

STATEMENT TO BE DELIVERED BY HON. SARAH ADWOA SAFO –
CHAIRPERSON OF WOMEN CAUCAUS, ON THE FLOOR OF
PARLIAMENT TO MARK THE BREAST CANCER MONTH

Mr. Speaker, as the World Health Organization set aside the month of October for breast cancer awareness dubbed as “pink month”, I wish to make this statement to commemorate the day by adding my voice to creating the awareness of this dreaded disease. The breast cancer awareness month is celebrated in many countries across the world every October. This by conscientizing and supporting awareness creation by advocating for early detection and treatment for the disease.

Mr. Speaker, according to the International Agency for Research on Cancer, there are about 1.38 million new cases and 458, 000 death from breast cancer each year (IARC Globocon, 2008) and it is estimated to be the most common cancer worldwide. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), breast cancer is by far the most common cancer in women worldwide, both in developed and developing countries as well as in low and middle level income countries where the issue has even been rising up steadily on yearly bases due to poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, increase urbanization and adaptation of western lifestyles.

Mr. Speaker, in Ghana the incidents of breast cancer are 0.76% which is predicted to increase with time. Nearly 70% of women diagnosed with breast cancer in Ghana are in advanced stages. Also, about 30% of these cancer cases were below age 35

years. This indicates there is a shift of cancer disease from older women to younger ones. PER THE RESEACH BY Frank Naku Gharthey Jnr and others, published in the international journal of breast cancer, vol. 1, 2016, AA. 1D 3645305, page 9, breast cancer screening for Ghanaians should start from early twenties.

Mr. Speaker, however, there is no comprehensive researches on the causes of breast cancer due to discrepancies in the data for various countries as well as inconsistencies in data collection and data quality. Hence, early detection of the disease remains very important in an attempt to control it. For this reason, WHO promotes comprehensive breast cancer control programs as part of national cancer control plans. In view of this, I will call on the ministry of health to follow the steps of WHO in ensuring that we reduce the rate of women likely to suffer from this disease.

Mr. Speaker, the world Health Organization again reported that, there has being 20% increase in breast cancer issues in the year 2018 as compare to the previous year. Considering the margin of increase in the numbers of breast cancer related issues, it is imperative that a lot more need to be done on breast cancer awareness creation. In view of this, I will call on all breast cancer related Non-governmental organizations, Agencies, Departments and Civil Society Organizations to intensify their efforts to mitigate this problem especially through awareness creation.

Mr. Speaker, sufficient evidence by researchers in Africa on breast cancer confirms the report by the WHO as the research findings suggests there is a growing incident of breast cancer in Africa. The disease is curable and survival so the public must be aware and report to the hospital early if they find any breast abnormality so that they could be treated.

Mr. Speaker, the majority of deaths that occur in developing countries out of breast cancer is due to the fact that most women who are with breast cancer are diagnosed late. This is mainly due to lack of awareness on early detection and barriers to health services. This is the more reason why each of us must add our voices to the idea of awareness creation to help remedy the problem at its infant stages.

Mr. Speaker, fortunately, breast cancer is also preventive in a number of ways especially by practicing good health habits such as limiting the amount of alcohol intake, avoiding smoking. Statistics proves that women who breast feed and are physically active are less prone to the disease. Controlling one's weight as well as avoiding exposure to radiation and environmental pollution are also preventive measures that can be taken by women. Due to our working conditions in Ghana, many career women are not able to adequately breast feed their babies and there is virtually no time for exercising. This is worrying as it can lead to breast cancer. I admonish colleague women to take note of these preventive measures.

Mr. Speaker, I will again entreat our precious women to regularly visit hospitals designated for breast cancer screening to undertake this exercise for immediate detected. Early detection helps in early treatment. I also will call on all husbands to give the needed support to the women in the fight against this disease and do not see it as a problem for the women only.

Mr. Speaker, the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) OF Ghana currently covers the cost of cryotherapy for cancer patients. Unfortunately for breast cancer it does not cover the cost of breast reconstruction surgery. We recommend the government take the necessary steps to extend the coverage to include same, if it requires amendment to the National Health Insurance Scheme Act (Act 654)

Thank you