SUPPORTING STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT ON THE RISE IN DISCRIMINATION, INTOLERANCE AND HATE CRIMES IN THE CURRENT GLOBAL CONTEXT BY HONOURABLE DR ZANETOR AGYEMAN-RAWLINGS, MP FOR KLOTTEY KORLE - 16 MARCH, 2017

Thank you very much. Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to make a comment on the Statement and also to commend the Hon Member who made the Statement for a brilliant presentation. I would like to make just a few comments on some of the underlying reasons for discrimination, and it is not to condone the existence of discrimination, but it is also to point out the fact that sometimes, the reasons are not as obvious as the differences in our skin tone or religious affiliation.

Sometimes, if you peel away the layers enough, you would actually find that it is the discrepancy in the socio-economic status of members of the community that can aggravate such situations. In referring to that, it perhaps should become something that is of concern to whether it is political leaders or governments worldwide. This is because it is not simply a case of people discriminating against others because they just hate those other people.

Perhaps we should look at it as an important part of nation building, regarding the sensitisation of our young people so that by the time they reach that age, they already have a recognition of the fact that our differences are not a reason to hate or destroy one another, but also to perhaps, hope that we would have enough political will with various governments to understand that, in alleviating poverty, they also remove some of the factors that drive, whether it is terrorism or violence or hate crime.

If you look at the recent trend in the radicalisation of women, when it comes to terrorism, if you peel away the layers, a lot of it comes down to the economics of it and some of the discrimination women face as a result of their lower levels of socio-economic standing, and the fact that they are not empowered.

Therefore, it is not simply a discrimination issue; it is something that affects various aspects of our lives. Therefore, if we are to deal with this, we need to look at it not just as a peace and security issue, but how we make our societies more holistic, so that when we deal with one another, it is from a place of knowledge and not a place of ignorance, arrogance, fear or hate.

It is also with the hope that in looking at these various situations where people are discriminated against, for example, in the South African situation, the issues of the economic existence of the various perpetrators of these crimes need to be taken into account. This is because in peace building or conflict resolution, it is not enough to look at the surface of the reason when something happens.

But in a bid to make sure that we deal with the issue in the long term, we also need to look at the underlying layers of the problem and tackle all of these because a lot of these issues that arise tend to start in areas where there are densely populated communities who live in abject poverty.
It only takes a few factors that trigger a lot of the violence and the most obvious victims tend to be people who are not from those communities. So, it becomes a political issue where there has to be that will to deal with some of these huge gaps in the economic status of various members of the community, in order to help deal with some of these hate crimes that we witness worldwide.

Thank you very much.