

**STATEMENT TO COMMEMORATE THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE
ERADICATION OF POVERTY**

Hon. Dr. Kojo Appiah-Kubi, MP, Atwima Kwanwoma Constituency

The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty has been observed every year since 1993, when the United Nations General Assembly by resolution 47/196, designated this day to promote awareness of the need to eradicate poverty and destitution in all countries. Poverty eradication similarly remains at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which sets poverty eradication as the overarching objective and obligated all countries to end poverty in all forms.

I wish, therefore, to call on this parliament and the country to observe this day and so affirm our conviction that poverty is not inevitable. By so doing let us pledge our solidarity with all people who, throughout the world, strive to answer the call to end poverty as the theme for this year's commemoration calls on us to do exactly that.

Indeed Mr. Speaker Ghana has since the nineties responded to the call to eradicate poverty and has consequently chalked some successes over the years. It has, as available statistics reveal, reduced poverty incidence from 51.7% in 1991\92 to 24.2% in 2013. This means that the proportion of people whose income cannot allow them to meet their daily nutritional or food requirements and basic non-food items by more than half. Extreme poverty incidence has also declined substantially, i.e., the proportion of people whose consumption expenditure or income is not sufficient to afford them their daily food requirements from 37% to 8.4%. The country has also made substantial progress on non-monetary indicators of poverty. Infant mortality has declined from 57 deaths per 1000 live births in 1998 to 21 in 2014 and so also has under 5 mortality declined by more than half. Secondary school attendance rates and access to other services has improved. Consequently the country was able to make substantial progress on the attainment of the MDGs and even achieved the MDG I ahead of the 2015 schedule date. These have also contributed to improve and raise the HDI of the country above the Sub-Saharan-African average.

Mr. Speaker these improvements on poverty indicators occurred in the face of recent rapid economic growth and several socio-economic interventions targeted at the vulnerable. These social and economic interventions include, the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP), Capitation Grant, School Feeding Programme, free SHS, free distribution of school uniforms, exercise books and textbooks, elimination of schools under trees, the National Health Insurance, free maternal health delivery, CHPS, and other agricultural and industrial programmes.

But Mr. Speaker these monetary improvements in quantitative indicators of poverty depict just one side of the picture. Behind this rosy picture of poverty

indicators are very worrying rising professional, geographical and gender disparities as well as individual sufferings of some worst forms of deprivation. Poverty appears to be also prevalent in the rural areas and in the northern parts of Ghana. Household heads who are farmers are not just the poorest in Ghana, but they contribute the most to Ghana's poverty. According to a 2013 Report of the Ghana Statistical Service, more than four in every ten persons are poor in the Upper East Region (44.4%). This increases to one in every two in the Northern Region (50.45%) and seven out of every ten in Upper West (70.7%). Whilst the level of extreme poverty in Ghana can be said to be relatively low, it appears to be concentrated in Rural Savannah, with more than a quarter of the people being extremely poor. The Upper West region, for instance, has the highest extreme poverty (45.1%), followed by Northern (22.8%) and Upper East (21.3%).

Ironically, Mr. Speaker, in terms of sex of household heads, poverty incidence among male headed households is higher (25.9%) than female headed households (19.1%). Behind this façade of improved poverty indicators an estimated 8.4 million Ghanaian still living below the poverty line with more than a quarter of children suffering from absolute poverty.

Exacerbating the situation of the geographical poverty divide is the growing inequality in the distribution of incomes in Ghana, which has led to a deterioration of the Gini Coefficient from 37 to 42 between 2006 and 2013. Once again the three Northern regions appear to suffer the most from the growing inequality. The upper west region, for instance, has the highest level of and the largest increase in inequality in Ghana with the Greater Accra accounting for the lowest level inequality. This means that some districts and communities or groups of people in certain regions, especially, in the North are being left behind and missing out on recent economic gains.

Mr. Speaker it is also worrying that the poor do not seem to be benefiting much from the growth gains as the rich. According to the recent GLSS 6 the consumption of the wealthiest decile is about 7 times that of the poorest. Over time the average consumption of the top rich also seems to have increased by 1.4 time greater than the poorest.

Mr. Speaker, a resource rich Ghana cannot be accept the current poverty trends even if its reduction efforts seems to have better compared to that of other African countries. An increasing share of its population are not benefitting from the country's economic and social gains. The government should, therefore, re-examine its policies and measures not only to accelerate growth, wealth creation and absolute poverty reduction, but also make sure the wealth generated from its resources trickle down to every Ghanaian fairly. Indeed poverty can be eradicated in Ghana but it will take a deliberate effort of all stakeholders, particularly, the government to bring that about.