SUPPORTING STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT TO CONGRATULATE H. E. PRESIDENT AKUFO-ADDO AS AU GENDER CHAMPION FOR 2017 AND CO-CHAIR OF UNSDG BY HONOURABLE ALEXANDER K. AFENYO-MARKIN, MP FOR EFFUTU - 6 JULY, 2017

Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to comment on the Statement made by the Hon Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection. Mr Speaker, if I may repeat myself, thank you for the opportunity to comment on this Statement made by the Hon Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection, pursuant to Standing Order 70 (2) of our rules. I commend the content of the Statement and also respect the views expressed by Hon Members who spoke before me. I would like to add that, we should not, as a nation, be selective in the way we view things, especially when it comes to awards of this nature.

Mr Speaker, not too long ago, we celebrated our Republic Day and in this very House, Hon Members were of the view that we should change our attitudes and develop a new spirit of volunteerism and patriotism. However, it comes as a surprise that, in the same vein, when the President of the Republic has been honoured, we are made to believe that it is not only him who deserved it, but that others laid the foundation. I agree that others played a role. In a similar vein, when things go wrong sometimes and references are made to past misdeeds, same should be accepted in good faith, if that is the way we want to go.

Mr Speaker, it is important to note that the President has respected the views of the minority, vulnerable and our women, and therefore, has given them prominence in his Government. The issue is not about how many are in Cabinet but how many have been appointed as Ministers or given other important roles to play. If we look at articles 27 and 28 of our 1992 Constitution and proceed further to article 29, it is clear that our Constitution makes provision for various individuals in certain categories to be well protected. So, it is not only the duty of the President but the collective duty of the leadership of this country, to ensure that the rights of all these categories of persons are well catered for. Therefore, if the President is leading the charge in ensuring that what has been done before is followed, we have to commend him.

On this occasion that he has received an award, it is important that we congratulate him. This is because if he had not, I am sure that he would not have received such a recognition. Mr Speaker, we are also aware that in Ghana today, the school feeding policy has been expanded to take care of the vulnerable and those who cannot afford. We are also aware that by September, children would enjoy free education at the Senior High School (SHS) level. All these, put together, point to a single positive sign that the President is ready to lead and that his focus is on the vulnerable in ensuring that the balance is struck. On an occasion like this, it would not be appropriate to be overly partisan in our comments.

Very well Mr Speaker, I am under your protection. They say he is a lion. On an occasion like this, it is important that we guard our comments in a manner that would not be seen as overly partisan. It is the President of the Republic who has won an award, for and on behalf of the people
of Ghana. If it is seen as though the President has done nothing and that the award was there as abona fide for Ghana, that would be wrong.

As Hon Ntoso said, the President was recognised for his efforts in deepening gender equity. So, it is for us as a House to take it on board and play our role. What is our role? The role in terms of advocacy is to ensure that we sustain the affirmative action drive that was initiated some years back, so that women and other vulnerable groups in our society would know that the country cares for them.

Mr Speaker, to conclude, a contribution on the floor led to a quote in the Constitution about spousal rights. The impression I got was that, the provision in the Constitution which enjoins this House to enact a legislation is for the protection of women. It is never so. A spouse is a spouse. It is for the protection of spouses and not the protection of women. That must be made clear, so that nobody carries the impression that there is a provision in the Constitution that says that this House should enact laws to protect women. That is not the law. The law is that there should be an enactment to give effect to spousal rights. My limited understanding of the word “spouse” is either a man, or woman in marriage. It is not only the wife; that is not the law.

Mr Speaker, with this explanation which is leading the Hon Deputy Minority Leader to nod in agreement, I would like to take my bow, since I see other Hon Members in very anxious mood to make very meaningful contributions on the matters raised on the floor.

I also thank Hon Otiko A. Djaba