Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity and let me also commend the Hon Minister for Foreign Affairs for the promptness of coming to this House with this Statement.

Today is 24th February, and as the Hon Minister informed us, the march against foreigners is slated for today. South Africa is two hours ahead of Ghana's time. This means that as we speak, it is about 2.00 p.m. there.

Demonstrations of such kind usually start in the morning. So, I would have thought that the Hon Minister would have been in the position to indicate to us what is happening now, so, we are better assured of the protection of the lives of Ghanaians.

I am told that so far, nothing negative has happened to Ghanaians. That is heartwarming to some extent even though it does not completely wipe out our anxieties.

Mr Speaker, I agree with the sentiments expressed by the Hon Minority Chief Whip, Alhaji Mohammed-Mubarak Muntaka. He alluded to what Nigeria did in facilitating the liberation of South Africa.

Mr Speaker, Ghana has done much better than Nigeria as far as these matters are concerned — contributing to liberating the States in Southern Africa. But how do we witness these matters? I believe the answer is simple. It is primarily attributed to mis-governance. South Africa at independence, was the largest economy in Africa.

Over just two years, they have lost place. Nigeria has overtaken them and their economy keeps shrinking — dumsor dumsor has afflicted South Africa and there is a massive and colossal corruption taking place there; and the ordinary people are left to their fate.

Mr Speaker, these things that happened are not at the instance of the Government. It is against government and they vent their spleen on other African nationals who, in their view, have come to take their places, even though ordinarily, many of the jobs that these nationals from other African countries apply themselves to would not be taken up by the South Africans themselves. Given the situation they find themselves in now, they think that the other nationals have taken over their positions and that is what has aggravated the situation.

For now, the focus is on Nigerians and it is so because every now and then, when one hears of drug business, accusing fingers are pointed at the Nigerians, in spite of the fact that many of the Nigerian nationals who are there are into good jobs and helping to grow the economy of South Africa.

However, because a few Nigerian miscreants are involved in drug business, they vent their spleen on the entirety of the citizens from Nigeria; whether one is an Ibo, Yuroba or Hausa, they
do not care. That is the danger. By association, Nigeria is in West Africa and Ghana is also in West Africa. Ghana is English-speaking just as Nigeria is. So, Ghanaians become the next target group.

Mr Speaker, these are triggers that should worry all of us. That is not in any way to justify what has happened. It is good that the Hon Minister has told us of the steps that they have taken. She said that the Mission has visited many shops owned by Ghanaians. She did not tell us exactly where, but she told us only of Sunnyside, which is a suburb of Pretoria. Sunnyside has many Ghanaian citizens who are engaged in honest and decent labour.

Close to Sutton City in Johannesburg, there are many Ghanaians who are really into honest labour. There are some seen on the streets polishing shoes; shoeshine boys. In South Africa, I saw Ghanaian shoe shine ladies. They do not exist in Ghana but they are on many streets in South Africa.

Mr Speaker, we should be concerned. The Hon Minister for Foreign Affairs told us that the Ghanaian community in Mamelodi where the march is scheduled to take place has also been advised not to open their businesses today. Maybe, they may do well not to even continue for the whole of the ensuing weekend.

This is because these guys who engage in these acts are so unpredictable. The last time, they did it for two continuous days and when it appeared to have ebbed, they surfaced on the fifth day. When the citizens of the other nationals least suspected, they descended on them and butchered some of them.

Mr Speaker, maybe, the Hon Minister would be urged to continue with the instructions to them not only to close their businesses and be indoors for today; they may have to keep indoors for the entire weekend though the activity has been planned for today, they would never know what may hold for tomorrow and Sunday. Usually, there is the spill off to the weekends. So, the Hon Minister may well advise them to continue with their isolation for the time being — for at least, the three days ahead of us.

Mr Speaker, having said so, the Hon Minister should keep her eyes on the radar firmly, so that if there are any disturbances, the people could be advised on the way forward.

There are a few voices which have come up from Cape Town against some Nigerians and Somalis. Certainly, where Nigerians are found, one may find a few Ghanaians. So, we need to keep an eye on Pretoria, Johannesburg and also Cape Town and perhaps, Rosenberg, which also has a large collection of Ghanaians.

Mr Speaker, I thank you very much for the space granted.