Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Statement. I would want to congratulate the Hon Member for that particular Statement. Mr Speaker, it is true that gaming in Ghana has taken a negative dimension, but at the same time, we should be able to count or tell the successes chalked within the past few years.

Mr Speaker, I say this because in 2013, when I was appointed Hon Deputy Minister for the Interior by H.E. ex-President Mahama, and I proceeded to the Ministry to start work, the Gaming Commission, as we had it at the time, was virtually non-existent. So, we settled down to work. What we did was to immediately re-organise the Gaming Commission in tandem with the Gaming Act, 2006. From that time onwards, the Gaming Commission has chalked some successes.

At the time we assumed office, the Gaming Commission and its operations were confined largely to Accra and Tema even though we all knew that some gaming-related activities occurred in other parts of the country. So, immediately, we set out on a recruitment drive to enhance the staff strength and capacity of the Gaming Commission.

So, largely, the problems that the Gaming Commission is faced with are not directly born out of, maybe, the lacunas in the Act that sets up the Commission. It is largely a question of enforcement of the Act itself. So, without the personnel in place, how do you enforce the Act, which is why we set out on that recruitment drive to enhance the staff capacity of the Commission? As we speak today, the Gaming Commission now has presence in the metropolitan centres of this country namely, Accra, Sekondi-Takoradi, Kumasi and Tamale.

Mr Speaker, at the time we left office, the overall ambition we had was to create offices for the Commission in all the regional capitals. So, I would urge the new Government to take up the challenge and ensure that the Gaming Commission has presence in all the regional capitals. That way, the Commission can properly regulate gaming and its related activities in the country.

Mr Speaker, I would also want to place on record that, under the Gaming Act itself, children or persons below the age of 18 are precluded from participating in any gaming-related activity. So, when you find a person below age 18 on admission in a casino, then immediately, you must know that a crime has been committed.

There is a sanctions regime spelt out in the Act, but like I said, it is a question of enforcement and we all need to come together — the District and Metropolitan Assemblies need to partner the Ministry of the Interior, through the Gaming Commission, and of course, the Ghana Police Service to enforce the laws.

Mr Speaker, the Hon Member who made the Statement talked about regulations; we must admit that after the passage of the Gaming Act, 2006, it was envisaged that regulations would be passed
to add some flesh to some of the provisions contained in the Act, which of course needs further elaboration. Unfortunately, we have not been able to pass those regulations.

I can report to this Honourable House that, before we left office, the Gaming Commission, with the blessings of the Ministry of the Interior, had commissioned a law firm to assist them draft some legislations which were intended to be forwarded to this House for consideration. Work on the regulations were concluded but unfortunately, we were unable to lay them before the House — Mr Speaker, to conclude, I wish to add that gaming per se is not bad. In fact, like the Hon Member who made the Statement rightly put it, it is one of the main revenue earnings of many countries across the world. At the Ministry of the Interior itself, following the reorganization of the Gaming Commission under the watch of former President Mahama, the Commission was able to rake in a lot of revenue.

At that time, it became one of the leading organisations in terms of its internally generated funds for the country. Mr Speaker, so, while we must ensure that the safeguards that have already been provided for in the Act are strictly complied with, we should also look at ways of equipping the Commission very well to carry on its enforcement activities. This is because if we streamline gaming in this country, we stand to benefit. In most countries, a lot of revenue is raked in from gaming activities.

With those words, I congratulate the Hon Member who made the Statement. Mr Speaker, lastly, because of the ability of the Commission to rake in a lot of revenue, it was able to wean itself from Government subvention; that speaks volumes about the amount of revenue we could rake in from the Commission if we were able to properly resource the Commission itself, and recruit more, so that it can have presence in all the regions to carry out its mandate.

Thank you.