SUPPORTING STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT ON THE NEED TO WEAR SEAT-BELTS TO SAVE LIVES
BY HONOURABLE JOSEPH OSEI-OWUSU, MP FOR BEKWAI - 6 JULY, 2017

Mr Speaker, this Statement has been made in different other forms in this House since I have been an Hon Member. The fact that we still bemoan the lack of enforcement of the rules that we have passed in this House, both the substantive Act passed in the year 2004 and the L.I. to back it passed in the year 2012, demonstrates how quick we are to make laws and how sluggish we are to ensure that the laws we make are enforced. Mr Speaker, I see two things. One, the responsibility for ensuring that anybody in the vehicle wears a seat-belt is placed squarely at the shoulder of the driver. In fact, if we look at the law, it is clear. The driver has the duty to ensure that the passenger wears the seat-belt; and if not, it is the driver who is in default and may be prosecuted. That is what the law says.

Mr Speaker, but we find that anytime there is an attempt to enforce these laws, the driver unions see it as an attack on them, and they constitute themselves into spokespersons for all persons. Even though many of these vehicles, even the trotros or public buses, have seat-belts in the front seat that the driver could wear, they purport that when we insist that seat-belts be put in the back seat for the passengers, it is an attack on them; the drivers. So, they rather resist the attempt. Mr Speaker, I recall that a year or two ago, there was an attempt, as recalled by the Hon Member for Tamale North, that after the L.I. had been passed and a lot of public education had gone on, the drivers were required to have their vehicles installed with seat-belts. There was a huge uproar and immediately, we, the politicians, joined forces and that became the end of the enforcement. That takes me to the last bit.

We, the politicians, are the reason many of those laws are not enforced. I say so because, anytime something is to be done which involves drivers, because they are organised — let one driver union secretary or organiser somewhere raise his voice, and it is taken up. Then quickly, if the New Patriotic Party (NPP) is in power, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) stands with the drivers. If the NDC is in power, the NPP stands with the drivers. In the end, nothing happens. Mr Speaker, so, we should take responsibility for the failure of enforcement. [Hear! Hear!] We should take responsibility — there are things for which we must stand together as a group and a nation, and one such thing is to ensure that there is safety on the roads.

Mr Speaker, I challenge us that we should not repeat this Statement in this House. We should stand together with the DVLA to ensure that, the laws are enforced. There should be a joint Statement made by the Leadership of the House, supported by their general secretaries that this law is to be enforced for the safety of all of us. I am sure all the failure of enforcement would cease. The Ghana Police Service is willing and ready to enforce it, but they are afraid of what we would say and how we would stand by them.

Mr Speaker, thank you.