SUPPORTING STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT ON THE HARASSMENT OF ONION SUPPLIERS BY THE POLICE AND CUSTOMS OFFICIALS BY HONOURABLE DR ROBERT BABA KUGANAB-LEM, MP FOR BINDURI, BY HON JAMES AGALGA, MP FOR BUILSA NORTH - 14 FEBRUARY, 2017

Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity. At the outset, I wish to congratulate Dr Kuganab-Lem, the Hon Member for Binduri for making such a wonderful Statement.

Mr Speaker, I wish to place on record that I am a Member of Parliament for a constituency where a lot of cattle are reared. So, on the question of alleged Police misconduct relative to extortion, I would want to say that I am privy to the issue to a large extent, and when I became privy, we did take steps.

The Inspector-General of Police at that time was immediately summoned and directed to deal with the issue. They put in place a number of measures to deal with the issue. But this issue kept recurring. What that meant was that, we needed to adopt a holistic approach to deal with the alleged misconduct on the part of police officers in this country.

Mr Speaker, the Ghana Police Service itself has certain internal mechanisms to deal with misconduct on the part of officers. So, the Police Professionals Standards Bureau was set-up to deal with indiscipline on the part of Police officers.

Unfortunately, the Police Intelligence Professionals Standards (PIPS) has not been decentralised as a result of lack of resources.

So, when the issue of extortion was raised by our Hon Colleague, immediately what came to my mind was that, there is the need for the Government to invest some resources towards the decentralisation of PIPS to make the Police Internal Mechanism that was put in place to deal with misconduct on the part of officers, effective and operational even in the regions.

Mr Speaker, a lot of criticisms have been labelled against the Police for the lack of will to deal with issues of misconduct against its officers. Whenever issues of misconduct are reported against the Police officers, the public doubts whether the Police has the capacity to deal with those issues in a manner that would be satisfactory to the public.

We had the occasion to examine the issue critically at our time at the Ministry of the Interior. We received a number of petitions, some of which pointed to the fact that, there was the need for us to establish an Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) to deal with issues of misconduct reported against the Police.

Mr Speaker, the matter got to the Police Council level and fortunately – we have Hon Dr Dominic A. Ayine here, as former Deputy Attorney-General and Deputy Minister for Justice and he was a member of the Police Council. They dealt extensively with the issue. Unfortunately, we left office.

But in line with the directive principles of State policy, enshrined in our Constitution, I would want to call on the Government of H.E. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo to take up the matter seriously, by seeing to it that, the IPCC is duly set up to deal with allegations of misconduct against
the Police. That way, public confidence in investigations relative to Police misconduct would be engendered.

Mr Speaker, I also wish to state that it is a notorious fact that, before H.E. President Mahama left office, he did cut the sod for work to commence on the Tamale Irrigation Project. When that project comes to fruition or completion, it would serve as a major boost for onion production in the Bawku area.

So, it is important that once as a country, we have invested a lot of money in onion production, our farmers who would engage in that enterprise have value for money. If it is indeed, the case that whenever farmers transport their onions from the Upper East Region and from our neighbouring countries to Accra, moneys are extorted from them, then we need to investigate the matter thoroughly to ensure that, the investment we have made so far as irrigation is concerned, does not go down the drain.

Mr Speaker, once again, I wish to congratulate the Hon Member who made the Statement. This is an issue which has come up time without number, and fortunately, today, he has brought it before this Honourable House. I would pray Mr Speaker to direct that the Ministry of the Interior takes up this matter seriously in particular, the establishment of the IPCC and the decentralisation of PIPS to deal with some of these complaints.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity.