Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me this opportunity to make this Statement.

The combination of a growing human and cattle population, the effects of climate change on the availability of water and forage crops as well as lack of access to foraging grounds due to the expansion of towns and villages are the proximate causes of the increasing tensions between farming communities and Fulani herdsmen.

Many farming communities in Ghana are likely to be hit with severe famine following the destruction of several acres of farms by the cattle of nomadic herdsmen.

It is no longer news that the constant clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in most parts of Ghana have taken a dangerous dimension. Frequently, the Ghanaian media spaces are awash with stories of how Fulani herdsmen armed with sophisticated weapons storm villages and kill innocent villagers and vice versa.

The fatal nature of the violence has left many people wondering about the source of the arms being used to carry out the atrocities. The most common weapon used in these types of conflict is the AK47 assault rifle. It must be noted that this tension is not only in Ghana but in almost all West African countries.

According to UK-based humanitarian organisation, “Mercy Corps”, this same conflict has cost the Nigerian economy more than US$14bn (£10bn) between 2013 and 2015.

It has also impeded market development and economic growth by destroying productive assets, preventing trade, deterring investment, and eroding trust between market actors.

It must be noted that the whole of northern West Africa is experiencing intense climatic shifts of climate change which is forcing agriculturalist and pastoralist alike to adapt their lifestyles.

Unpredictable climate patterns and unsustainable practices have made the northern environment a fragile state. Farmers are seeing severe declines in their crop yield.

The Fulani herdsmen who depend on the wet season of the North to sustain their herds are losing cattle to starvation and dehydration. Strong dependence on the land and its resources for survival, high poverty levels, and the lack of knowledge and fiscal resources to adapt to are compounded by climatic change and its consequences.

When faced with such sinister scenarios, competition for diminishing resources would ultimately lead to civil conflicts.

In spite of all these, there has not been much change in the way we do things as handed over to us by our forefathers. The free-range system of cattle farming destroys farms and farm lands;
they also pollute drinking sources of water in many towns and villages across without any explanation. It is also simply destroying our wildlife, native plants and natural resources.

Before the nomadic Fulani herdsmen found their way into Ghana, cattle rearing were mainly in the northern belt of the country. At that point in time, the cattle sparingly destroy crops or farm lands. Even if it did, there was always a way of peacefully resolving such conflicts whenever and wherever they occurred.

These were through amicable arbitration by chiefs and elders of the communities where they occurred. In recent times, the authority of chiefs and other elders has been heavily undermined.

Several District Assemblies where the activities of the Fulani herdsmen took place came out with by-laws to regulate such activities. But these by-laws could not be enforced because of combined forces of institutional weaknesses of the Assemblies and absolute gargantuan nature of the danger at hand. This was evidenced by frequent clashes that kept occurring between farmers/indigenes and Fulani herdsmen/settlers.

Various efforts have been taken to prevent or minimise these conflicts. In December, 2011, the chiefs and elders at Agogo ordered the Fulani herdsmen out of the Agogo area, but local groups reported that the herdsmen did not move. Conflicts continued throughout some communities in Brong Ahafo, Eastern, Volta, and the Northern regions which resulted in the destruction of farms and human lives.

Mr Speaker, in December 2011, Parliament of Ghana set up a 13-member Committee to investigate the causes and potential for farther conflict between Fulani migrants and native farmers (the Konkombas). This was as a result of killing 12 Fulani herdsmen, with dozens injured after the conflict in some settler farming communities in the Gushegu District of the Northern Region.

In recent times, especially in the first quarter of 2016, the menace became more awry and fearful. In the Sekyere Afram Plains and some Agogo areas of the Ashanti Region, including the Upper Manya Krobo area of the Eastern Region, Sekode Ando (Volta Region) and other areas of the country in general, some of the Fulani herdsmen allowed their cattle to massively storm and destroy crops which adversely affected the livelihood of the communities.

Communities such as Anyaboni resettlement area, Aframase, Akateng, Poliwa, Terguanya and other farming communities were affected by the activities of the Fulani herdsmen thus creating fear for food insecurity and National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO) was called upon to come to their aid.

How can this be eliminated or minimised?

To this, I propose the following:

1. The recommendations of the 2011 Parliamentary Committee Report should be implemented (if any).
2. Legislation should be enacted to enforce anyone owning, rearing or intending to rear cattle or such ruminants in Ghana to have ranch(es) or very restricted area(s) within which the animals can be kept and fed, much so that no such animals under the possession of any person or group of people can have the freedom to move freely outside the restricted borders to invade, tamper with and/or destroy property of others.

3. Foreigners entering Ghana with cattle or such other ruminants must, under no circumstance, be allowed into the country without absolute proof that they have the capacity to acquire land to rear and keep their animals in a restricted space. Without this proof and permit thereof, any such foreign animals and their possessors found illegally wandering in Ghana must have the owners immediately repatriated.

4. With respect to foreign animals that have gained legal entry into the country, if they violate the articles of the legislation, the owners should be heavily fined and given a strong warning. The second violation should result in heavy fines with their outright repatriation and seizure of their animals on the last count.

5. In the case of the indigenes or Ghanaians for that matter, first violation will result in heavy fine while three subsequent violations thereafter will result in heavy fines each with the last one attracting outright seizure of the animals. This proposition is mindful of ECOWAS protocols on free movement of “persons, establishment and residence” (Ch.IV). It also gives recognition to the 1992 Constitution which protects the migration rights of foreigners under its own principles and the international laws it binds Ghana to respect and enforce.

6. Strict licensing and monitoring mechanisms should be activated to ensure compliance with the tenets and components of the legislation.

7. By-laws of District Assemblies on ranching should be developed and or strengthened to detail, protect and enhance the implementation of any legislation on ranching.

8. In the meantime, the police and military should constantly have their intelligence on the ground and take immediate, lawfully drastic actions against anyone who is found to disturb the peace of local communities with their cattle or such other livestock.

9. Minor incidence should be viewed as a source of communal violence. While they remain a threat to security, they, in themselves, do not possess physical violence force. They have to be acted upon by trigger agents before they manifest their explosion.

10. By nature, major incidents, which include violent group clashes, physical harm and assault, and property damage, are often criminal in nature. Their felonious nature means criminal approaches such as arrest, detentions, investigations, and prosecutions should be employed to deal with such cases.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.