CONFERENCE AND GENERAL MEETING OF FORUM FOR FORMER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT.
WEDNESDAY JULY 19, 2017. PARLIAMENT HOUSE. ACCRA. WELCOME ADDRESS BY KOSI KEDEM
(OUTGOING-PRESIDENT)

Good morning everybody, Brothers and Sisters. Immediately, I recognize and salute the Rt. Hon.
Speaker of Parliament, Hon. 2nd Deputy Speaker, Hon. Majority/Minority Leaders, Ministers, if
present, fellow Hon. Former MPs, the Press, distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Today, we have a full House and we are also making history. The reason is simple. For the first
time, since the Forum was formed, we are honoured to have members of the Forum and the
Leadership of Parliament under the same roof. I want to take this rare opportunity to welcome
all of you to this Conference, especially the Rt. Hon. Speaker and the Leadership of the House.
By the way Mr. Speaker, the comments you made on homosexuality and moral perversion
when a delegation of Amnesty International called on you recently were apt, appropriate and
spot on. The comments were pleasant music to our ears. You are not alone. The Forum
supports and stands by you. We congratulate you on your courage and forthrightness. We join
you to say to them “enough is enough!”

APOLOGY TO FORUM MEMBERS
The Conference was originally scheduled for Monday 17th July but we were compelled by
circumstances to shift it to Wednesday 19, 2017. We apologize to Hon. Members for any
inconvenience caused.

HON. BAGBIN, 2ND DEPUTY SPEAKER

Hon. Chairman, permit me to perform this important function before I proceed. On behalf of
the Forum, I sincerely congratulate Hon. Bagbin, the Second Deputy Speaker, for his 25th year in
Parliament. In my view, he symbolizes and epitomizes the travails, privileges, fears and
aspirations of the 4th Republican MP in Ghana. He has experienced it all—the enjoyment, hope,
privileges and frustrations of the MP. He was a back bencher, front bencher, Minority and
Majority Leader, Minister of State and now Second Deputy Speaker. What else is there for him
to experience in governance except, may be, experience the life of a President or Head of State
and to eventually join the Forum? As for being a president, it is a divine call so we leave it in the
hands of the Almighty. Hon. Bagbin congratulations. You are great. Everything about you is
great. We are inspired by your life and good works. We anxiously and eagerly look forward to
your memoirs. Already we have noticed that the Hon. Majority Leader is eyeing your record as
“the Mugabe of Parliament.” We wish him well. May God always look upon both of you with
favour and compassion.

FORUM’S GRATITUDE TO PARLIAMENT
I am in a hurry to thank the Leadership of Parliament for all the wonderful help they have given
to the Forum so far. They have generously provided the Forum with an office and an auxiliary staff. They have provided funds and vehicle for some of our activities. And let me whisper this into your ears. *This Conference is being funded by the generosity of the Rt. Hon. Speaker.* Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. We appreciate your kindness, support and encouragement. Indeed, no word(s) can adequately express our gratitude to you and Parliament. Our humble appeal to you and the Leadership is that you should continue to support us because we are in the same boat and we have shared objectives and vision.

**PERFORMANCE OF THE OUTGOING EXECUTIVES**

At this stage, let me apologize profusely to Hon. Members of the Forum. Since this Executive was elected in September, 2012 nothing much has been done and well wishes keep asking what was happening to the Forum. Let me confess that there was a systems failure somewhere and somehow. To make things worse, the Executive, without permission, over stayed its tenure by almost two years. This is clearly unconstitutional. Eventually, the Executive Committee had to dissolve itself. A Caretaker Committee was put in place to organize this Conference and General Meeting of the Forum. I want to thank the Caretaker Committee under the able Chairmanship of Hon. Adu for the commendable job they have done to date in organizing this Conference.

The outgoing Executive, without a doubt, had laudable programmes on paper to, for instance,

(i) Promote the welfare of former MPs-cardinal objective
(ii) Pass on experience and mentor new MPs
(iii) Organize seminars to promote Parliamentary democracy and, above all, to
(iv) Establish relationship with former MPs of Africa, USA, Canada and Europe
(v) Form a Network of Former African Parliamentarians

Unfortunately, we could only hold three meetings to discuss and make input into three bills before Parliament. We could have done more but as the saying goes, the “spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” We had serious problems of implementation which I find inappropriate to narrate here. We urge the next executives, soon to be elected, to pursue and implement these programmes to the best of their ability. We want to emphasize, especially, the welfare programme for former MPs who are under serious stress and are living a life of misery and penury. The Forum is a fantastic concept and it must not be allowed to perish.

**APPEAL TO PARLIAMENT**

At this point, we humbly appeal to Parliament to do something urgent about the nasty state of former MPs. We hereby suggest as follows:

(1) Parliament should, without delay, establish a *Pension Scheme* for sitting MPs and if possible extend it to the former MPs. Alternatively, *MPs should be made to retire on part of their salary.* The existing end of service benefit scheme or gratuity of collecting bulk sum gives false hopes. It is like a mirage. It is not sustainable. It is neither adequate nor sustainable. I am talking from experience. After Parliament, many MPs are stigmatized, politically, and they cannot get
any job to do. Of course, some have reached the sunset of their life and have little strength left to do any job. Paradoxically, it is at this time that they spend a lot of money to maintain their health. Some invested their gratuity, with good intentions, but those investments have collapsed. The gratuity system has woefully failed to answer the needs of the former MP, especially, in his old age. A more responsive, fair and equitable end of service benefit system is urgently required. We are convinced that a Pension Scheme could be the answer, may be a lesser evil!

(2) Parliament should also consider extending some of its welfare programmes for sitting MPs to former MPs. For instance, former MPs should have access to the Parliament clinic on free or subsidized basis.

(3) Furthermore, if a former MP is on admission or dies, Parliament could consider supporting the family.

(4) We suggest to Parliament to institute a “Memoir Writing and Publishing Fund” to help former MPs who want to write and publish their memoirs. Based on my own experience, I suspect that there are many former MPs who would want to write and publish their memoirs but do not have the funds to do so. It follows logically that Parliament should also make available its Research and Library facilities to former MPs. With all his experience, if an MP dies without a written memoir then a whole library is lost to posterity.

RECOGNITION FROM GOVERNMENT
We urge Government to show more interest in the affairs of the Forum. We regard former MPs as important members of the society. They should be recognized as such. To this end, we humbly appeal to Government to extend some facilities and benefits to members of the Forum. We can immediately think of a few such as:

(i) Provision of service passport to make traveling easier and more convenient. Government should also place the Forum on its protocol list for state functions and activities.

(ii) Government should support Parliament to establish a pension scheme for sitting and former MPs.

(iii) Former MPs may be placed on public boards and given political appointments, no matter the government in power.

DUTIES OF FORUM MEMBERS
We have appealed to Parliament and Government for help. But what are hon. Members of the Forum doing to help themselves? I urge hon. Member to, at least, pay their registration fees and membership dues to enable the Forum function effectively. They should also participate actively in the activities of the Forum.

CONCLUSION
Mr. Chairman, Rt. Hon. Speaker, Leadership of the House, Ladies and Gentlemen, every day, I
mean every day, the former MP is confronted with myriad of problems. Some of these problems are not entirely of his making. It is our belief that Parliament and the Government can help to alleviate some of these problems. We humbly beg them to give serious consideration to our appeal, especially the appeal to establish a viable Pension Scheme for sitting MPs which should be extended to former MPs.

Let me end by expression my joy at the presence of the Rt. Hon. Speaker and the Leadership of the House. Once again, I welcome you all to this historic Conference. I hope you will find it enjoyable and useful. We call upon God to guide and inspire us in today's deliberations. Thank you and have a blessed day.