Mr Speaker, I am happy to contribute to this able Statement made by our Hon Colleague, Hon Emmanuel K. Bedzrah which eulogises the Hon Second Deputy Speaker. Mr Speaker, I am happy about the Statement in the sense that since I came to this House, I have never heard Parliament make time to speak well of one of us, unless the person died. Mr Speaker, we are good at doing it when we are dead and gone and I stand corrected. This is the first time I am seeing this happening and let us commend Mr Speaker for allowing space for this to be done.

Mr Speaker, let me say that there are two gentlemen in the Chamber today, whom I hold in very high esteem. My coming to and continued stay in this House really hinges on their advice. The first one, is Hon Alban Bagbin. If I would take you through memory lane, that in the year 2005, the late Dr Gibril Adamu Mohammed was sworn-in in this Chamber to represent the people of Asawase. After 39 days, he died and then we needed to replace him. Based on the Islamic tradition, he had to be buried the same day he died and right at the funeral grounds, Hon Alban Bagbin said he wanted to talk to me.

Mr Speaker, innocently, at the funeral grounds, I went closer to him and he told me that they have been told that I am capable of replacing the gentleman and I was shocked. This is because, yes, I was very interested in politics at the university level; and I was very active but I had truly not planned of coming to Parliament that soon. So, I told him that sincerely, this was not something that I had wanted to do and I would be more than happy to support whoever the party chose to represent it in that by-election just as I had done for the late Dr Gibril Adamu Mohammed. He insisted and got Imams to speak to me and at a point, the agreement we had was that I would represent the constituency for only one term and we agreed. I am still serving the one term, I have not finished serving —

Mr Speaker, I say that I hold my being here to Allah who created me and to Hon Bagbin. This is because had it not been for his perseverance, there was no way I would have been in this House because I thought I was not ready to be in Parliament then. In the year 2007, we travelled to Geneva with the current Hon Majority Leader, then the Hon Majority Chief Whip and Hon Bagbin was the Hon Minority Leader. In our conversation, I confided in the Hon Majority Leader that what they were doing with this small salary with all this confusion, I was going to bow out.

Then Hon Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu told me that I was one gentleman he had noticed with a lot of potential, so, I should please not step out. Little did I know that our conversation was extended to my Leader and I was summoned. Hon Bagbin said that he deliberately watched me and gave me a lot of assignments, so that, I could be interested in staying in the House. So, I should please stop thinking that I would not come back to the House again. That is why I said I hold these two gentlemen in high esteem to my continual stay in this House because they encouraged me.
Mr Speaker, today, we are eulogising the Hon Bagbin as the first Hon Member of Parliament who has been in the House for 25 years. Let us admit that there were a lot of things that they were doing which today, most of our Hon Colleagues who come to this House do not understand. They were identifying whether regardless of one’s political side — because I have been told more than 10 times by the Hon Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu — even though, we did not belong to the same political party, that the way I am working very hard, I would one day be a good Hon Member of Parliament irrespective of party affiliation. Today, almost everyone who comes to this House — and I am happy, hoping that the Hon Majority Chief Whip would agree with me — that even before the swearing-in ceremony, Hon Members were running to the Leaders to ask which committees were juicy and which they would want to serve on.

Mr Speaker, when we came, our Leaders were able to identify those with huge potentials and gave them opportunities in the form of assignments to build them up. Today, many of us who come to this House are looking for the opportunity either to make money, to travel or do other things. Mr Speaker, when we are talking about high attrition rate, let us be honest with each other by looking at ourselves too. This Chamber is supposed to contain 275 of us, let us also observe how many of us do stay in this Chamber constantly to work and to help the development of Parliament. Many of us just come, sit down for about 30 minutes to one hour and then step out. Some of us were trained by Hon Bagbin, that when we enter this Chamber, unless there is a very good reason to step out, we do not step out.

We stay because this is the biggest university you could find in the world. Parliament is the biggest university; because everything from archaeology to zoology of the country passes through Parliament and therefore, just sitting down and listening is more than enough for one to learn. Mr Speaker, he also taught us that when someone makes a statement, they make reference to the Standing Orders. So, we should make sure that at all times, we have our Standing Orders and Constitutions by us. As we sit in this Chamber, when one goes round, how many of us have our Standing Orders and Constitution with us? He told us that if something is quoted 10 times, we should open them and look at the quotations 10 times. This is because it is the only way it would stick in our memories.

The Hon Bagbin taught us that if people were debating on the floor and a Senior Hon Colleague said something that we did not understand, when the House adjourns, we should walk to that person and try to understand the basis of that person’s argument. There was deliberate grooming in this House. Today, people come to the House and they think that they are even wiser than their Leaders. Simply because, with the greatest of respect, maybe, they are older, or they were classmates and they were better than you, or even in the political parties, they are much older in politics before you became an Hon Member of Parliament.

So, we are beginning to behave in a disorganised manner and all we do is to accuse each other and do things that do not augur well. I say this because we need to find a way of making Parliament grow and it is very worrying that after every election, we have almost 50 per cent of new Hon Members in the House. There is no way we can maintain a Parliament when after every
election, 50 per cent of the House is made up of new Hon Members. The attrition rate is very high and I can speak for the Minority side. Mr Speaker, today, the only person that we have serving a seventh term is Hon Bagbin and we have Hon Collins Dauda, who is serving his sixth term. On our side, we do not have anybody serving the fifth term; and the fourth term Hon Members are about 11, the third term are about 18 and the second term are 48 and then we have the first term Members of Parliament being about 40.

It clearly shows that the attrition rate is so high. Let me now turn my attention to the cause of attrition rate outside. Mr Speaker, having stayed in this House for over a decade, if we do not do away with two things, by my observation, we would continue to have the challenges that we have regardless of what we do. In my view, as painful as it may be, all of us have been involved in it and I mean, as the Hon Majority Leader would say, someone was a champion of one thing or the other. The excessive partisanship in Parliament. Mr Speaker, if we, as a Parliament do not wake up and rise above excessive partisanship in this House, there is no way we would make the mark to get us to stay in this Chamber for long.

This is because, almost everything that the Hon Members of the Majority side of the House are doing is to protect their own and the Hon Members of the Minority side are doing everything to drag the Hon Members of the Majority down. That is what we seem to be doing in this House. With the greatest of respect — When one is on the Majority side, it is as if when they were there, they were protecting their own interest and how would one now want to expose them and a lot of pressure goes to the Hon Majority Leader and his team on the front bench. So, at a point, they also lose guard and it is about they protecting their own interest. No matter what the Majority side does, the Minority side would say that if they should acknowledge the Majority side, they would never come to power. So, no matter what it is, they would insist and push them down. Mr Speaker, if we do not do away with this attitude, there is no way this House would grow.

Mr Speaker, secondly and very importantly is the politics of patronage and this is one of the main banes of our challenges as Hon Members of Parliament. Mr Speaker, a person gets elected and everybody in the constituency thinks that the person should be the Father Christmas and provide for food, health, bills and support people to get jobs and buy other things. Mr Speaker, even when other people are getting married, they think that because they have voted for you and they were members of your executive, so, you have to support them.

Mr Speaker, if we do not find a way of legislating and criminalising the excessive patronage in our politics in Ghana, then there is no way that the politics in this country would develop. This is because it would all be about elections; one goes for the election, when it is done then the person would come back, and beginning 8th January the person would start working towards elections. We would never do anything out of conscience — just because it has to be done, we would all do things, so that we would win the next elections. Mr Speaker, if we do this, then there is no way that we would be able to develop this House. It is sad.
Mr Speaker, last time, when Hon Bagbin was the Hon Majority Leader with Hon Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu as the then Hon Minority Leader, they had to struggle through their primaries. Not the election itself but the climax towards the contests — the insults and name calling. One would wonder whether it is worth it — having developed their constituencies, themselves and this House to that level — must they be treated to that level of humiliation?

Mr Speaker, people called them names and said all manner of things about them. There was a person who said in Twi that “Na aden, ono nko ara na owo nyansa?” to wit “Is he the only wise man in this constituency?” He has done enough and so he should go. I was on the radio and asked him whether he wanted to remove somebody who is an Hon Leader in the House and then when he gets here, he would come and start from behind? Mr Speaker, then he said that when he comes, he would come and sit on his chair. Mr Speaker, that was what he thought — that when he comes here he would come and sit on the Hon Majority Leader’s chair and continue from where he left. This is so sad.

Mr Speaker, as individuals and Hon Members of Parliament, we must do the best that we could to get our constituents to understand that our focus is law making. Yes, we could support as much as possible but it should not be as though all we have to do is to constantly do almost everything for a constituent. Mr Speaker, when we do that we would never be able to meet their expectations and definitely every four years, a chunk would drop along the way. Mr Speaker, the late Rt Hon Speaker, Hon Peter Ala Adjetey, did something which I believe we should bring back. My Hon Leaders are here to correct me. Close to the end of the tenure, certificates were presented to every Hon Member of Parliament.

There was usually a dinner and a certificate was presented to the Hon Member that he was in this House over a certain period. Mr Speaker, I believe that the last time was with the late Hon Peter Ala Adjetey but when Hon Sekyi-Hughes was the Rt Hon Speaker, it did not happen and so on till today. Mr Speaker, we do not want to recognise ourselves, yet we would want outsiders to recognise us. I believe that the Rt Hon Speaker should give it a thought because, through that we popularise those who are doing very well among us and give Hon Members certificates of having been here over the period.

Mr Speaker, because I know that the Hon Majority Leader or someone from the Majority side would also speak, let me end by saying that this is a very useful thing that we are doing for ourselves — to identify people who have contributed heavily and recognise them while they are alive and are still Hon Members of Parliament. Mr Speaker, let me say without any fear of contradiction that if there is one other person that we would need to find the opportunity to really acknowledge the immense contribution to this House then, obviously, it is the Hon Majority Leader. This is because everyone and those of us who have been in this Chamber over a decade would admit that he may have his shortfalls and weaknesses, but when it comes to law making, I doubt that if we are going to count the first five Members of Parliament in this Chamber, he would be one.
Mr Speaker, and for him to do this over 20 years, then we would need to definitely find time to also acknowledge his effort just as we are doing today for our senior Hon Colleague, Hon Alban Bagbin. We do not have to wait until they are dead before we would come and say all the nice things about them when they cannot hear but only their families would hear. Mr Speaker, while they are still alive and they are still Hon Members, let us continue to do this. Mr Speaker, I thank you sincerely for the opportunity to contribute to this Statement and I hope that our new Hon Colleagues would take a lot of lessons from the senior Hon Colleagues, like the Hon Majority Leader and Hon Bagbin.

Mr Speaker, thank you very much.