SUPPORTING STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT ON THE PEABO DISASTER BY HONOURABLE FRANK ANNOH-DOMPREH MP FOR NSAWM-ADOAGYIRI BY HON JAMES AGALGA, MP FOR BUILSA NORTH - 27 JANUARY, 2017

Thank you, Mr Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to contribute to the Statement ably made by the Hon Member for Nsawam-Adoagyiri. In doing so, I would like to recall vividly the sad events that happened at a Peabo quarry site on the 23rd of December, 2015.

Mr Speaker, when the incident occurred at the time, in the absence of the Minister for the Interior, I, in my capacity as the Deputy Minister, immediately visited the scene of the accident to assess the situation. I did that in the company of the Inspector-General of Police at the time and some other senior officials from the Ministry of the Interior. Mr Speaker, we sent a team to the scene of the accident to conduct preliminary investigations. Those investigations were carried out by explosive experts from the Ghana Armed Forces. This was to demonstrate the goodwill of Government and how serious Government took the issue at the time.

Mr Speaker, after the preliminary investigations, we again found it necessary to set up an investigative committee at the Ministerial level, to carry out investigations into the possible causes of the tragedy at Peabo. The Hon Member for Nsawam Adoagyiri, in his Statement, alluded to the work done by the investigative committee and an Hon Member suggested that the committee’s report was shelved. The Committee did its work and came out with recommendations that we thought needed the input of the Attorney General’s Department. This is because there were issues of compensation arising from the Committee’s work. So, we duly submitted the Committee’s Report to the Attorney-General’s Department for their input before implementation.

Mr Speaker, this was where we got to before we exited office. So, as I speak, the Report, together with its recommendations are with the Attorney General’s Department. When the Attorney-General’s Department makes an input into the issues of compensation that were raised, I believe strongly that the current Minister for the Interior would implement the recommendations. Furthermore, Hon Annoh-Dompreh has raised issues about disaster management in this country and clearly made an allusion to an attempt by the previous Government to pass the National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO) Bill.

For the information of this House, and as a matter of public record, the NADMO Bill was duly passed into law by the Sixth Parliament under the leadership of His Excellency former President John Dramani Mahama. Mr Speaker, the highlight of the new NADMO Act is that, it seeks to establish a NADMO Fund. With the establishment of the NADMO Fund, I have the strong conviction that the usual problem that NADMO usually encounters, that is, the lack of funding for its operations, would be a thing of the past.

I would urge the current Administration to implement the new Act to the fullest. If that is done, I believe disaster management in this country would be taken to a high level. Mr Speaker, before I conclude, I would like to make an important intervention here. The issue of the importation of
explosives needs to be taken very seriously. This is because what happened at Peabo was that, explosives which had been imported and detonated, wreaked havoc on innocent citizens.

The problem we face is that, the existing legislations which regulate the importation of explosives are scattered, so, there is the need for us to harmonise those legislations in order to enhance the effective supervision of the importation of explosives into this country. Mr Speaker, classic example is that the Minerals Commission plays a role by first making recommendations to the Minister for the Interior, for the Minister to issue permits for the importation of explosives into the country. We believe that if those laws are harmonised — the Arms and Ammunition Act and the Minerals and Mining Act, the supervision of the importation of explosives can be properly supervised to avoid the reoccurrence of what happened at Peabo. I send my condolences to the bereaved families, and may the souls of the dead rest in perfect peace.

Thank you very much for the opportunity, Mr Speaker.