

**STATEMENT ON “WORLD MALARIA DAY” BY HON. DR. KWABENA
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COMMITTEE ON HEALTH**

Mr. Speaker, World Malaria Day (WMD) is commemorated every year on 25 April and recognises global efforts to control malaria. The theme for this year, is **“Zero Malaria Starts with Me”** and it highlights the need for individual and collective responsibility for the control of the disease.

Mr. Speaker, Malaria continues to be a threat globally with 3.3 billion people in 106 countries still at risk. The African continent accounts for over 90% of the global malaria burden according to the 2017 World Malaria Report. About 194 million new cases and 410,000 malaria related deaths were recorded in Africa alone in the year 2016 and it is worrying that Ghana is one of the eleven (11) countries in the world that have the biggest malaria burden. These countries account for over 70% of the global burden and it is in this context that the “Zero Malaria Starts with Me” campaign is critical.

Mr. Speaker, Ghana’s efforts in accelerating progress to save lives; malaria death rates decreased across age groups by 87.3% within a period of ten years. That is, deaths associated with malaria, dropped from 3,374 cases in year 2000 to 428 cases in year 2018. However, since 2012, the proportion of OPD malaria cases, tested by microscopy or RDT, has been increasing. From a low figure of 38.9% in 2012, this has risen to 91.5% in 2018. This performance represents 135.2% increase over the 2012 results and 105.0% achievement of the target set (100%) by the program in 2018. Millions of people in Ghana have been reached with effective lifesaving tools [long lasting Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) and Artemisinin-Based Combination Therapy (ACTs)].

Mr. Speaker, last year, over 15 million nets were distributed nationwide. The 2016 Malaria Indicator Survey showed that 72% of all households in the country owned Insecticide Treated Nets an increase from the 2003 figure of 3.2% (GDHS, 2003). In that same Study in 2016, 3 out of every 5 children under 5 years slept under the Insecticide Treated Nets which translates to 52.3% and about half (50%) of pregnant women sleep under Insecticide Treated Nets every night. Following the distribution of 15million nets last year, we believe the figures will even be higher. This year, the ministry is extending a very effective intervention of Seasonal Malaria Chemoprevention to the Northern, North East and Savanna

Regions so that children in those regions will have additional protection. Larviciding which is attacking the mosquitoes in their early stages (the larvae form) is also going to be implemented nationwide.

Mr. Speaker, despite all the relentless and concerted efforts and success chalked in its control, Malaria is still a major public health issue in our Country and also poses a significant developmental challenge impacting adversely on all sectors of the Economy. There were over 11 million suspected malaria related cases recorded at the OPD in 2018. This still puts the disease, the number one cause of OPD attendance in our Country and also makes it one of the highest on the list of expenditure items on our Health Budget in terms of quantum. Further, we are faced with the issue of dwindling resources and therefore the need for increased efforts in domestic resource to fill the widening gaps that exist.

Mr. Speaker we cannot therefore rest on our oars but intensify the efforts at combating the disease because fighting malaria is like going to war. There is the need to have a sustained multiple arsenal approach till eradication. The elimination of malaria above all, also requires political leadership at the highest level. The fight must begin at the highest political level and then supported adequately with resources, appropriate inter-sectoral and cross-border collaboration. I therefore call on my colleagues to join hands with the Ministry of Health, the Ghana Health Service and implementing agencies to boost the domestic resource mobilization agenda which is currently been pursued. Mobilising domestic funds to compliment the donor support is very key as it propels us towards the elimination the disease and helps to contribute to the achievement of other Sustainable Development Goals, particularly improving maternal and child health.

I will therefore call on my colleagues to join the Ghana Health Service, the Agency driving the domestic resource mobilisation agenda higher. Let's all contribute ideas and resources for its effective implementation. All Parliamentarians, particularly those on of us on the Health Committee must advocate strongly to ensure the availability of resources to implement the needed malaria control interventions in the Country. Within our constituencies also, we should all support the implementation of these interventions.

Mr. Speaker, the need for closer and more intense collaboration with the MMDAs and health sector will ensure judicious use of the 0.5% District Assemblies Common Fund. These monies meant for malaria control, should be used for malaria control and nothing else. I urge the Ministries of Local Government, Transport, Roads and Highways and Housing to consider the impact on malaria

control as they undertake their projects. Our development projects should reduce the breeding sites for the mosquitoes to breed. I also urge health workers to even do more in their field of work to ensure that all suspected malaria cases are tested and confirmed before treatment. We need to make sure that what we are treating is really malaria.

Mr. Speaker, the traditional authorities and religious bodies also have a role to play and they help to ensure that our people use the interventions as recommended and not misuse the ITNs which have been bought with scarce resources.

This year's theme calls for re-ignition of the grassroots movements in which individuals, families, communities, religious leaders, private sector, political leaders, and other members of our society, pledge commitment and take responsibility in the fight against malaria.

Let us intensify our efforts in the fight against malaria. A malaria-free Ghana is possible. Zero malaria starts with me, with you and with all of us.

Thank you