Mr Speaker, I will start by thanking our two Hon Colleagues, Hon Alex Adomako-Mensah, the Hon Member for Sekyere Afram Plains; and Hon Andy Kwame Appiah-Kubi.

Mr Speaker, I would want to make preliminary comments on the Statements, beginning with that from Hon Adomako Mensah. It is titled, “The conflict between the Fulani herdsmen and farming communities in Ghana: Any way forward?”

Mr Speaker, the problem is not about the Fulani herdsmen. It is about recalcitrant nomadic herdsmen. This is because the majority of Fulanis resident in Ghana are law-abiding.

There is also the local component of Fulani herdsmen in-country, who care for cattle and live peacefully with the communities in which they reside.

What we are talking about are the nomads who come seasonally into the country. So, we need to put that in context.

In the same vein, I would disagree with the Ministry in-charge of the Zongos being involved in this matter. It is not a particular group responsibility.

Mr Speaker, let me say that this matter is both pertinent and perennial. The resultant ramifications are pervasive and cannot be ignored.

In just my short time at the Ministry of the Interior, Hon Andy Kwame Appiah-Kubi has already alluded to the intervention we had to make in his area.

Mr Speaker, let me give this case around the Abetifi area. On 29th November, 2016, one Mr Asomani, who was 40 years old, was found dead. Then on 28th January, 2017, a Fulani man named Mr Danyi, who was 30 years old, was found dead. On 29th January, 2017, one Mr Kojo Boateng, who was 20 years old, was found dead in the bush. On 2nd February, 2017, one Mr Abubakari Maanu, who was 30 years old was found dead in his hut; he was a Fulani man. On 7th February, 2017, intelligence information had it that 15 Fulanis entered the area and started firing and a village called Mempeasem in the Abetifi area has been abandoned. All the villagers have escaped, leaving behind animals only.

Mr Speaker, the reaction so far is the deployment of 10 police personnel from the Rapid Deployment Unit of the Koforidua Police Station; 20 police officers from Nkawkaw; and 10 police officers from the Formed Police Unit from Accra, which made a total number of 40 police officers deployed to that area.
Mr Speaker, we have to realise that this is a collective responsibility, and there are no quick fixes.

Let us start with some introspection; Parliament has failed so far. In 2011, we set up a Committee to deliberate on this matter and to report; yet it never took place.

We should accept that it is regrettable, and commit ourselves to doing better before we begin to point the fingers which have been pointed here; at the Police and other organisations. So, it is a collective one.

Mr Speaker, what do we do as Parliament to show that as the representatives elected to this House, we are committed to this pertinent and perennial problem? We need to deal with that first before we can move forward.

Mr Speaker, let me however, deal with the security aspect of it. There are logistical challenges. We have the herdsmen entering Ghana, and our borders are supposed to be manned by officers of the Ghana Immigration Service, who do not even have pen knives, let alone guns. They do not even have one rifle.

Mr Speaker, how are they going to prevent armed Fulani men from coming in? That is a challenge we need to look at.

I have just talked about one deployment in the Abetifi area — a small village and Hon Andy Appiah-Kubi would testify to the deployment in this area. In just two weeks, in that Ministry and already the numbers are going to be stretched. The problem is national and it is in all parts of the country. How can the Police man all those places?

First, we clearly have a shortage of men and Abetifi is now facing a challenge of fuel to run around

Mr Speaker, what I now want us to do, is to go beyond the intentions that Hon James Agalga said, noble as they might be, and to take concrete actions since it is multi-ministerial.

We have known that there are best practices such as in Brazil, where one has grazing areas and the Ministry for Food and Agriculture (MoFA) needs to be part of this for us to achieve that. There are examples which may be in Nigeria and so on. We need to work expeditiously towards that to make sure that we solve this problem once and for all. But we need to profile the Fulanis; we need data on them so that those who then come in can be handled.

Mr Speaker, yes, chiefs might play their part but some of them have condoned the actions of the herdsmen and we should not overlook that. Mr Speaker, I, therefore, think that we should give ourselves a certain time frame. If it is this year, let us work together on legislation that would help us to have the MoFA come out with zoning, grazing areas and let us also know that we need the numbers, the logistics and so on.

For instance, right now, we are facing challenges of tents and vehicles. We need to focus and deal with it, otherwise, we would talk and come again and re-talk and we would make no progress.
Mr Speaker, I would therefore, support the proposals made by Hon Andy Appiah Kubi where he talks of Parliament giving certain directives, so that when we talk here, we should arrive at certain conclusions that we can hold ourselves responsible for, move forward and deal with.

1.30 p.m.

Mr Speaker, I think that I can only say that we would continue to do our best and so far, we are going to do what we can but we are stretched and we would need the intervention of the military at a certain stage. The Operation Cow Leg I and Cow Leg II were a combined operation between the police and soldiers depending on the fire power that they meet and as the Statement made by Hon Adomako-Mensah has pointed out, they carry really sophisticated weapons and therefore, we have to face it and make sure we do all in our power to deal with it.

Mr Speaker, meanwhile, permit me to say that we would do our best to keep the situation in the interim and we would expect that before Statements are made here, we are informed as was done in the case of Hon Andy Appiah-Kubi and we would do our best to work together.