

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY HON JOHN ALEXANDER ACKON DEPUTY MINISTER FOR CHIEFTAINCY AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS ON BEHALF OF THE HON MINISTER FOR CHIEFTAINCY AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS, DR. SEIDU DAANNA AT THE 2014 EDITION OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE ANNUAL APOMASO FESTIVAL BY THE CHIEFS AND PEOPLE OF AHAFO NORTH TRADITIONAL AREA ON SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22<sup>ND</sup> 2014 AT NTOTROSO**

Chairman/Chairperson,

His Royal Majesty, Otumfour Osei Tutu II, Asantehene,

Hon Regional Minister for the Brong Ahafo Region,

Hon Members of Parliament,

Municipal/Metropolitan / District Chief Executives

Barima Twereku Ampem III, Ntotrosohene and President of the Ahafo North Traditional Council,

Members of the Brong Ahafo Regional House of Chiefs,

Nananom,

Distinguished Invited Guests,

The Media,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I sit back and observed the smiles and the joy on the faces of each and everyone of us gathered here this morning, the pomp and pageantry that is being exhibited here to showcase the rich culture and heritage of the traditional area, I have no doubt in my mind that today is a special day not only for the chiefs and people of

the traditional area, but indeed for all of us. It is a day that has brought about the fulfillment of the power of positive thinking, the realisation of one of the biggest dreams of the chiefs and people of Ahafo North Traditional Area. Indeed, a day that will go down in history as a remarkable day in the life of the chiefs and people of the area for traversing another milestone in their quest to enhance their socio-economic life.

Nana Chairman, Honourable Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, before I proceed further, it is my profound duty and pleasure to convey to you fraternal greetings from the Minister for Chieftaincy and Traditional Affairs who was specially invited to this year's special Apomasu festival celebration.

Unfortunately, however, owing to other equally pre-arranged engagements, he could not make it. He has asked me to render his sincerest apologies to Nananom and indeed to all here gathered. I wish to humbly, Nana Chairman, ask your permission to proceed and deliver the address on his behalf.

Chairman, Hon Regional Minister, Nananom, Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, first and foremost, we are grateful to the Almighty God for the life of everyone here and for another opportunity to assemble as one big family to celebrate our

annual Apomasu festival. I have been informed that today's celebration is quite significant because it is opening a new chapter in the history of the traditional area. The commissioning of a Health Training Institute.

Under normal circumstances, I understand that the Apomasu festival is celebrated by the Chiefs and People of Ntotroso in veneration of the Apomasu deity, which has been a source of blessing and strength for the community since the period of migration and settlement in this area. The festival also serves as a platform to heal the wounds of the past, for re-unification and above all for initiating development projects to enhance the socio-economic life of the people. It is in furtherance of the latter that today we are gathered here to witness the commissioning of a Nursing Training Institute, an important landmark project in the history of the traditional area. A facility which will bring about a turning point in the health delivery system of the Ahafo North traditional area in particular, and the Brong Ahafo region in general.

Nana Chairman, I have been informed that in 2012 during the celebration of the 2012 Apomasu festival, the idea to establish a Health care Training Institute in the traditional area to complement the efforts of existing institutions in the training of professionals in the Health sector was mooted. It was one project that was to

spearhead the development at the traditional area and beyond. Thankfully, the project had the support and blessing of other well meaning Ghanaians. Notable among them were his Excellency, the President, John Dramani Mahama and His Royal Majesty, Otumfour Osei Tutu II, the Asantehene.

Today, it is a dream and vision come through, through the perseverance, dedication and tenacity of purpose of the chiefs and people of the traditional area. I have also been informed that the Nursing Training Institute will make its first batch of admission in August/September where a lot of programmes will be rolled out.

Nana Chairman, I wish to convey my personal appreciation first of all to Nananom and the people of the traditional area for the thoughtful idea and their resilience in ensuring the completion of the project within the shortest possible time. It is worthy of commendation because other similar projects in the past have been planned by various communities, but those projects never saw the light of day.

Secondly, I also wish to commend all those individuals and corporate bodies who played a key role in the completion of this project. It is an indication of your commitment as corporate bodies and individuals to your corporate social

responsibility and the desire to invest a little in your community for a worthy cause.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the theme for the celebration of this year's Apomasu festival which incidentally coincides with the commissioning of the Nursing Training Institute is "Pursuing Quality Health care – the role of the Nursing Training Institute." The theme couldn't have been better chosen than this. It is appropriate and relevant because all over the world today the emphasis is on Quality Health Care delivery to meet the goals set out in the millennium Development 'Goals (MDGs). The effective realization of this objective is anchored on the role of our Health Institutions and facilities.

It is the training institutions that train and feed the various hospitals and other delivery facilities with the requisite staff. Therefore the issue of quality health care delivery starts from the training institutions, in terms of their course content, materials, services and programmes and the quality of personnel produced. It is therefore expedient for our health training institutions to be resourced in order to deliver on their mandate.

Nana Chairman, the government will continue to play its role by providing the necessary resources and logistics to ensure a vibrant health sector for the good health of the people. It is an acknowledged fact that the greatest resource of every nation is its human capital. That is why the government of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) has developed a conscious policy to promote the health needs of the people. One of the four (4) pillars of the government's development vision is 'Putting People First'. This seeks to address the issue of quality health including HIV/AIDS and the expansion of health facilities throughout the country.

Nana Chairman, as a country, we have made tremendous progress in the attainment of some aspects of the Millennium Development Goals on Health. 'There has been a systematic decline in the HIV/AIDS prevalent rate since 2010. In fact mortality and maternal health have also improved significantly over the years. However, that is not to say our challenges in the Quality Health delivery system are over. We will continue to work towards more improved performance.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, a word for the managers of the facility we are commissioning today. By all standards, it is one of the best Nursing Training facilities we can think of. I will urge the managers and all the users of the facility

to take good care of it and adopt the culture of maintenance. It must continue to be a shining example to others. I will also advise that you adopt pragmatic programmes that will reach out to the people and not confine your activities to the school environment only. I challenge you to use your research findings to improve upon the life of the people. Let them see visible signs of social change in their health. Adopt the interactive approach and open your administrative policy to earn the good will, trust and support of the chiefs and people of the community.

Finally, before I take my seat, I wish to prevail upon Nananom and the entire members of the community to protect the facility. Most often we are witnesses to acts of vandalism on the staff and other users of such facilities by the very people the facility is supposed to serve upon the least provocation, sometime out of misinformation when dialogue could have solved it.

Properties are destroyed and the very people who are supposed to provide us the facilities we need are attacked. The latest incident being the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital one. These acts go a long way to undermine the efforts of the government in the pursuance of its programmes. It must be emphasized that information management and communication should be strongly adopted in our dealings with the public as human sensitivities reign high in cases of sicknesses,

deaths etc, I am sure such an approach could have prevented the Komfo Anokye case.

Besides, it brings a huge cost on the budget when facilities destroyed have to be replaced. It is my belief that this facility will continue to be an educational and research institution of excellence. This is our collective responsibility.

Nana Chairman, Nananom, Distinguished Ladies and Gentleman, today the institution of chieftaincy in the country is going through reforms to make the institution more relevant to our developmental goals as a country. The reforms are also being pursued to strengthen the institution.

Last year, I was privileged to launch a Code of Royal Ethics for Nananom. The development of the code was under taken by the National House of Chiefs and facilitated by my ministry. The Code was to ensure sanity and decorum prevails in our noble chieftaincy institution. However, I must add that it is not a document for destooling chiefs. I will urge Nananom to study the provisions of the Code and make it a living document.

Chairman, another important development which my ministry has been working on is the Amendment to Section 63(d) of the chieftaincy Act (759). The Amendment of that provision has been forwarded to Parliament. This is to empower Nananom to be able to discharge their traditional functions and exercise their authority to promote peace and development.

Similarly, the Legislative Instrument on the composition of the membership of the Regional Houses of Chiefs (L.I. 2207) has also been forwarded to Parliament. It is my expectation that these reforms will re-define the role and functions of the chieftaincy institution and re-position it strongly as an agent for development to complement the efforts of the central government.

On this note, I wish the chiefs and people of Ntotroso, a hearty and enjoyable festival and May God richly bless you all.

Thank you

HON. JOHN ALEXANDER ACKON

DEPUTY MINISTER – CHIEFTAINCY AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS.