need for Ghanaians to patronize cocoa products and to help generate

more revenue for national development.

The day was also set aside to re-direct the attention of the youth from indulging in promiscuous living during Valentine's Day, which in the past resulted in shortage of condoms in some drug stores.

Even though chocolate was regularly eaten for pleasure, there were potentially many health benefits like being the best cancer-fighting foods alongside foods like red wine, blueberries, garlic and tea.

Research in further benefits of chocolate indicated the anticipation that additional health benefits would be unearthed to make Ghana's chocolate in particular the preferred healthy expression of love, adding that two ways that chocolate worked as a cancer fighter were by inhibiting cell division and reducing inflammation.

## Zongo Dev't Fund not 'Father Christmas' – Boniface

By Priscilla Anum-Noi

The Minister for Inner Cities and Zongo Development, Mr. Abubakar Siddique Boniface has announced that the Zongo Development Fund would be used to support potential business men and women in Zongo Communities around the country.

According to him the Fund would not be a "Father Christmas" fund for the targeted beneficiaries and would not be abused on social and traditional engagements.

Former Minister for Water, Works and Housing, Hon Abubakar Siddique Boniface who said this when he appeared before the Appointment Committee on Wednesday, February 8 lamented that most people in such communities are good in trading but lack funding and support hence the Fund.

"They are a lot of people who are engaged in several

businesses but they don't have capital. These people do not need so much capital but just a little capital to change their economic status ... that is why, the President has targeted creating a Zongo Development Fund to support such people," he said.

Aside the fund, Hon Abubakar Siddique Boniface, who is also the MP for Madina said the Fund would assist businessmen with very flexible loan facilities with low interest in order to help them grow.

"If you go to the bank to acquire a loan, the cost of capital would be about thirty five percent but if I see you as a potential business person, I can decide to isolate you to a cost of twenty percent or even 15 percent. Which means that you will be ahead of your colleagues who will be going for the same loan at thirty five percent cost of capital" he said.

The Nominee further added that, "If you want to export, we will know your business partners then we pay into your correspondence bank and pay them direct so that you will not use the money for clothes and shoes and then come back looking for money for business".

He noted that indications from government is that, it will be allocating \$50 million dollars to the fund, which will be an item in the 2017 budget.

In a response to a question by Hon Titus Glover, MP East, the nominee said poverty is the major challenge in the Zongo Communities hence the need for his appointment.

Touching on the creation of slums Mr. Boniface said plans would be actualized to ensure that people stay in their communities to reduce slums in the country.

"Ladies who come here as potters, some are coming here because of school fees, some sewing machine which are not huge monies ... even teachers who will teach in the Zongo, we will attempt to top up for them to serve as incentives. If I give you maybe a fifty Ghana Cedis onto your salary is enough for you to stay" he added.

### About Boniface Siddique Boniface

Abubakar Siddique, 56, holds an MA in Economics from the University of Essex, MBA in Financial Management from the University Of Exeter, MA in

Conflict, Peace and Security from the Kofi Annan International Peace Keeping Center and a BA in Social Sciences from the KNUST.

He worked in the Ministry of Finance for 14 years as an Economic Officer, eventually becoming a Senior Finance Officer. In politics, he has been a two-time MP for Salaga from 2001-2009.

He also served as Minister for Water Resources, Works and Housing, Minister for Manpower, Youth and Employment and Northern Regional Minister.

He is married with three children.



## Chocolate Day Special Supplement

# Possible health benefits of chocolate



Andrew Baker

**C**hocolate is the ultimate comfort food, a sure-fire stand-by in times of stress, a reliable source of consolation when life has let us down, and a mood-enhancer and romance-inducer in more positive circumstances. But is it at all healthy?

If you scoff lots of it, obviously not. But there are a host of medically proven ways in which chocolate — good chocolate, which is to say dark chocolate, with a cocoa percentage of around seventy per cent or more — really is good for us.

Research is continuing all the time, and experts have already found that chocolate is good for the heart, circulation and brain, and it has been suggested that it may be beneficial in such major health challenges as autism, obesity and diabetes.

And in fact, the very latest research suggests that eating chocolate could help keep your brain function whirring into old age.

Here are ten scientifically established health benefits of good chocolate.



### 1 . It's good for the heart and circulation

A recent study found that dark chocolate helps restore flexibility to arteries while also preventing white blood cells from sticking to the walls of blood vessels - both common causes of artery clogging.

### 2 . It reduces risk of stroke

Researchers in Finland have found that chocolate consumption lowers the risk of suffering a stroke - by a staggering 17 per cent average in the group of men they tested.

### 3 . It's mineral rich

Dark chocolate is packed with beneficial minerals such as potassium, zinc and selenium, and a 100g bar of dark (70 per cent or more) choc provides 67 per cent of the RDA of iron.

### 4 . It reduces cholesterol

Consumption of cocoa has been shown to reduce levels of "bad" cholesterol (LDL) and raise levels of "good" cholesterol, potentially lowering the risk of cardiovascular disease.

### 5 . It's good for your skin

The flavonols in dark chocolate can protect the skin against sun damage (though you'd probably better still slap on some sun cream).

### 6 . It can help you lose weight

Chocolate can help you lose weight. Really. Neuroscientist Will Clower says a small square of good choc melted on the tongue 20 minutes before a meal triggers the hormones in the brain that say "I'm full", cutting the amount of food you subsequently consume.

Finishing a meal with the same small trigger could reduce subsequent snacking.

### 7 . It's good for mothers and babies

A Finnish study found that chocolate reduced stress in expectant mothers, and that the babies of such mothers smiled more often than the offspring of non-chocolate-eating parents.

### 8 . It may prevent diabetes

It sounds mad, but cocoa has been shown to improve insulin sensitivity. So dark chocolate - in moderation - might delay or prevent the onset of diabetes.

### 9 . Chocolate is good for the brain

Flavanols are thought to reduce memory loss in older people, and the anti-inflammatory qualities of dark chocolate have been found beneficial in treating brain injuries such as concussion.

### 10 . Chocolate makes you feel better

Chocolate contains phenylethylamine (PEA), which is the same chemical that your brain creates when you feel like you're falling in love. PEA encourages your brain to release feel-good endorphins.

As a chocolate lover I would also add that certain kinds of chocolate can be good for the soul: this is chocolate for which the raw materials have been grown with care by farmers who are properly rewarded for their work; then processed by people who take time and care in their work, and finished by chocolatiers who love what they do. It will not be mass-produced, and it may not be cheap. But it will be good for you, heart and soul.



## Chocolate Day Special Supplement

# In whose interest is the National Chocolate Day Celebrations in Ghana

**Here is a thought-provoking letter to the President by Naa Akuye**



Dear Nana Akuffo Addo,

I would like to wish you a happy Chocolate day. As you know, this is going to be the first Chocolate day that you celebrate as the elected President of Ghana. You already know how precious our Kingsbite chocolate is to us. We are asking for chocolate this year because we cannot afford it on an average day. Since Chocolate day comes with no specific increase in government and private sector salaries, we are banking our hopes on you. Give us chocolate at a price we can afford.

Ghana's cocoa has gone all around the world. We are praised for the richness of the cocoa we grow on our soil. Our cocoa travels to foreign companies abroad to be made into chocolate. Once sweetened and pampered out of its initial bitterness, it is subsequently perfumed with international standards and it makes its way back into our Ghanaian shops to be resold again to us, at a price we cannot afford regularly. The irony of this situation is that cocoa products tend to be more expensive to the average Ghanaian in his own country than they are to the average Joe in North America or Europe.

So who benefits the most when we celebrate Chocolate day? It is surely not the

farmer who sold a bag of cocoa beans for a few hundred cedis. Or could it be the trader who makes pesewa commissions on selling the Kingsbite chocolate bars individually? How about the young men and women who are already hawking in the streets of every big and small town in Ghana? How about CocoBod?

The real beneficiary is behind the seas, making sure the cocoa that he buys from us is affordable to the average citizen of his country. The sweat of the Ghanaian farmers' makes some companies richer and their executive boards more comfortable that the farmers who labored to grow this cocoa.

In a celebration as mundane as Chocolate day, the effects of the terrible decisions of the recent past directors in the area of internationalizing Ghana's Cocoa is obvious for all to see.

To add to their absolute lack of vision, they have attached a nationalist and patriotic agenda to mask their bad decisions. Economically speaking, Chocolate day is simply a day when Ghanaians buy more chocolate to make foreign companies richer. This insult to the talent and skill of the Ghanaian people to make their own brand of chocolate has gone on long enough.

Nana, as you enjoy the complimentary package of Ghanaian chocolate that will be delivered to you as President, I would like you to remember this: there are many children in many rural communities in Ghana who have never tasted chocolate because their families cannot afford to buy the smallest Kingsbite bar.

But can I say there is an American or European child who has never tasted chocolate?

That is a near impossibility. When we deprive even our own of affordable chocolate, how can we raise patriotic Ghanaians if the resources in their own home are not available to even them?

We complain of unpatriotism among the Ghanaian public. When in our recent national history has our country shown any loyalty to seeing her citizens enjoy her

cheaply abroad? Ghana, as a mother in this chocolate day litmus test has failed.

Nana, this is the first chocolate day that you will be celebrating as Ghana's president. First, how about undertaking a diligent search for sweet makers in all parts of Ghana? And then training them to hone their skills, and making chocolate our style. And whilst you are at, why not look again at the trade agreements that Ghana's cocoa companies have with these foreign countries? Throw out the ones that are draining our capital, and bring chocolate making home to Ghana.

I am for Ghana's chocolate. Nana, make us all proud, starting this chocolate day. Bring our chocolate home to us.

Naa Akuye.  
A concerned chocolate citizen.



resources? Don't they say charity begins at home? How then has Ghana given us an example of patriotism when we talk about cocoa?

Can we even call Ghana, a motherland when its most famous export has been denied us at an affordable price? Which mother makes good things inaccessible for her child, but distributes her resources





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## General News

# CDD Ghana's Message to the New Parliament

By Faith Felila Musah

**T**he Deputy Director and Head of Research Programmes at the Ghana branch of the Center for Democratic Development (CDD), Franklin Oduro has underscored the need for the Seventh Parliament of the Fourth Republic of Ghana to endeavour to avoid some of the mistakes of past parliaments.

Mr. Oduro who made his expectations known in an exclusive interview with the Parliamentary News Paper expressed some concerns about the central role of Parliament including law making, representation and the oversight of the executive which he expects this new Parliament to tackle critically.

According to him, previous studies by the Center indicated that most members of parliament (MP) rarely visit their constituencies after they have been elected into office.

"Last year a lot of studies we did suggested that most MPs did not visit their constituencies for feedback" he said.

He added that parliamentarians should go back to their people to inform them about whatever has been going on in Parliament since they were sent there to represent the people. Mr. Oduro observed that a refusal of par-



Deputy Director and Head of Research Programmes at the Ghana branch of the Center for Democratic Development (CDD), Franklin Oduro

liament to execute its representative role will hurt the relationship between the parliamentarians and their people which will in turn slow development.

"Once you are elected to come to parliament, parliament is not the only place for your operation. You have to go back to give some feed back to your constituents" he said.

Responding to the argument that distance might not permit this regular visit by some parliamentarians, he stressed that distance should not be an excuse since parliament only sits between Tuesday and Friday and therefore the weekend could be used for such visits.

"I wouldn't want to even contextualize that to be those coming from afar or near, that is the fundamental role of every Member of Parliament (MP)"

he said.

Mr. Oduro further went on to say that, the previous Parliament did not play their oversight role well as far as he is concerned. He recalled instances where ministers sometimes failed to appear before parliament when invited to answer questions or address issues. He urged the MPs to do more to hold the executive accountable at all times. "I want to see this parliament do more to hold the executive accountable for their actions" he added.

Speaking on bills that failed to see the light of the day during the previous Parliament, Mr. Oduro expressed much interest in the Right to Information bill (RTI) and hoped it will be passed within the first year of this new parliament.

He has high hopes for the passage of this bill because of its

significance and coupled with the numerous work that has gone into it all these years that it has been lurking around Parliament. The meetings, workshops etc that went on to refine the bill will make it easy even if it is to be repackaged and presented to the current parliament.

"A lot of work done in the last parliament, series of review, workshops, meeting to refine the draft bill so even if it is to be packaged as new to the current parliament, it won't require the same kind of work that was done in the various parliament" he added.

However, he did not leave out the fact that there are some new faces in this new parliament that might express the concern that they were not part of the consideration of the bill and therefore would want to take a critical look at the components of this new one again yet he expects this new parliament to pass the RTI bill.

The Deputy Director of the CDD commended the speaker of Parliament Hon. Prof. Aron Mike Oquaye for his resolve to implement the Private Member's bill which will pave the way for parliamentarians to introduce bills on their own without relying on the Executive to make laws.

Adding that if parliamentarians are not allowed to make laws and only depend on the execu-

tive, then the function of parliament as a law making body is not fully complete. He then urged parliamentarians to take up the challenge and see how they can strengthen themselves to take advantage of the call.

"I think that the call by the Speaker of parliament is in order and I will expect that parliamentarians would take up the challenge to see how in the interim they can institute some processes that can strengthen Private Member's Bill" he said. He also argued that Parliament must be allowed to make laws that will serve national interest and for this to happen, the provision of the Constitution as to parliament not making laws because of the fear of its associated cost must be eliminated. "More importantly, I will argue that, that provision in the Constitution needs to be eliminated. We need to allow parliament make laws they deem fit that will serve the national interest" he added.

brought to bare his expectations from the new Parliament. He touched on the challenges of the previous Parliament such as poor representation among others.

It's on this regards he made his submission which he believes if taken in good faith and worked upon will bring massive improvement in the activities of the seventh Parliament which will in turn develop the country.

**Name of poverty reduction strategy Committee must be changed**  
- Dr Heloo urges

By Christian Kpesese

**T**he Honourable member of Parliament for Hohoe in the Volta Region and a member of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee of the house has urged leadership and the Speaker of parliament to ensure that the name of the committee is changed to Economic Development Committee to reflect Ghana's current status as a lower middle income country.

According to her the name "Poverty Reduction Strategy has outlived its usefulness in Ghana's status books hence must be changed to a more relevant name.

The former deputy Minister for Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation explained that the committee was first set up in the early 2000s when Ghana was declared a Highly Indebted and Poor Country (HIPC) to help in drafting relevant poverty reduction strategies to enable the country come out of poverty.

Hon Dr Adiku Heloo who was a member of the Committee in the 6th parliament argues that issues that are discussed during the committee sittings with relevant stakeholders including reports of the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) are not poverty reduction strategies but economic empowerment issues and therefore the committee should be restructured as such.



Dr. Bernice Adiku-Heloo  
GHANA

## Minority

# Statement by Hon Ras Mubarak MP for Kumbungu On MPs Voting Record



Hon. Ras Mubarak, MP for Kumbungu

**It is true that MPs are in parliament on the ticket of their party, but it is also true that MPs will have to balance what is in party interest and what is in the interest of the people they are representing in parliament.**

Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament in the House of Commons, the UK's lower chamber, yesterday voted in favor of the U.K. government's Brexit Bill, by a majority of 498 votes versus 114 votes.

What is of interest to me in that historic vote is revelation about Conservative and Labour MPs who defied the strict three line whip and voted in a way that reflected local sentiments.

Member of Parliament for Rushcliffe, Ken Clarke, who's a member of the governing party voted against the government's bill. On the side of the opposition Labour Party, sixteen front-benchers and scores of other Labour backbenchers defied the Labour leader's strict three line whip to back Brexit and revolted.

Speaking to reporters, Meg Hillier, a Labour MP explained that she voted against the bill because majority of her constituents, the very people who sent her to parliament, in the UK referendum on Brexit voted to remain in the UK. She therefore didn't see why she should betray their trust and vote in parliament for a bill that will see Britain leaving the European Union.

In your inaugural address, Mr. Speaker, you touched on a lot of exciting things that need urgent follow up. Among these are your commitment to (I) completing the work on revising the standing orders of parliament; (ii) Private Members Bills (III) your call for improving the laws on elections and (IV) Record Keeping.

Mr. Speaker, I take comfort in your encouraging inaugural address when you entreated "new entrants to prepare and present statements on any issue of interest." Making public Voting record of MPs is one that I'm passionate about.

Mr. Speaker we live in a country where there's a collapse of trust in public institutions, especially parliament. Interestingly we've been here before. And we must be guided by history.

In the 60s, 70s and 80s, whenever the public showed signs of losing trust in politicians, the military stepped in. But that was the 20th century.

There may not be room for military adventurism today, but there certainly is room for mass protests, like the Jasmine Revolution, that saw the overthrow of President Abidine Ben Ali and the dissolution of parliament in Tunisia,

and the Egyptian uprising that culminated in the collapse of the government of Hosni Mubarak.

Mr. Speaker, when Musah Kalamu in Ablekuma North, or Iddrisu Agaaga in Kumbungu, begin to feel parliament has become a rubber stamp, we ought to do think anew.

Rt. Honourable Speaker, making public the voting record of MPs as you aptly stated in your inaugural address, sharpens not just the responsibilities of individual MPs, but it also give constituents an opportunity to know how individual MPs voted on key legislations.

It will expose MPs who ran away when their constituents needed their votes on crucial matters.

The argument of those who do not wish for the kind of changes you intend to bring to parliament in respect of voting record is that, if whips allow MPs to vote the way they want, it will weaken government programs.

It is true that MPs are in parliament on the ticket of their party, but it is also true that MPs will have to balance what is in party interest and what is in the interest of the people they are representing in parliament.

It can't be business as usual, we have to cede ground and give the people what they want.

Rt. Hon. Speaker, in this 2017, and in this 7th parliament of the 4th Republic, we have a chance to make history, to turn this House into a parliament that responds to the needs of the people.

May I propose, that on the website of the parliament of Ghana, there should be a column titled "How did my MP vote." This should give constituents, the media and the Ghanaian people a chance to key in the name of their MP and see how they voted on issues of relevance.

As Frantz Fanon famously put it, "each generation must discover its mission, to fulfill that mission or betray it." This 7th parliament of the 4th Republic has a mission. And I trust, Rt. Hon. Speaker, that with your dedication and commitment to seeing positive reforms in parliament, and the dedication and commitment of colleague MPs, we shall live up to the call. Let's not miss the opportunity.

I thank you very much indeed Mr. Speaker.

# Majority

## ASSESSING THE PERFORMANCE OF PARLIAMENT AND PARLIAMENTARIANS: COULD THERE BE A BEST APPROACH?

### Statement By Hon. Frank Annoh-Dompreh

MP For Nsawam Adoagyiri

**P**arliament remains one of the strong pillars and bedrock of democracy in various countries including Ghana. It is a general knowledge that from the inception of parliament into our democracy after Ghana achieved full political independence, the constitution was fashioned after that of the westerners and over the years, we as a country have been able to give space and legitimacy to the creation of parliament and by extension Members of Parliament.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union defines a democratic parliament by referring to the universal values, which they should all aspire to and which retain their validity. According to the definition, a democratic parliament is a representative of the political will and social diversity of the population and its effectiveness is in its legislature's oversight functions. It is also transparent, accessible and accountable to the citizens that it represents.

Mr. Speaker, reference can be made to IPU's ground breaking study 'Parliament and democracy in the twenty first century: a guide to good practice'. Parliament from the basic definition is a representative body having the supreme legislative power within a state or multinational organization. Chapter 10 of our 1992 constitution Article 93 states clearly the duties of parliament and by extension the functions of Members of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, from the above reference to the constitution, the duties, functions and responsibilities of the House and the Members of Parliament can be deduced as:

1. The representative role, where Members of Parliament represent their constituents and parliament represent the people of the country.
2. The Parliamentary oversight role over the executive
3. The Legislative capacity
4. Power of the purse or Finance control function
5. Deliberative function
6. Informative function

7. Approval rights – Treaties and conventions, etc

Further to this outstanding order, it spells out clearly how these roles should be carried out and further added on.

Mr. Speaker, parliament and parliamentarian assessment over the past few years has become a worrying concern and a much discussed subject on our social media and news portals to the extent that benefits and gratuity becomes the benchmark for assessment. My concern and the basis for my statement today is to bring the attention of the House to a growing phenomenon where individuals, civil societies, concerned groups come out with all sorts of assessment criteria to assess parliament and Members of Parliament.

From my checks and research, I can conclude that it is therefore difficult to arrive at a meaningful and universal applicable statistical or similar measurement for the performance of Members of Parliament since views differ, constituencies vary, the political context of each committee is unique and on that basis it will be unfair for any such organization, civil society, pressure group or a media house to use one performance indicator to measure the general parliamentarian within a given period of time.

Mr. Speaker, these should not be interpreted as my disapproval of assessment and examination of our efforts and performance but to rather say I welcome fair, transparent, more inclusive approach of assessment by individuals, civil society groups and the media because their efforts in doing so will or is likely to provide valuable perspectives that will or may enrich our individual self, our parliamentary procedure and our democratic credentials at large. These brings to mind the following questions:

1. What criteria is employed
2. What process or the participating process
3. Time frame (is it a fair representation)
4. Source of data (how credible

is the source)

5. Documenting the procedure (for reference)

6. Outcome

Mr. Speaker, it is not surprising to know that Members of Parliament are assessed based on the voters' preferences, their expectations and values, personal favors for getting a job, or for local developments, and social calls at functions. These assessments are sometimes for and against Members of Parliament.

Very recently, a news outfit called the ODEKRO group came out with a publication on the various social media platforms and some key news portals like myjoyonline.com about their ranking of poor and best performed Members of Parliament and the outcome has gone viral.

The repercussions have also gone viral with lots of errors evident in their assessment of which I can mention a few. They tendered an apology to Hon. Adwoa Safo, Member of Parliament for Dome Kwabenya, my good self and other Members of Parliament that have received one way or the other an apology from them and this is very unfortunate.

David Beethan 2008 with the Inter-Parliamentary Union 2008 and also the International IDEA state of democracy assessment methodology came out with the following assessment kits for measuring performance and they are as follows:

- The MPs representation in Parliament
- His role in the performance of oversight of the executive
- His legislative capacity
- Transparency and accessibility in parliament

The NCCE report in April 2015 (assessing the effectiveness of parliament in Ghana's democracy), a work that was organized into six chapters which are:

- Assesses the public's knowledge of the role of parliament and parliamentarians
- Seeks the views of the general public on how well parliamentarians have



Hon. Frank Annoh-Dompreh MP For Nsawam Adoagyiri

performed

- Looks at the criteria the public uses to measure the effectiveness of Parliament's work
- Presents the public's view on some hindrances to parliament's work
- Examines how parliamentarians can be made more effective; and
- Presents recommendations from the public on possible changes to the current parliamentary system of Ghana to improve its effectiveness.

This study covered 72 districts and from the study and its findings, it states that the general public was fairly satisfied with the performance of parliament and parliamentarians in terms of their duties i.e. executive oversight, law making, being the voice of the people and representation.

Mr. Speaker, moving forward parliament should consider and put measures in place to manage these reportage and I recommend the following:

1. The parliamentary public affairs office should set up an educational outfit to help educate the public on the parliamentary

duties and proceedings.

2. The parliamentary public relations office should set up a regulatory body or a well-organized structure to reconcile various studies and research which will be conducted by the civil service, groups and agencies. Independent bodies should pass through the parliamentary structures to ensure the following:

- Cross data
- Cross tabulation
- Validation of data

This however, is not an attempt to censor the works of supposed independent civil society groups but rather a collaborative, effective way to ensure fairness, transparent and quiet a scientific approach.

3. The NCCE for which reason I referenced their report should intensify their educational function, which again is a constitutional mandate, to help the general public understand how parliament operates. The misconception about the work of the Member of Parliament needs to be cleared and a clear point should be made to the general public not to discredit the major committee works of parliament.

## Photo Report: Speaker Hosts Envoys



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