TRIBUTE TO PARLIAMENT IN MEMORY OF THE LATE JOSEPH HENRY OWUSU-ACHEAMPONG BY
HONOURABLE OSEI KYEI-MENSAH-BONSU, MP FOR SUAME, MAJORITY LEADER AND MINISTER
FOR PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS - 2 AUGUST, 2017

Mr Speaker, I rise to pay a tribute in memory of the late Joseph Henry Owusu-Acheampong, a
former Member of Parliament who represented the Berekum Constituency, former Majority
Leader, former Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and also former Minister for Food, Agriculture
and Cocoa Affairs.

“Now praise we great and famous men, The fathers named in story; And praise the Lord, who
now as then, Reveals in man His glory. Praise we the wise and brave and strong, Who graced their
generation, Who helped the right and fought the wrong, And made our folk a nation” — Charles
Wesley

In the affairs of mankind, it is customary to commemorate the dead, especially the renowned, by
enshrining their memories in the hearts of succeeding generations and causing their good or
heroic deeds to be remembered and emulated by posterity.

It is in this regard that the Parliament of Ghana pays this tribute in memory of the late Hon Joseph
Henry Owusu Acheampong, former Member of Parliament for Berekum, former Majority Leader
and Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and also former Minister for Food and Agriculture.

As we mourn this distinguished statesman, colleague, and beloved friend, we cannot but agree
with W.H. Long Fellow when he said, “The heights that great men reached and kept were not
attained by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept were toiling upward in the
night”. Parliament received the news of the passing on of Hon J. H. OwusuAcheampong with deep
sorrow, at a time when we least expected it.

This was because, though ailment sought to confine him at a point when age had just begun
taking a toll on him, most of us were still hopeful that he was going to bounce back to his feet as
the Good Lord did for him some time back. Unfortunately, however, it was not to be. The late
former Member and Minister would forever be remembered by

Parliament, in particular, as a trail blazer, an astute legislator, a decent politician, an agent of
change and development, a purpose-driven person, a fine gentleman, a patriot and true
statesman whose sweat and toil added value to the consolidation of Parliamentary democracy
under the Fourth Republic.

Being one of the only two Members of the First Parliament of the Fourth Republic who had had
a previous experience as a Member of Parliament, specifically of the Third Republican Parliament,
he mentored most of the Members of the First Parliament of the Fourth Republic. Indeed, he
brought his experience to bear on the work of the House and contributed meaningfully towards
the nurturing, growth and development of the institution of Parliament.
As an experienced legislator, he rose to every occasion of challenge and filled the gap whenever required in the House, and this enabled the First Parliament to discharge its mandate effectively, at a time when his calibre of persons were in want.

Ghana, having returned to constitutional democracy, and recognising the need for the country to put in place the requisite legal framework and the enabling environment to attract investment, the late Owusu-Acheampong blazed the trail in the Legislature which had returned from over a decade of abeyance.

Although not a lawyer, he readily stood in for the then Attorney-General and Minister for Justice whom duty had taken out of the jurisdiction and accordingly, moved the Motion for the Second Reading of the Companies Code (Amendment) Bill, which largely bordered on the principles of law.

There were many instances that as Leader of Government Business and Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, the Hon Owusu-Acheampong rose to the occasion and effectively and efficiently filled in for his compatriots; the Ministers.

As Majority Leader, he certainly lived up to expectation. Indeed, he devoted valuable time for law making during Consideration Stage of Bills, in particular. He always chaired winnowing sessions with unwavering commitment to improve the text of amendments all with the view to ensuring judicious use of prime time in plenary. This duty he discharged with diligence even to a fault. Not only that, he personally filed amendments and also contributed meaningfully to the debates.

Substantiating his proposed amendment to the Companies Code (Amendment) Bill at the Consideration Stage, he had this to say, and with your permission, I quote: “...Indeed international investors would think it odd if the directors of the company are not themselves permitted to invest in it on the same terms as everyone else. The proposed amendment therefore provides that, the prohibition in section 202 (2) does not apply where the shareholders of the company approve the issue by an ordinary resolution and where the company is a public listed company or a public company whose equity shares are to become listed at the same time. Again, it is considered that, the rules of the Ghana Stock Exchange and those of reputable international stock exchanges would prevent abuse by directors.

His commitment to the development of the Legislature also found expression in his active participation in Committee work. Thus, he devoted time to be in attendance at most Committee meetings, which example encouraged other Members to do same. As a true patriot and distinguished statesman, the peace and security of this country was a key focus area he sought to pursue together with the entire House.

Moving a Motion for the State of Emergency (Specified Areas) Proclamation on the floor, he stated and with your permission, Mr Speaker, I quote: “Mr Speaker, I beg to move, that this House do hereby decide that the State of Emergency (Specified Areas) Proclamation should
remain in force... Mr Speaker, I want the House to take an affirmative position on this matter to enable us secure peace and tranquillity in the areas affected. As it is well known, the State is quite concerned; the President is quite concerned; the Executive is quite concerned about the situation in those areas and it is only by this means that law and order can be brought about in the affected areas. Therefore, it is important that this matter should be dealt with expeditiously this evening to allow the Proclamation to be in force. Mr Speaker, I beg to move.”

As an agent of change and development, he was committed to the tenets of legislative oversight. He sought to encourage Members to take their oversight functions seriously. He was also committed to the development of a Legislature that is up to the task of exacting accountability from the Executive. This commitment found expression in his attitude in relation to Question time. At the beginning of a Meeting, he, in his usual manner of carrying all Members along, had this to say:

“Mr Speaker, the agenda for the Meeting has been issued out, and as it may be noticed, there are only a few Members of the House who have put in Questions to be answered by Ministers. I would like to appeal to Members of the House, that is, those who have any Questions to ask, to let the Clerk’s office have them as soon as possible so that they can process them for Question Time in the House...”.

The late Hon Owusu-Acheampong demonstrated sufficient knowledge of the rules of procedure, conventions and practices of the House and never hesitated to call the attention of Mr Speaker to bring Hon Members to order whenever the need arose, and most especially on occasions when it was required to have government business done. He was addicted to the Standing Orders and it was always a joy to watch him apply the Orders to guide debate in the House.

He was a perfect gentleman who found pleasure in service to humanity. He was a very calm person who exuded humility and yet was very resolute in his stand on matters of principle. These virtues placed him in the category of persons whose appearance commanded respect and dignity. Indeed, the nation has lost a true patriot, and a distinguished statesman. As we pay this tribute in memory of our former Leader, we extend our deepest condolences to the bereaved family, especially the nuclear family and wish them well in their future endeavours.

May the soul of the Hon Joseph Henry Owusu-Acheampong and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in the bosom of the Lord.

Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity.