Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment on this Statement and also thank the Hon Member who made the Statement, for drawing our attention to the numerous road accidents that we have in our country.

Mr Speaker, the causes of road accidents are many, such that, all the stakeholders, including Parliament, should take a second look at some of these causes and see how best we can reduce accidents on our roads. The Hon Member who made the Statement stated some of the accidents that have happened.

Quite recently, a former Hon Member of this House, for Akwatia, also lost his life in a similar accident on the AccraKumasi Road, where a faulty vehicle had parked on the road and he ran his vehicle into the parked faulty vehicle and lost his life in the process.

Mr Speaker, if we take a critical look at the accidents that happen on our roads, one major issue that I would want all of us to take a look at, and see how best we can reduce speeding. If we drive and we reduce our speed — the warning statement says; “reduce your speed and save your life”. It is important we see how best we can control speeding on our roads. The police can help to enforce the laws to reduce speeding.

Mr Speaker, we have road signs that say that when one gets to a town, the speed limit is 50 km/h but who is there to check it? We do not have new methods or systems that we can use to reduce speed on our roads.

So, drivers sit in their vehicles and decide without even considering the condition of the road — For instance, on the Accra-Tema Motorway, there is no need for any driver to drive more than 100 km/h on that motorway; not as it is now. Any driver who drives more than 100 kmh on the Accra-Tema Motorway is speeding. So, we should look at some of these things and see how best we can reduce accidents.

The second issue is on driver behaviour. Drivers — as people tend to accuse DVLA, the Motor Traffic and Transport Department (MTTD) and all that, one important thing we must take a critical look at, is the behaviour of the drivers. We can check and train the driver but as soon as he sits behind the steering wheel, then the behaviour changes.

Mr Speaker, as a former DVLA officer, I remember that on several occasions I have retested drivers who are involved in road accidents. If you try to find out what happened before the accident occurred, you would see that the driver did not know what should have been done. When you interview them, you would know clearly that they were aware and knew what they were supposed to do, but they refused to do them and caused accidents thus killing a lot of people.
Mr Speaker, laws and agreements we have passed in this House should have been able to help us reduce accidents. For instance, recently, the Committee on Roads and Transport passed a Bill in this House and tasked the DVLA to put a percentage on the road worthy certificate fee, give that money to the National Road Safety Commission so that we would have towing vehicles to tow faulty vehicles on the roads within an hour.

But what is happening is that this money has been collected by DVLA and handed over to National Road Safety Commission (NRSC), but there is a friction between the NRSC and the company that brought in the towing vehicles into this country. As we speak now, the towing cars are parked, the owners of the towing vehicles have not been paid and because of that, the company is no more working.

If we have a system where the MTTD, the DVLA and this company can take faulty vehicles off the road within thirty minutes or one hour, it can prevent some of these accidents from happening. So, it is important that we take a second look at this. What is preventing NRSC from paying the money to the company for the services that they have rendered to this country?

Mr Speaker, the next thing I would want us to look at is lighting on our streets. We all know that when the road surface or the condition of the road surface is improved, we should have reduced accidents. But in this country, the newer the road, the higher the accidents. So, we must ask ourselves — what is happening?

Is it that we should maintain or stop maintaining our roads? I ask this because when the road is bad, accidents are reduced. But that should not be the case; so, what is happening? We must try as much as we can to get streetlights. Mr Speaker, on the N1 Highway here in Accra, on several occasions, you would see that the streetlights do not work but people are crossing, and vehicles are speeding. One would not know what is ahead. There is a law in driving which says that, if we do not see an estimated 40 metres ahead of us, we should not move.

But vehicles move and drivers drive when they know very well that they do not see 40 metres ahead of them. So, it is important we improve the condition of streetlights on our roads, especially when the roads connect towns and communities, to reduce accidents.

Mr Speaker, the next issue is on the road blocks on our major roads. It is not good to drive on a highway from Accra to Kumasi and then, while the vehicles are on the road moving, one sees these road rumps. We should try as much as we can, to develop overhead bridges so that we stop this road berths and other road blocks that we have on our roads to reduce the accidents.

The next thing which has already been mentioned by the Hon Member who made the Statement, which I would want to emphasise, is the law enforcement. Mr Speaker, people normally accuse DVLA. Yes, I agree. But the most important thing is that commercial vehicles visit DVLA twice a year while the private ones visit them once a year.
So, if one puts a tyre under one’s private vehicle, it would take one a whole year for the vehicle to visit DVLA again. So, those who would be on the road every day to check faulty vehicles and those that are not roadworthy should be the police, the law enforcement agencies, and MTTD.

It is important they also help. The law permits them to withdraw roadworthy certificates of vehicles which the police believe are not roadworthy and refer them to DVLA for re-examination. It does not matter whether one’s vehicle has been to DVLA for less than six months, or in the case of a private vehicle, for less than one year. The policeman has every right to withdraw the certificate and refer the driver to DVLA for re-examination.

This would help to reduce — I believe DVLA has done a lot by giving this private garages to expand their facilities across the country, so that there would be efficiency in the examination of the vehicle. Though they have a lot of work to do in terms of performance, it is important that the law enforcement agency, MTTD up their game so that they can help to prevent accidents.

Mr Speaker, we must also look at another law that I spoke against some time ago in this House. We have vehicles that are 30 years old on the roads of Ghana, but when we travel outside and bring a vehicle which is ten years into this country, we put laws and measures that would prevent those vehicles from coming into this country. Yet, we have vehicles that are 30 and 40 years but are still being driven on our roads.

I would suggest that we should soften that law because, a ten-year-old vehicle in, say, USA or Germany is better than a 30-year-old vehicle in this country. The newer the vehicle, the less the damage when the vehicle is involved in an accident. So, it is important that we take a second look at this, so that we bring used vehicles that are better than those that we have in this country, to reduce the overaged vehicles we have. If this is done, we can reduce accidents.

Mr Speaker, the last issue I would want to talk about is passenger behaviour. We must take a look at that. We must try to educate — and this is the work of the National Road Safety Commission (NRSC) and the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE). They should try as much as they can, to educate passengers for us.

Some would say the driver is too slow. “We started this journey two hours ago, what type of driver is this?” These words put pressure on the drivers. We must try as much as we can to also reduce those who are selling and preaching in our buses.

We must also encourage the public bus system like the Metro Mass Transit that we have and the State Transport Company (STC) and the Aayalolo which came in quite recently. We must try to get more of such buses to reduce, one, the traffic on our roads, and also, to reduce the road accidents as well.

Mr Speaker, with these few words, I would want to thank you once more and also the Hon Member who made the Statement for this wonderful presentation.