

STATEMENT ON THE CURRENT IMPASSE ON THE KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Right Honourable Speaker,

I thank you for this opportunity to make a statement on behalf of all Old Fellows and Continentals here in Parliament on the series of sad events that have happened on the campus of the prestigious Kwame Nkrumah University of science and Technology, Kumasi. An institution that we hold very dear to our heart.

As Old Fellows and Continentals from the University and Unity Halls respectively, we hold dear the traditions of these two great halls that helped shape and guide us during our sojourn on campus. These all male halls play a special role in the ecosystem of campus and add to the overall experience that KNUST offers its students. It therefore came as a worrying news to us and like-minded Fellows and Continentals, the intention to convert these traditionally male halls of residence to mixed halls. One would have thought that tradition would be respected and upheld. It is not for nothing that sorority and fraternity halls in Ivy League institutions have been maintained in some cases for over two centuries.

It also seems worrying how a policy aimed at increasing female intake has ended up reducing the number of males in traditionally male Halls. This lends credence to the suggestion that the removal of all male students from the Main Hall of the University Hall goes beyond the announced policy decision to a more purposed intent to emasculate and dilute student power, the fulcrum of which is the University-Unity Hall axis. Mr. Speaker, let us hasten to add that we are not against an increased intake of women into the sciences and the attendant need for accommodation. Our position however, is that this increased female enrollment must not come at the cost of several decades of tradition.

There are several novel ways by which this issue can be addressed and tradition also preserved. We are aware of a proposal from a consortium of Banks led by CAL Bank Ghana to invest substantially in the provision of accommodation facilities on Campus. We are at a loss why this proposal has not been acted upon and appears to be facing some resistance. This model is workable as it guarantees a return on investment for any investor. There exist success stories which the administration of KNUST can learn from. It is even more imperative to look proactively at increasing accommodation and learning facilities on campus as one can safely project an increase in the

number of applicants in the next 2-3 years on the back of the increased numbers currently enrolled under the free SHS policy. How would the University Management handle the increase in both Male and Female enrollments? The current arrangement only appears to be a knee jerk reaction that does not address the fundamental issue of the need for increased infrastructure but rather tinkers with the problem instead of tackling it head on.

Right Honourable Speaker, another worrying issue is the issue of a 10pm deadline for students on campus. This is simply outrageous. University Students cannot be subjected to what is at best an attempt to create a prep time and sleeping time on campus. These are adults Mr. Speaker and they must be accorded the necessary dignity of adulthood. How then do we situate the late-night study group meetings that we all were a part of in this restrictive time arrangement?

Mr. Speaker, the need for bonding is also essential as it helps us build a nation of intricately woven citizens. In our Secondary Schools, we are introduced to people from differing ethnicities and religious persuasions and we forge bonds that make us Ghanaian. It is essential that this critical part of building our Nation's fibre is not overlooked as we make lifelong friends, business ideas are nurtured and life partners are found by virtue of these interactions on campus.

The In-Out-Out-Out policy of the University is also one that does not sit well with us Mr. Speaker. Many of our Nation's top politicians including many of us in this Chamber honed our political careers from engaging in student politics. The JCRCs and SRCs helped to nurture this generation of Politicians. Many of us learnt from the continuing students who we met in the JCRCs and SRCs. Today, the situation where the JCRCs are being restricted to only first years leave the question of who would mentor them? How do they learn the art of politicking? From themselves? It is imperative that we have a return of continuing students especially final year students who are engaged in their project work into the Halls of Residence to act as guides for the new students. Perhaps, if we had more of the continuing students in the Halls of Residence, we may have averted the unfortunate incidents we witnessed recently.

Let us be quick however to state that we condemn in no uncertain terms the demonstrations of 22nd October 2018 that led to the destruction of property on the campus of KNUST. As Teknokrats, we abhor any action that seeks to undermine the laws of society and decency. Dialogue, irrespective of

however slow it may appear, is always the panacea for any impasse. This point is even strengthened by news that the Student leadership and the Management of the University have begun discussions aimed at normalizing things on campus.

It is our considered belief that Government should as a matter of urgency continue engagements with the Chancellor of the University, His Majesty, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II in executing the roadmap to the opening of the University within the stipulated time. We urge government and non-government actors to be mindful of their comments at this time as the revered Otumfuor navigates us all through these challenging times for the University. We wish to call on all the various stakeholders, including and not limited to UTAG-KNUST, TEWU, GRASAG, the SRC and Alumni Body to work conscientiously with one goal – the restoration of full academic and administrative work on Campus.

Right Honourable Speaker, as the issue of reconstituting the Governing Council and the reopening of the University are being vigorously pursued, we use this medium to make a passionate appeal to His Majesty to as Chancellor, lend his ears to the demand of Old Fellows and Continentals over the issue of hall conversion. We believe that as a principal custodian of tradition and custom in Asanteman, the Otumfuo would appreciate the importance and gravitas of preserving and upholding the traditions of the two all-male Halls on KNUST campus. This issue is at the very root of the disturbances we have witnessed recently.

We call on the Student body to as a matter of grave importance exercise restraint as they return to Campus and engage in dialogue with the University Management and Chancellor to have the full return of normalcy to Campus. As Members of Parliament, we pledge our support to the just cause of preserving tradition on campus in a way that is non-discriminatory and lawful.

May we all be guided by the motto of our great University, “Nyansap) w)sane no badwenma” to wit, the knot of wisdom is untied only by the wise.

Thank you, Right Honourable Speaker, for this opportunity.