STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT ON THE CELEBRATION OF THE ABOAKYER FESTIVAL BY HONOURABLE ALEXANDER K. AFENYO-MARKIN, MP FOR EFFUTU - 6 APRIL, 2017

Mr Speaker, I am exceedingly grateful for the opportunity to make this Statement.

Mr Speaker, Aboakyer is a deer hunting festival celebrated by the Effutus in the Central Region of Ghana. It is celebrated on the first Saturday in May. On the first day of the festival, two Asafo Companies in Winneba take part in a hunting expedition. The first troop to catch a live deer from a game reserve presents it to the chiefs and people in a dignified ceremony.

The deer is then sacrificed to signify the start of Aboakyer festival. The sacrifice is to thank the gods for the protection of Simpafo through their migration from North-East Africa to our present home here in Ghana. Mr Speaker, festival time used to be a uniquely interesting time in Winneba and all the chiefs and people looked forward to the season. The celebration of this festival is not just of historical value, but also an expression of the ties that bind us as a people. Through it, we show where we have come from and the progress we have made. We display our culture to the world, we forge new connections and renew the bonds between our compatriots and our visitors from far and near.

Mr Speaker, notwithstanding the relevance of Aboakyer to the socioeconomic and cultural development of the Effutu, recent contestations manifesting in violent mob actions such as stone throwing by opposing factions in Effutu, have challenged the peaceful celebration of the festival, robbing it of much of its allure to both indigenes and the numerous visitors that hitherto trooped to Winneba, to witness the beauty and grace of the Aboakyer festival.

Mr Speaker, over the last few years, the Ghana Police have generally maintained security by keeping the opposing factions at bay. Their presence, though critical and needful, also adds a measure of anxiety to the otherwise peaceful, friendly and warm environment that hitherto characterised the celebration of the Aboakyer festival, thus driving away teeming indigenes as well as visitors who might decode the presence of the Police not as an assurance of security, but an indication of strife.

Additionally, the large numbers of corporate organisations that used to provide the much-needed financial support for the festival have in the last few years reduced.

Mr Speaker, as the people of Effutu prepare to celebrate another Aboakyer on May 5th, I would want to use this medium to call upon my people to recognise, that what binds us are more than that which divides us. The University of Education in Winneba for instance, continues to attract positive attention as a national hub for teacher education in Ghana. The Police Command and Staff College, Nurses Training College and many other institutions situated within Effutu land point to the relevance of the area in Ghana’s socio-economic and political development.
The beautiful beaches of Winneba, our fancy-dress procession, the growing list of A-class choral groups, including the internationally acclaimed Winneba Youth Choir, and the infectious sights and sounds of the Effutus all continue to attract considerable positive attention to Winneba and the entire Effutu land.

Mr Speaker, these are the things that can be harnessed to shore up socioeconomic development of the Effutu. However, to succeed, we need peace. We need stability and we need an atmosphere that facilitates collaboration and a general desire to succeed among all and sundry in Effutu.

On this occasion, Mr Speaker, I would want to call on the chiefs and people of Simpa, the youth, opinion leaders, Effutus in the diaspora and all traditional leaders and stakeholders, to do their utmost best to ensure that this year’s celebration is smooth, dignified and worthy of our time.

I further call on the Ghana Police Service, to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place, to ensure a peaceful and incident free celebration.

I thank you Mr Speaker.