SUPPORTING STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT ON THE BRIBERY ALLEGATION AGAINST MINORITY MEMBERS OF THE APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE BY HONOURABLE DR NANA AYEW AFRIYE, MP FOR EFFIDUASE ASOKORE BY HON HARUNA IDDRISU, MINORITY LEADER AND MP FOR TAMALE SOUTH - 31 JANUARY, 2017

Mr Speaker, I rise, with your indulgence, probably, before I proceed, to draw your attention to the fact that, while the Statement by the Hon First Deputy Speaker and Hon Chairman of the Appointments Committee urged you to grant him immunity to proceed to Court to redeem his image, subsequent thereupon, the Hon Member has also asked for the referral of the matter to the Privileges Committee in a complaint.

Mr Speaker, let me also draw your attention to the fact that the Hon Mahama Ayariga, supported by the Hon Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa and the Hon Alhasan Suhuyini Sayibu, wrote formally to you on 30th January, 2017 requesting an internal inquiry into this matter. Mr Speaker, whatever it is, the bribery scandal or allegation means a lot to this House — to the reputation and the dignity of this House and to the integrity of the Hon Members of this House.

Mr Speaker, the Ghanaian public as I have observed, is very angry and would want nothing but that we establish the truth or otherwise of this allegation. It is one Hon Member’s word against the other. Coincidentally, the Hon First Deputy Speaker and Chairman of the Appointments Committee also doubles as the Chairman of the Privileges Committee. The principles of law — even though naturally, the Privileges Committee would have a Vice Chairman — a referral to that Committee where he would preside over the matter itself would lead to questions.

Mr Speaker, the Ghanaian public and the world at large, expect nothing but for us to establish and share with them the truth of a full-scale investigation to establish who is truthful. I am minded by a quote that, God cannot be for and against the same matter at the same time. God would stand by those who are truthful and righteous and those who are morally right against wrong. [Hear! Hear!] It must be established.

Mr Speaker, I have heard the Hon First Deputy Speaker — and as the Ranking Member on the Appointments Committee, we are particularly concerned. We need to redeem personal integrities, secure personal reputations and restore the dignity and reputation of this House. We must do so only after a careful and thorough investigation into the matter.

We, on this side of the House, have no objection to you proceeding further. Suffice it to add that, I would wish that, given that the three other Hon Colleagues have requested an internal scrutiny — While I have no control over what your judgment would be, I would request that, you refer this to a special Ad hoc Committee. May I refer you to Order 191 of our Standing Orders. Mr Speaker, with your indulgence, I beg to read: “The House may at any time by motion appoint Special or Ad Hoc Committee to investigate any matter of public importance; to consider any Bill that does not come under the jurisdiction of any of the Standing or Select Committee.”
As a result of the reason I gave, that the Chairman of the Appointments Committee and the one making the complaint, supported by the Hon Member, in order to redeem his image, chairs the Appointments Committee. Mr Speaker, we are gradually eroding and betraying public trust in some of the things that we do and say. We need to end this image problem. I would, again, request under Standing Order 191, that we have a committee.

In times past, the public felt uneasy that many a time, even when referrals are made to the Privileges Committee, the details are not shared with them. We would be guided by your good example. We would want to get to the bottom of this particular matter. Who has done what? Who has engaged in what transaction to achieve what?

Mr Speaker, may I further request you to refer this matter to a special Ad hoc Committee. Should they work and find their work unsatisfactory, together with the Ghanaian public, we may consider other possible and appropriate legal remedies to look into the matter. What is important to us, is to establish the truth or otherwise of the allegations and for them to establish otherwise.

I accordingly submit that, Mr Speaker, you refer this matter without prejudice, to ensure that the truth is established. Accordingly, they would invite witnesses to testify. Then the Committee would submit a report to you and whatever the sanctions, this House should not fail the Ghanaian public in exacting what is right from whoever is right or wrong. I am unable, at this juncture, to know who is standing where God stands; where the truth stands.

Thank you, Mr Speaker------

Mr Speaker, we would essentially take guidance from you. My Hon Colleague referred to article 115 of the Constitution but there are many other provisions of the Constitution and by convention, Parliament has an investigative function. One, is to investigate alleged bribery scandals and submit a report to you. Mr Speaker, we would take a cue from you. It is important that this matter is investigated and brought to closure and the findings shared with the Ghanaian public. We need to win public trust and public confidence in the work that we do.

Mr Speaker, I do associate myself with the Hon Majority Leader, in supporting that you set up this ad hoc committee to look into the matter and bring a report to Parliament for us to act on the outcomes and recommendations of the Committee. Mr Speaker, we would wait for your guidance on the matter – I do not need to second the Motion. I do not think it should come by a Motion. I have got guidance from Mr Speaker and so, I beg to second the Motion-----

Mr Speaker, once again, thank you very much. Mr Speaker, even before you proceed to hear us on the composition, terms of reference and time lines for the committee, I would have wished that, you put a Question to the earlier Motion on the Ad hoc committee that is, the special and investigative committee as you decided, to look into this matter. Mr Speaker, but be as it may, I support the five (5) member committee. We have Hon Benson Tongo Baba and Hon Magnus Kofi Amoatey, together with the other three (3) names that the Hon Majority Leader mentioned. Mr
Speaker, there is enormous public interest in this matter. It is also a matter which affects
the reputation of persons and that of Parliament. I would support that, not later than 30 days, the
committee should submit its report.

Its terms of reference is already defined and known. Firstly, to investigate into the alleged bribery
allegation by Hon Mahama Ayariga and company. Secondly, and to do an internal inquiry
whether, there were efforts and attempts to bribe Hon Members of the Appointments
Committee and thirdly, the complaint of the Hon First Deputy Speaker. Mr Speaker, as a rule, and
thankfully, we have done that; no member of the Appointments Committee should be associated
with the work of the committee. So, part of the terms of reference is, to look into the remit of
the complaint of the Hon First Deputy Speaker and the assertions he made on matters affecting
his standing-----

Mr Speaker, if you may direct, that as he stated, it is captured as his primary terms of reference,
and other related matters as the Hon Majority Leader said. Thank you-----