STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT ON THE ECOWAS INTERVENTION IN THE GAMBIA BY
HONOURABLE ALEXANDER K. AFENYO-MARKIN MP FOR EFFUTU - 25 JANUARY, 2017

Mr Speaker, fortified by the rules of this House, in particular, Standing Order 72, I beg to make a Statement on the ECOWAS intervention in The Gambia and its implications on peace and security of the West African sub-region. Mr Speaker, one of the perennial challenges to the peace and security of the West African sub-region has been contestation over election results and the attendant armed conflicts.

On 9th December, 2016, President Yahya Jammeh of The Gambia withdrew an earlier concession of defeat he had offered to Adama Barrow, following the 1st December, 2016 elections in the small West African country. Initially calling for fresh elections, President Jammeh subsequently indicated his intention to legally contest the election results. This was enabled by an admission by the Electoral Commission of The Gambia that the margin of Barrow’s victory had been recomputed from nine per cent to four per cent. The integrity of Jammeh’s decision to contest the election results was, however, tamed by his record of manipulation of the Judiciary in The Gambia, and the reality that there were no Supreme Court Judges to rule on the matter.

At the brink of another violent conflict situation in the sub-region, ECOWAS activated its dispute settlement mechanism, while calling on President Jammeh to respect the results and ensure that there is a peaceful transition to the newly elected leader Adama Barrow. Gunboat diplomacy, manifesting as a combination of mediation and the declared intention to use force to remove Mr Jammeh, as well as overt support from the international community, including the African Union and the UN Security Council, yielded the intended outcome and on 21st January 2017, Mr Jammeh departed The Gambia for Guinea Conakry.

Mr Speaker, in the past decade, acrimonious political issues, including election disputes, were left to fester until the point of violent conflicts. Even where efforts were made to intervene, same was done rather passively and with cold hands. Commendably, ECOWAS was very proactive in the recent political impasse in The Gambia.

Authorising a high-powered mediation team that at various times included Presidents Johnson-Sirleaf, Buhari, Mahama and Alpha Conde, ECOWAS also ensured that the Protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, was fully enforced, thereby setting a new standard in the sub-regional commitment to action.

It is clear that the multi-purpose approach adopted, including the immediate deployment of UN-backed troops from the sub-region and the supervision of the swearing in of the new President, Adama Barrow at the Embassy of The Gambia in Senegal, were necessary interventions that averted the following:

I. Humanitarian disaster
II. Possible violation of human rights and the rule of law
III. The manifest threat to peace and security in the sub-region
IV. Internal conflict by political actors and displacement of persons.

Mr Speaker, it is even more gratifying that even after Jammeh’s departure, ECOWAS troops have still been deployed to ensure that the threats to the security of The Gambian State likely to emerge from vestiges of the Jammeh era are confronted and addressed. Through such measures, it is expected that the new President of The Gambia will inherit an environment with a reasonable level of peace and security, to roll out his vision for the good people of The Gambia.

The determination of ECOWAS, the cooperation of the UN Security Council, and indeed, the wider international community, as well as the spontaneous jubilation of The Gambians home and abroad, have sent a clear message that the political adjustment engineered to subvert the will of the people, unconstitutional alterations in political power, democratic dictatorships and paternalistic autocracies that characterised governance of yesteryears will no longer be tolerated.

As a pre-eminent stakeholder in the enterprise to maintain peace and security and a vanguard of peacekeeping in the sub-region, Ghana, with the commitment of 205 troops, ensured that it enhanced its political leverage in the sub-region.

His Excellency President Akufo-Addo’s decision to request former President John Dramani Mahama to continue his mediation role alongside other subregional leaders in The Gambia, is a lesson in pragmatism and a true reflection of His Excellency’s outstanding knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of international relations and diplomacy. Ultimately, this is a success story for the sub-region.

Democracy has triumphed over dictatorship. More grease to the elbow of ECOWAS for promoting peace in the sub-region.