Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Statement ably made by the Hon Members for Sekyere Afram Plains and Asante Akim North.

Mr Speaker, I would congratulate them for taking time off their extremely busy schedules to write Statements extensively on the subject of nomadic herdsmen and its negative effect on the economic growth of this country.

Mr Speaker, I would wish to draw the attention of the House to the fact that the issue of nomadic herdsmen — and I would prefer to use the phrase “nomadic herdsmen” because increasingly, the reference to the subject as “the problems posed by Fulani herdsmen” leads to a situation where if care is not taken, xenophobia would engulf us and that is a dangerous issue that would pose security threat for our dear country. So, I would rather use the phrase “nomadic herdsmen”.

Mr Speaker, Ghana is party to several Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocols on free movement of persons, goods and even transhumance; the movement of livestock across borders.

Mr Speaker, unfortunately however, as a dualist State, we have omitted, as a country, to pass legislation to give effect to the protocol on transhumance. But as a country, our failure to do so does not in any way take away the obligations that arise from that particular protocol on transhumance.

We would have to be very circumspect in discussing this subject. As a nation, we have certain obligations, such as the setting up of grazing fields and even veterinary services for the transhumance or the nomadic herdsmen to take advantage of when they enter our territory. Unfortunately, we have not honoured our part of the bargain.

Mr Speaker, certain States also have certain obligations, such as notifying the host countries about the movement of nomadic herdsmen from their countries into our country. So, these are issues we would need to look at dispassionately and legislate on the subject matter to give effect to the ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance, to which Ghana is a party.

Our response as a country to the issue has been very ad hoc and that has lightly contributed to our inability to find lasting solutions to the problem.

Mr Speaker, whenever the dry season sets in and the nomadic herdsmen enter our country, as they have entered the Asante Akim North and Sekyere Afram Plains constituencies, the response
of the security agencies in our country is to set up task forces such as Operation CowLeg and once the issue dies down with the setting in of the rains, everybody goes to sleep.

The following year, when the dry season sets in again and the cattle in our neighbouring countries, the Sahelian countries cannot find fodder to graze and enter our jurisdiction, then immediately we go back to set up those same task forces. That is not a holistic way to deal with the issue.

Mr Speaker, it is good that the Hon Minister for the Interior is in the House. I would want to appeal to him to use his good offices to continue with a project we started during our time at the Ministry of the Interior.

Mr Speaker, during our time, we had contemplated the setting up of a tripartite committee made up of the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, to consider a proposed legislation for the consideration of this House.

Mr Speaker, my appeal is for the Hon Minister for the Interior to consider to continue with that project we started, which was to set up the tripartite committee we had contemplated, comprising the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, to consider the proposed legislation that we most desire at this point in time.

Mr Speaker, Nigeria has taken the lead. The Nigerian Senate has passed a law in recent times to deal with the subject and an important intervention that that law has introduced in Nigeria is the establishment of a Commission to deal with the issue of nomadic herdsmen.

Mr Speaker, that particular Act gives meaning to the ECOWAS Protocol on Transhumance.

We would have to be careful as a country because if care is not taken, our handling of nomadic herdsmen, whether they are Fulanis or Kotokolis or whatever could result in our breach of international law. So, we need to take account of that and set in motion our agenda to introduce a legislation on the subject in this House for our immediate consideration.

Thank you.