

**STATEMENT IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF TURKEY AND SYRIA**  
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**RANKING MEMBER ON THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE)**  
**FOLLOWING THE FEBRUARY 6, 2023 DEVASTATING EARTHQUAKE IN**  
**TURKEY AND SYRIA**

Right Honourable Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to deliver a statement of solidarity to the Government and People of Turkey and Syria following this week's devastating earthquake of cataclysmic proportions.

Mr. Speaker, On Monday, 6th February, 2023, just before Turks and Syrians would awake to go about their daily activities, a 7.8-magnitude quake hit just after 4 a.m. local time sending tremors hundreds of miles and creating disaster zones on both sides of the Turkey-Syria border.

The world soon became witnesses to the horrendous turn of events particularly in Turkey and the heart-wrenching images saddened the hearts of the international community. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan promptly announced 7 days of national mourning and declared a three-month state of emergency in 10 of the country's provinces on Tuesday.

Mr. Speaker, it has been officially reported that more than 15,000 people have sadly passed away since the beginning of this disaster and 52,929 people have been injured. According to the *UN*, 300,000 people have been displaced as a result of the disaster and time is running out for many others who remain stranded under the rubbles awaiting an overwhelmed rescue crew.

The *WHO* has predicted that the death toll could increase eight fold, with a little under 8,000 people having been rescued. The quake has resulted in fire outbreaks across the

country of Turkey including the southern Iskenderun Port which saw hundreds of containers set ablaze. Mr. Speaker, it is no exaggeration to posit that the result of the earthquake has caused havoc of apocalyptic dimensions.

Mr. Speaker, it is imperative to emphasize the long standing bilateral relations which Ghana and Turkey have enjoyed over the years. Diplomatic relations between Turkey and Ghana were established in 1958 following the independence of Ghana. However, it was not until February 1st 2010, that the first Turkish embassy was established in Ghana since 1981. It marked the beginning of true friendship between the two nations. Indeed, under President Atta Mills, there were conscious efforts made to strengthen ties between the two nations.

The Presidential visits paid by the former President of Turkey, H.E. Mr. Abdullah Gül on March 2011 to Ghana and by former President of the Republic of Ghana H.E. John Dramani Mahama on January 2013 to Turkey, paved the way for further enhancement and strengthening of the relations. Subsequently, H.E. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Ghana in 2016 equally created a new milestone in bilateral relations as it witnessed the establishment of a business forum between Turkish and Ghanaian businesses.

Turkish Ambassador to Ghana, Her Excellency Özlem Ergün Ulueren is a great friend of this House having paid a number of courtesy calls on Mr. Speaker and interacted with the Foreign Affairs Committee. She has hosted a number of MPs in her office including my good self and visited a good number of constituencies. Mr. Speaker, it must not be lost on us, the enormous developmental impact our partnership with Turkey has generated.

Notable among these projects are the construction of the Terminal 3 at the Kotoka International Airport, the construction of the National Mosque which is the second largest in West Africa, the execution the \$165 million water project for the Birim Central and Effutu municipalities and the Denkyembour District and the Completion of the Akyem Oda Water project which is a great relief to the people. The build quality of the Turkish

people is impeccable and that must explain why they boast of having the second largest number of construction firms after China.

Mr. Speaker, it is gratifying to note that the world appears to be rallying timeously behind Turkey and Syria in these difficult times. Even though there appears to be challenges with the rescue effort.

Australia is deploying 72 search and rescue specialists to Turkey following the devastating earthquake, according to the country's Department of Foreign Affairs. It will also deploy personnel from the foreign affairs department, police force as well as ambulance and health workers to affected areas. The European Union has also announced a donor conference to raise funds for Turkey and Syria as the two countries continue to grapple with the devastation. In addition, the United States military has transported two civilian urban search and rescue teams to Turkey to assist in earthquake relief efforts, according to the US Defense Department, as well as transporting first responders to and from the most impacted areas.

The WHO has resolved to send medical teams and three flights of medical supplies, including surgical trauma kits, to Turkey and Syria. Similarly, the UAE has pledged 100 million dollars in relief towards the rescue efforts. Indeed it is comforting to note that as the days go by, several other countries and World organizations are responding swiftly to the call to send help to the doorsteps of those gravely affected.

Mr. Speaker, the devastation of these happenings in Turkey has been felt directly by many other countries. For instance, three US citizens were killed in the earthquake in southeastern Turkey. Many citizens of the world who reside in Turkey have either been displaced or affected.

Mr. Speaker, this sadly brings me to the subject of one of our beloved and cherished sons of the land, Christian Atsu Twasam. A Ghanaian extraordinarily talented professional footballer who plays for Turkish Süper Lig club Hatayspor and the Ghana national team.

Conflicting accounts about his safety and whereabouts have left all Ghanaians and the global football community in a terrible state of anxiety and anguish.

Atsu's exceptional work ethics, patriotism and rare talent have caused him to excel in many leagues and his time in Turkey counts as no exception. Indeed he scored a winning goal for his team only last Sunday. He is touted by many of his colleagues as an asset. Many Ghanaians attribute their love for him outside of football to the outstanding role he has played in philanthropy.

I therefore appeal to the Government of Ghana and the Ministry of Foreign affairs to deepen their efforts in ensuring the safety of all Ghanaians even as we keep hopes alive in anticipation of their recovery and full recovery.

Mr. Speaker, may I also urgently appeal to all colleagues and the ever compassionate Ghanaian public to contribute in their own little way to help victims of this catastrophe by donating to the special initiative launched by the Turkish Embassy in Accra. Donations such as winter clothing, boots, gloves, canned foods, sanitary materials, baby foods amongst others will be mostly appreciated. The point of collection of these items is at the National Mosque of Ghana, Kanda- Accra.

In conclusion Mr. Speaker, I extend my sincerest condolences to families who have lost loved ones and it is my fervent prayer that the many more who are yet to be found, will come out unscathed. A speedy recovery to the rescued.

This house and the good people we represent sympathize with the people of Turkey and Syria. They remain in our thoughts and prayer. We are confident that healing and brighter prospects lie ahead.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.