



## SAND WINNING; A THREAT TO ECONOMIC PRODUCTIVITY

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Mr. Speaker, I wish to draw the attention of this august house to the unprecedented rise in the level of sand winning on our land sites. Almost every corner of this country has some negative story to tell about sand winning in recent times. Forests have been pulled down, coastal soils massively scooped and savannah areas degraded through sand winning.

Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt in my mind that attempts aimed at promoting food production and security would be fruitless unless negative activities like sand winning on our arable lands are properly checked and managed. For how long shall we stand aloof, watch and allow our ~~lands to be destroyed by sand winners?~~

Mr. Speaker, what are we doing as a legislative body to ensure that laws that protect our environments are made to work effectively?

Mr. Speaker, I do not think we need a soothsayer to reveal to us that theft of beach sand is a direct cause of erosion along many shorelines. It is very damaging and ruinous to beach aesthetics and frequently causes environmental damage to other coastal ecosystems such as wetlands. Sand winning has rendered many well-patronized beaches including the once famous Dansoman and Korle-Gonno beaches among other facilities useless and dangerous because of the strength waves.

Sand winning has become so rampant that almost every land piece is vulnerable. Farmers continue to harbor fears since they do not know exactly when their farms will be destroyed. Crops are often vandalized to allow for easy collection of sand. Farmers go through many harrowing situations.

Mr. Speaker, situations and outcomes related to this particular topic in discussion is no different from those in my constituency, Nsawam Adoagyiri.

Mr. Speaker, preliminary checks indicate that Otukwadwo, Avaga, Okobeyeyie, Ahodwo, Nana Boame, Otoase, Pampanso No1, Gyamkama Dobro, Chinto, Akraman, Kofi Kwei etc all within and around my constituency have in the past and are still suffering the dire and grave effects of sand mining activities.

The above named communities are predominant farming areas. Farmers in these areas engage in large scale cultivation of various farm produce for export and supply to many of our local companies and industries.

A fairly good quantity of farm produce from these sites are also transported to our markets and sold to local consumers.

Already, Mr. Speaker, farmers have myriad of mishaps to battle with. There are natural, social, economic, cultural, religious and even political factors militating against farmers' production

fortunes. Disappointments from the local weather, especially rainfall, prevalence of pests and diseases, lack of funding, high cost of farm inputs, machinery, and implements, fluctuations in market conditions. The farmers' predicaments get deepened at the occurrence of disasters such as bush fires, floods etc. In fact, the farmer has numerous hurdles to mitigate before any successful production story can be told. These notwithstanding, farmers still struggle to till lands as means of livelihood. Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that farmers regard their farms as gold mines.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, sand winning in modern times seems to have brought some imbalances to the agricultural sector. What makes the activities of sand winners so disgusting is the way they destroy farm lands. They hardly give farmers prior notification. Immediately they complete their contract agreement with the so called land owners, they quickly move to the sites to initiate destruction. With the aid of bulldozers and excavators, these sand winners

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vandalize crops with impunity. The affected farmers are by no means compensated. Lands are rendered perpetually unproductive. Mr. Speaker, aside the damage caused to crops and lands, sand winning activities pose health threats to humans. Moving trucks emit excessive noise and dust, causing pollution and gullies created at these sites to homes become breeding grounds for mosquitoes during rainy seasons

Mr. Speaker, I think it is time to heed to calls and advice by individuals and various agencies, actors and stakeholders to enforce the laws. The various district, municipal and metropolitan assemblies, the Ghana Police Service, Environmental protection agency, the tourism ministry and the Lands and Natural resources ministry must be well resourced and legally empowered to prosecute illegal sand winners and other persons found culpable in relation to sand winning.

Mr. Speaker, let me be quick to add that Ghana's resolve to mitigate the negative effects of climate change may face serious hiccups should authorities continue to relax in clamping down on sand winning at unauthorized locations.

In fact, the relevant sector ministries responsible should be made to come and brief the house on plans put in place to fight the menace.

No one is totally against the operation of construction firms. At all cost, houses would have to be put up, roads, schools, hospitals and markets need to be constructed and there is absolutely no way these can happen without using the soil. But it will be ideal Mr. Speaker, if the authorities could properly designate areas for these soils to be collected. They must also ensure that prospective sand winners adequately complete all processes regarding effective land use, evaluation and reclamation to allow for the protection of other people's welfare in the society.

Respectfully and humbly, I submit. Thank you for your audience and the opportunity.