STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT ON ALLEGATION OF BRIBERY BY HONOURABLE JOSEPH OSEI-OWUSU, MP FOR BEKWAI - 31 JANUARY, 2017

Mr Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I make the Statement on the floor of this House today. On Friday, 27th January, 2017, at about 3:13 p.m. while I was in this same Chamber waiting for the Sitting of the House to resume following suspension of Sitting earlier in the day, I received a WhatsApp message from a friend in the Media, which showed that one Sammy Ablordepey, purporting to report from Parliament that Mr Boakye Agyarko was alleged to have given to Hon Osei Owusu, an amount of GH¢100,000 to be doled out to Members to pass him as Minister for Energy.

The message further said “Each Member of the Majority was given GH¢3,000. The Minority had since returned the money to Hon Osei-Owusu who had in turn given it back to Mr Agyarko who was spotted coming to Parliament to collect it from Mr Osei Owusu. A very shameful Act.

And this Mr Agyarko, criminal, calls President Mahama corrupt....”. Upon enquiry, the Parliamentary Press Corp leadership told me that the alleged reporter was not part of the Parliamentary Press Corps. I showed the message to the Majority Leadership and we laughed about it, thinking it was one of the usual misinformation tricks of some partisan journalists.

However, not long after, about an hour after that message was brought to my attention, other Colleague Members of Parliament also showed me publications by some respectable news houses like, My Joy-online; Peace FM online and others. They attributed their stories to Hon Mahama Ayariga, the Member of Parliament for Bawku Central and also a member of the Appointments Committee which I chair. I was livid.

Not long after those publications were brought to my attention however, Mr Speaker suspended Sitting in the Chamber upon an application from the Minority Leader, requesting that the Leadership went into a meeting with the Appointments Committee members to reconsider the parts of its Report regarding Mr Boakye Agyarko and Mr Yaw Osafo Maafo that had attracted some disagreement.

At that caucus meeting, Mr Speaker, the Minority Leader and his team, comprising Hon Mahama Ayariga, Hon Okudjeto Ablakwa, Hon Suhuyini, Hon Joseph Yieleh Chireh, Hon Sampson Ahi and Hon Eric Opoku, pointed out to the Ministers designate, Mr Boakye Agyarko and Hon Osafo Maafo what in their testimonies they in the Minority found offensive and that if they agreed to offer further elucidation, or in the alternative, withdraw those specific statements, they would withdraw their objection and have them approved by consensus rather than by a majority decision as recommended in the Report.

Mr Speaker, the two nominees took a cue from the discussions and offered explanations and different choice of words which satisfied the Minority side, after which they announced their withdrawal of objection and agreed to them being approved by consensus. My Speaker, at this juncture, I insisted that the Committee had to deal with the allegations of bribery attributed to
Hon Mahama Ayariga. The Minority Members in unison appealed to me to take it easy. It was at this time that a Member said that because Hon Agyarko called “their” President Mahama a corrupt President, that they were also spreading the corruption allegation to cover all. We all laughed about it, thinking that it indeed, would end there.

Later that evening, however, what I reported on the floor had been published by the Press. Hon Mahama Ayariga took to social media to repeat the untruth about me and even went on Joy News flagship programme, The Newsfile, to repeat same. Fortunately for me, Newsfile gave me the opportunity to speak to the matter.

Mr Speaker, let me repeat here, for the avoidance of doubt, that I, Joseph Osei Owusu, Member of Parliament, (MP), First Deputy Speaker and Chairman of the Appointments Committee have never discussed, requested, demanded or received money of whatever quantum for myself or Committee members from Mr Boakye Agyarko, or any other person, for that matter. Neither have I discussed, offered or given any money to Hon Muntaka Mohammed-Mubarak for himself or for the members of the Minority on the Appointments Committee.

The allegation by Hon Mahama Ayariga therefore is a colossal untruth which has done grievous damage to my reputation and hard-earned integrity as a Lawyer of twenty-seven (27) years standing, a public servant of high repute, a respected Member of Parliament of the Bekwai Constituency of the Ashanti Region.

Let me further put on record that the Appointments Committee always takes a decision on every nominee who appears before it as soon as the day’s proceedings are over. Mr Speaker, decisions on Mr Boakye Agyarko and Mr Yaw Osafo-Maafo were taken the same night after they appeared before the Committee, that is, 22nd and 23rd of January respectively.

The decisions were that, the Minority could not support them therefore they would be recommended to be approved by a majority decision. It was the Hon Minority Leader who requested that we should allow them some time to consult among themselves further. The Minority’s position did not change until last Friday when the Hon Minority Leader insisted that the consideration of the two nominees be brought to a closure.

The charge of bribery for the Minority to “pass the nominee” therefore, does not fit in the equation as the nominee had already been recommended to be passed by the Majority in the same night the nominee was vetted. Mr, Speaker, recognisably, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) has such a huge majority in Parliament and as such, does not need to pay a bribe to have its way in this House, that is, assuming bribery has been part of the business of this House. The need to have consensus is largely to benefit the Minority to the extent that their concerns may be taken into consideration in decision-making.

To turn round to accuse the Majority of bribing the Minority, therefore, is illogical, ill-motivated and in bad faith. I shudder to think that such a development, if not properly handled, may lead
the Leadership of the Majority to reconsider its position on any consensus building endeavour lest some Members abuse it to create mistrust for the Majority in the eyes of the public.

Mr Speaker, I have a dilemma. My fervent heart’s desire is to go to the civil Court to reclaim my integrity. I am, however, aware of the challenges one has to battle with in any litigation involving a Sitting Member of Parliament. But Mr Speaker, you have the power to permit service of court processes on a Sitting Member of Parliament through your Office. I crave your indulgence to assist me to ventilate my grievance in court. If I am successful, it may help redeem the image of this Parliament, which is often battered by its own Members.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to make this Statement.