LOW REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE UPCOMING DISTRICT LEVEL ELECTIONS: STATEMENT BY HON. CATHERINE AFEKU, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR EVALUDE AJOMORO GWIRA CONSTITUENCY.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to share with this August house the worrying trend of the decreasing number of women participating in the upcoming District Level Elections.

At the close of nominations for the upcoming District Level Election on the 17th of December 2019, the number of women aspirants who had filed to contest nationwide was very discouraging. Out of the total aspirants of fifty-seven thousand thirty (57,030), only four thousand six hundred sixty (4,660) of them were women representing a very low figure of 8.17%.

Mr. Speaker, it is worthy to note that during the last census population in 2010, Ghana’s population saw an incremental percentage of 30.4 over the 2000 census population of eighteen million nine hundred and twelve thousand, seventy nine (18,912,079) to twenty-four million six hundred fifty-eight thousand eight hundred twenty-three (24,658,823) out of which the female population stood at twelve million six hundred thirty-three thousand nine hundred seventy-eight (12,633,978) representing 51% of the total population. I am confident that the trend will not be any different in the 2020 census population. Women will still get a higher percentage of the population.

Mr. Speaker, not only do we comprise the majority in terms of population, but we also play a crucial role in society as co-creators of good governance and decision-making at the family level and society as a whole. In the Akan tradition, kings are chosen from the matrilineal lineage.

Although, a few of us have made great strides in obtaining the mandate of our people, our numbers are still insignificant. The low participation of women in the decision-making process affects our progress in
improving the legal and regulatory framework for promoting gender equality since very few of us are influencing the legislative process at the district level. The rationale for promoting women’s participation in political dispensation is based on equity, quality and the development of our society.

Given the nominally higher population of women in Ghana, it is only right for us to equally participate in political decisions on matters affecting our motherland from the unit committee, through the district level right up to this august house and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, research has shown some probable causes of the very low participation of women in general elections:

1. Cultural norms; families discouraging women from putting themselves up for leadership position for fear of insults that denigrates their person and by extension their families.

2. Finance; lack of finance for the purpose of electioneering, women who are not empowered financially have a hard time raising funds for political work than their male counterparts. Often time they are subjected to unwanted sexual overtures that can traumatize them for life.

3. Societal limitations; placed on women who aspire to leadership in governance often times without malice can erode the confidence of woman who have the desire to contest elections in the public governance space.

These and many other factors place psychological limitations on many women who otherwise would have contributed immensely to enrich the discourse at the various levels of governance in our country.

Mr. Speaker permit me to share my thought as we deliberate on the Affirmative Action Bill which is currently before this house. It will be a great legacy for you Mr. Speaker, as a strong gender advocate to see to
it that women are adequately represented at all levels of the decision-making structure.

Mr. Speaker, I respectfully propose that this house open up discussions on the possibility of allotting a significant quota for the nomination of women at the district level. The 30% allotment for government appointees at the district level could be amended to 50% allotment with more women representation at the district level. This provision must be entrenched to protect the interest of women as well as shore up women’s participation at the district level to enrich our democracy.

Mr. Speaker, media outfits, civil society organizations, gender groups should also deepen their sensitization efforts early enough to encourage more women to participate in elections at the district level.

I entreat all women in leadership to arise and support our sisters who aspire to serve at various levels of the governance structure to give women a louder voice.

In conclusion Mr. Speaker, I would like to paraphrase the gospel according Apostle Luke who gave a rendition of what happened at Golgotha that, it was Mary Magdalene who first broke the news that our Savior was no more in the tomb. Mary is one of the women who traveled with Jesus and helped support his ministry "out of their resources", indicating that she was wealthy. As a witness to the crucifixion and burial of Jesus, She is also cited as the first to testify to Jesus's resurrection. For these reasons, she is known in many Christian traditions as the "apostle to the apostles" so as women, let us take a cue from her boldness and leadership and be inspired to pursue our God given roles in leadership.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.