

WORLD WATER DAY - 22 MARCH 2017

STATEMENT FOR PARLIAMENT

Mr. Speaker, the United Nations (UN) has since 1993 designated the day 22 of March of every year, as International World Water Day to focus global attention on the importance of water. All nation states are enjoined by this call, to devote the Day, as appropriate within their respective national contexts, to undertake activities related to the conservation and development of water resources.

Each year, a different UN agency coordinates events surrounding World Water Day around the world, and a different aspect of water is chosen to reflect the many facets of freshwater resources. World Water Day 2017 is designed on 'water and wastewater, and the campaign, 'Why waste water?', is about reducing and reusing wastewater.

Globally, the bulk of all the wastewater from our homes, business places and industry, all flows back to nature without being treated or reused; thereby polluting the environment, and losing valuable nutrients and other recoverable materials. Indeed, wastewater management is seriously neglected, and wastewater therefore is grossly undervalued as a potentially affordable and sustainable source of water and energy energy source.

Mr. Speaker, this is the theme within which the United Nations body, wants us to celebrate this year's International Water Day.

Mr. Speaker, within our Ghanaian context today however, we are confronted with many challenges as we seek to marshal our national

effort to attain the targeted goal of “Water for All”, which in its own, is another UN goal.

Mr. Speaker, although Ghana has been reported in international circles to have done remarkably well in the just-ended MDGs agenda, with regards to water because we have been able to attain the set goal earlier than scheduled. On our road to “Water for All” however, our journey still remains rocky and arduous. The issues are complex and inter-related as they are multi-faceted, involving all stakeholders; thus, making it incumbent on all Ghanaians to collaborate and play their respective roles to ensure that we overcome those issues.

Right Honourable Speaker, some of the water issues in the Ghanaian context include among others, the following:

- Inadequate water supply, investment costs, affordability and sustainability;
- the need for a thorough and deep understanding of issues of Climate Change and also how to adapt to various policy measures on attitudinal transformation for Ghana to assist the global effort in this regard;
- the drying up of our river bodies and waterways, compounded by upstream activities such as diversion of rivers for farming etc.;
- the widely known illegal mining activities called “galamsey” and its attendant pollution of our water bodies exacerbating the situation of access to water;
- the depleting aquifers or underground water sources as reported by hydrologists and our lack of capacity to adequately assess their state and design policies and embark on action plans to address that situation effectively; and

- issues of water quality and treatment costs to prevent contraction of associated waterborne diseases.

Mr. Speaker, previous governments have made strides in these areas but much still needs to be undertaken. In the vision of His Excellency President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, he has found the need to set up a dedicated Ministry to deal with this matter in a focused manner and I might add, Mr. Speaker, that the Government is poised to tackle these issues effectively so as to bring results.

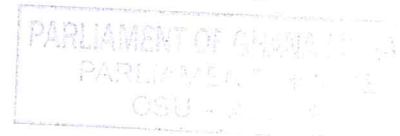
Mr. Speaker, on this year's theme designated by the UN, we need to see wastewater as a resource that should be reduced and reused, rather than leave it as a burden just to be disposed of. In our homes, we can reuse greywater on our gardens and plots. In our cities, we can treat and reuse wastewater for green spaces. In business and industry, we can treat and recycle discharge for things like cooling systems and irrigation.

By exploiting this valuable resource, we will make the water cycle work better for every living thing. For example, exploiting wastewater in agriculture and aquaculture, protects workers, farmers and consumers, promotes food security, health and wellbeing. And we will help achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 6 target to halve the proportion of untreated wastewater and increase water recycling and safe reuse.

For the celebration of 2017 World Water Day in Ghana, activities have been planned to draw the public's attention to the need for water to be carefully managed during every part of the water cycle: from fresh

water abstraction, pre-treatment, distribution, use, collection and post-treatment, to the use of treated wastewater and its ultimate return to the environment.

Mr. Speaker, on the actual Day, a durbar and flag hoisting ceremony at the Waste Water Recycling Plant site, Action Chapel on the Spintex Road, would climax the celebration. This will be preceded by Radio and Television talk shows, excursion of the media to selected wastewater recycling plants and awards to schools which took part in a tree planting exercise.



In Ghana, the occasion also presents us with an opportunity to take stock of our socioeconomic practices with respect to our waters and its importance to other vital sectors of the economy. It is a call to take action on the best ways of equitably sharing water in order to meet the ever-growing demands. It is also a clarion call on us to inspire political, community, and media attention and action as well as encourage greater understanding for us to be more responsible towards water use, protection and conservation.

Government is seeking to ensure that its citizens have the water they need to lead healthy, happy and productive lives. Government's attention is therefore on increasing investments in water and sanitation services to decrease the time spent on collecting water; tackling our cities water infrastructure systems which waste more freshwater than they deliver; shifting towards environmentally sustainable policies that take account of interconnection among ecological systems and reduce pollution; promoting efficient water treatment technologies that reduce the use of water and improve the

quality of wastewater; increasing water use efficiency in agriculture to reduce water losses and increase crop productivity; and ensuring commitment to the principles of disaster prevention and response.

Mr. Speaker, even as government takes pragmatic actions to stimulate coordination between water and other critical domains for a better future, there is widespread acknowledgement to increase education of the citizenry in the conservation and protection of water as well. Therefore, the challenge for the country's governance system is to take account of the multiple aspects, roles, and benefits of water, and to place water at the heart of decision-making for all water-dependent sectors.

Mr. Speaker, water and wastewater are also issues at the sub-regional and regional levels that call for pragmatic solutions anchored on negotiations and dialogue. For instance, Ghana, the most downstream country in the Volta, which drains almost 70% of the country, shares the basin with the upstream riparian countries of Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, Mali, and Benin. Therefore, we are to nurture the opportunities that this position offers to us and continue to encourage 'Benefit Sharing' to promote mutual cooperation for peace, security, and sustainable economic growth.

As we join the whole world in celebrating the World Water Day, let us exploit the enormous opportunities from wastewater as a resource, and in our own small way make it our business to be concerned and to promote sustainable practices in the realm of water.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

