

STATEMENT BY HON. KWAKU OFORI ASIAMAH, MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA ON THE POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES BEING INSTITUTED BY THE MINISTRY TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM

Mr. Speaker,

I am grateful to the maker of the statement and also this august House for the opportunity to apprise you on the policies and programmes the Ministry of Transport is instituting to address Avoidable Road Accidents: The Role of the Citizens and the Responsibility of Government.

Indeed, this year has been a very bad year for road safety in the country, considering that the issue of road traffic crashes has been highlighted daily in the media, including the crash involving the Deputy Minister of Communications, Hon. George Andah, on the Kasoa – Winneba Road and the series of Pedestrian knockdowns on the Madina – Adenta highway, which led to the huge public outcry in the past two weeks and consequently the spontaneous demonstration by the community on 8th of November, 2018, after the death of a 1st year student of West African Senior High School.

Available statistics on road traffic crashes and casualties as at 30th October this year indicate that, 11,159 crashes have so far been recorded nationwide involving 18,063 vehicles including 3,156 motorcycles which have resulted in 1,921 persons killed and 11,130 persons injured.

It must be noted that 2,602 pedestrians were knocked down over this period of which 626 were killed. These statistics show increase in all the parameters, with the exception of pedestrian knockdowns which shows a decrease of 5.48% over the same period last year, 2017.

Mr. Speaker,

Our worry is that, many families have had to grief over the painful demise of their relatives and loved ones in such unpleasant situations. While we discuss the road safety situation, we must recognize that the road safety challenge is one largely borne out of our own failures to act proactively and responsibly as Public Agencies in responding to road safety issues quickly with policy and real interventions. Most of the crashes could also have been prevented if road-users had been disciplined and demonstrated responsibility for safe road use practices and compliance with existing road traffic regulations as drivers, pedestrians, passengers, motorcyclists and operators of road transport services.

We wish to express our deepest condolences to families of all those who have lost their lives through road traffic crashes and wish all the injured speedy recovery.

Mr. Speaker,

Road Safety has become a public health issue and is increasingly gaining attention locally and globally largely due to the rising trends in the number of persons losing their lives and getting injured through road traffic crashes and the resultant social and economic burden on individuals, families and societies.

Mr. Speaker,

We cannot continue lamenting, rather we need to move on as a country to jointly and collectively be responsible and put in place pragmatic measures to stop the carnage on our roads, by sensitizing and educating road users to be disciplined in safe road use practices and obey road traffic regulations.

As a first step and with immediate effect, my Ministry has, in collaboration with the Ministries of the Interior and Roads and Highways, instructed our responsible agencies comprising: National Road Safety Commission, Motor Traffic and Transport Department of the Ghana Police Service, Ghana Highway Authority, Department of Urban Roads and Department of Feeder Roads, to scale up their activities regarding sensitization, enforcement of road traffic regulations especially on travel speeds and provision of appropriate road furniture, road signs and roadway markings.

In this regard, funds have been released from the Road Fund to the Road Safety Commission to step up educational and sensitization programmes in this regard.

Mr. Speaker,

On the Adenta Madina highway, I am reliably informed that six (6) Contractors are currently on site working on the footbridges, lane markings as well as traffic calming installations.

Mr. Speaker,

The NRSC as it exists now lacks the mandate to enforce compliance with road safety deficiencies.

I am pleased to inform you that Cabinet has granted approval to the Proposal for the country's road safety lead Agency, the National Road Safety Commission, to be transformed into an **Authority**. As an Authority, the agency will have a new mandate to **regulate/enforce institutional standards for road safety related activities and issue appropriate sanctions for non-compliance**. This would be in addition to its current functions of promoting road safety through education, recommendations, advise, collaboration, coordination and liaison. Under this new mandate, the Commission would be able to exact obedience and sanction breaches of road safety standards.

Additionally, the Commission has been equipped with 10 pick-up vehicles for all the regional offices to intensify road safety education and sensitization activities across the country.

Mr. Speaker,

The Ministry, through the National Road Safety Commission, has commenced the establishment of One Hundred (100) **Road Surveillance and Incident Response Centers** (RoadSIRC) across the national road network in the country. These Centers will be adequately be equipped with the requisite logistics and manned by trained personnel from the National Road Safety Commission, National Ambulance Service, Ghana Red Cross Society, NADMO, Ghana National Fire Service and the Ghana Police Service, to carry out 24/7 surveillance of the road network to identify risky road-user behaviors on the road and respond accordingly with the appropriate actions to prevent any incident of a road crash. In the case where a crash occurs, the Centers shall offer emergency/post-crash services for the victims. The Ministry will soon commence discussions with government to absorb this initiative under the Nation Builders Corps (NABCO) with a recruitment of about 1,000 men and women to participate in the response activities. Eight (8) of such centers have already been established by the National Road Safety Commission at:

- Asuboi, Bunso, Asankare and Juaso on the Accra – Kumasi highway
- Toje near Kasseh/Ada Junction and Nogokpo on the Tema – Aflao highway and
- Okyereko and Apam Junction on the Accra – Takoradi highway.

Mr. Speaker,

The National Road Safety Commission and its stakeholders are also embarking on a number of activities to promote a positive change in the attitude of road users;

- A reward system for drivers and road transport actors to encourage safe road practices
- Enforcement of speed and use of seatbelt regulations to reduce incidence of severity in the event of a road traffic crash
- Engagement of Road Safety Goodwill Ambassadors and Advocates to compliment efforts of the Commission and stakeholders in advocacy and sensitization. It may interest Honourable Members to know, Mr. Speaker, that some members of this august House including the 1st Deputy Speaker, Hon. Joseph Osei-Owusu have availed themselves to be Road Safety Advocates. I humbly request the entire membership of this Honourable House to see themselves as road safety advocates and champion road safety wherever they may find themselves.

The Commission and its stakeholders, before, during and after the yuletide will intensify road safety education and sensitization at the lorry parks, within communities, schools, churches, mosques and on the highways. The Commission will also intensify media activities through the airing of road safety adverts and discussions. Some Corporate Institutions, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Media House are collaborating with the Commission to undertake various road safety activities and programmes to enhance safety on our roads.

Mr. Speaker,

I wish to draw the attention of this august House to section 154 of the Road Traffic Regulations, 2012, L.I. 2180. It is an offence for pedestrians to jay walk or a pedestrian to ignore a traffic light signal. It is also an offence if one fails to use a footbridge or an underpass where it is provided. Unfortunately, most pedestrians are not aware of this provision, I have therefore directed the NRSC to intensify their education on this regulation.

Mr. Speaker,

All around the World, technology is being used to address developmental challenges. In this vain, the MTTD in collaboration with NRSC will soon install Speed Cameras to check over-speeding and traffic infractions on our roads. These unmanned Traffic Enforcement Devices will automatically detect, record, transmit and store traffic violations.

Furthermore, the Commission will enforce the regulations on retraining and refresher programmes for commercial vehicle drivers in line with section 125 of the Road Traffic Regulation, 2012, LI 2180.

Mr. Speaker,

The time for us, as a nation and as a people, to embrace **change** is now. We have only two options, i.e. **Change** to see a reduction in the crashes, deaths and injuries or **Maintain** the status quo and continue to see the figures on these sad occurrences rise.

Mr. Speaker,

Change is obviously the way forward. We need:

- Change in the policy and standards that will enable adequate investment in road infrastructure for dualization of our major highways, by-passing towns and villages and separating vehicular traffic from pedestrian
- Change in standards for training of our drivers
- Change in policy to regulate our public road transport system
- Change in attitude of road users
- Change in the way we enforce road traffic regulations by the use of modern technology
- Change of policy to relocate transportation of heavy goods to rail and water, and

- Change in the way we appropriate funds for road safety activities.

Mr. Speaker,

In concluding, I express my sincere gratitude to the House for inviting me to apprise Honourable members on Policies and Programmes being instituted by the Ministry to address the numerous road safety issues confronting the country.

Once again, my deepest condolences to families of all those who have lost their lives through road traffic crashes and wish all the injured speedy recovery.

Thank You.