Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute to the Statement made by the Hon Minister for Defence.

Mr Speaker, I would wish to commend highly the efforts of the new Hon Minister for Defence in the light of the recent happenings in The Gambia, and by extension, the Government of President Nana Akufo-Addo.

Mr Speaker, my Hon Colleague, the former Minister for Petroleum congratulated former President Mahama for the efforts he made when the West African Community — [ Interruption] — selected him to join hands with his colleague Presidents from Nigeria and Liberia to mediate and ensure that the situation in The Gambia did not escalate into war.

I would also wish to commend our gallant troops who were deployed to maintain the peace in The Gambia. They have always been professional and in times like this, we can be very proud of them and expect them to deliver.

Mr Speaker, I would wish to point out that the next time violence threatens to break loose in a neighbouring State, such as The Gambia, the ECOWAS may want to hasten slowly.

Mr Speaker, I say so because, in the wake of controversy that engulfed The Gambia — Yes, former President Yahya Jammeh conceded defeat initially. But according to him and his followers, they detected that there were certain mistakes in the collation of results and that the elections may have been marred by certain acts of fraud perpetrated by the electoral commission to favour his opponent.

Mr Speaker, I do not hold brief for former President Jammeh, but we need to be careful here. This is because when a contestant in any election cries foul, the person must be given the opportunity to test the outcome of the results in a judicial forum. Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, the judiciary did not help matters in The Gambia. They abdicated the mandate to adjudicate over electoral disputes in The Gambia, thereby leaving Yahya Jammeh with no option than to declare a state of emergency.

Mr Speaker, if the judiciary in The Gambia had lived up to expectation, I strongly believe that, there would not have been the need for the ECOWAS to deploy troops as they did.

Mr Speaker, our own example is worth emulating. When the current President lost elections in 2012, Mr Speaker, the judiciary in Ghana did not abdicate its role. So, for eight solid months, we were litigating in the Supreme Court. That is the rule of law; those are the dictates of the rule of law.

Mr Speaker, so, as a sub-region, we should be interested in ensuring that all the institutions of State, including the arms of government, are fully functional in member States. We do not have
to wait for when conflict is about to erupt — Only to realise that some organs of State are not fully functional, then we are compelled or constrained to intervene without allowing contestants to have their day in court.

Mr Speaker, I also wish to commend the new Hon Minister for Defence for the effort he made. I am sure that he had not even settled down in office when he had to be baptised with fire with The Gambian crises. Listening to him, he gave an indication that Ghanaian troops had secured some Ghanaian communities in The Gambia. I believe that is an effort worth commending and I would want to congratulate him on that effort.

This is because not too long ago, this same country was in the news for the murder of over 44 Ghanaians for no apparent reason. So, in the midst of confusion, the decision to deploy Ghanaian troops to secure Ghanaian communities in The Gambia was a welcome news and I would wish to congratulate the Hon Minister on that effort.

Mr Speaker, with these few words, I would wish to say kudos to the Government, including former President Mahama for the effort they played in ensuring that peace returned to The Gambia.

Thank you very much.