Mr Speaker, let me thank you for the opportunity to associate myself with the Statement ably made by the Hon Afenyo-Markin on the ECOWAS intervention in The Gambia and its implications on the peace and security of the West African sub-region.

Mr Speaker, in doing so, I commend the maker of the Statement and wish to state without hesitation that after listening to him and many other Hon Colleagues, one could only come to a conclusion that, the democratic and political developments in The Gambia are a perfect example of a curious jumble of paradoxes and contradictions, particularly relative to Ghana, where open and democratic elections have been conducted, transitions of power done in respect of the law and the Constitution of Ghana. But in respect of The Gambia, it is the opposite.

Mr Speaker, it is important that we understand the undercurrent of the politics in The Gambia, that around the year 1994, when the former President, Jammeh came to power at the time — in Africa particularly, in the 1980s up to the 1990s, military intervention was the practice that was hailed and Ghana was no exception to it. If you would want to be reminded, in many other periods of our democratic journeys in the years 1969 and 1972, we went through those sad experiences.

That is why I again agree with the maker of the Statement that the ECOWAS Heads of State together with the new political leadership of The Gambia must act with a pulse of urgency on democratic and constitutional reforms in The Gambia, one which secures the security and dignity of its citizens with respect to its fundamental rights and freedoms.

However, Mr Speaker, it is a known fact, and with yourself being a good diplomat, that the undercurrent to the former President Jammeh’s u-turn and not handing over when he was supposed to, was the threat that he would be handed to the International Criminal Court of Justice (ICC) for abuses and atrocities associated with his administration. That was the undercurrent.

Mr Speaker, the lesson again is, let us be gracious in defeat and be magnanimous with victory. But today, what is important is holding the unity of The Gambia, and we have seen other examples following major other interventions. I do not want to refer to post-Libya, but the lessons for ECOWAS Heads of State are not to start celebrating and jubilating because they sent a mighty military force to a small, beautiful country.

When one says 250 armed forces, it is about a quarter of the Armed Forces population of The Gambia. Therefore, it is easy to deal with. Could we imagine if Nigeria was to walk in darkness, whether ECOWAS would have the muscle and strength to that, which they have done in The Gambia in Nigeria? It poses a lesson.
Nevertheless, Mr Speaker, in line with the principle of respecting democratic regimes, from 1994 till date, we had one known leader of The Gambia. West African leaders must say no to despotic rule and despotic regimes. Why must somebody sit to rule a country, more than the mandatory eight constitutional years?

So, part of the democratic and constitutional reforms of The Gambia must touch at the heart of the tenure of office. It is not seamless twenty-two years as President, but we are encouraged by the intervention of the ECOWAS, and I should be concluding that, in Ghana, we demonstrated as usual, the highest political maturity and political diplomacy in President Mahama, as he then was, now a former President, but still acting in the capacity to represent the Republic of Ghana.

At least, the respect of the transition process that not the change in Government reflected in what mediating role he played. Mr Speaker, I am sure ECOWAS did not wake up to recommend an ECOWAS force. It was on the basis of political leadership and good counsel they got.

Mr Speaker, finally, for those of us who want to learn diplomacy, the President of The Gambia, President Barrow was sworn in in an Embassy in Senegal. Again, a lesson for diplomatic learners, that at least, the territory of The Gambia extends to the offices of its Embassy in Senegal. But how the citizens would have wished that this happened within the corridor of the State of The Gambia.

I should commend the leadership, which President Mahama provided, supported by the support and counseling he got from President Nana Akufo-Addo. Ghana must continue to lead by example and shine as a beacon of democracy. I believe we are available for The Gambia to learn from some good democratic practices and ideals.

I thank the maker of the Statement and I associate myself with it.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.