

REMARKS BY THE RT. HONOURABLE
SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT, PROFESSOR
MICHAEL AARON OQUAYE AT THE OPENING
OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE FIRST
SESSION OF THE SEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF
THE FOURTH REPUBLIC ON TUESDAY, 30TH
MAY, 2017

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Honourable Members,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the commencement of the Second Meeting of the First Session of the Seventh Parliament.

I am thankful to the Almighty God for seeing to your well-being during the recess and also your safe return to the House this morning. It is my prayer that the good Lord will continue to grant us mercies and good health to continue with the work ahead of us.

I should mention that a number of you were assiduously engaged in Committee work or other Parliamentary assignments during the recess. I am very happy that you cooperated with Leadership to go the extra mile to assist the House. The Media and our people need to know that Members of Parliament are actively engaged even during recess.

Honourable Members, the Seventh Parliamentary Service Board was inaugurated during the recess. A number of important issues were considered which include the following:

- (i) the award of the contract for the partial re-roofing of the Chamber of Parliament to

Messrs China State Hualong Construction Limited,

- (ii) the establishment of the Parliamentary Reforms and Assurances Unit,
- (iii) the establishment of a Legal Department in the Parliamentary Service,
- (iv) the proposed new Chamber Block for Parliament,
- (v) audit and recovery of all lands belonging to Parliament
- (vi) facilitating the health needs of Members of Parliament and staff of the Parliamentary Service.

Honourable Members, if you will recall, part of the roof of the Chamber of Parliament was ripped during a heavy rainstorm during the last Meeting. Some temporary work was however carried out by Messrs China Hualong Company Limited to

enable the House continue with work in the Chamber. The need for the proper partial re-roofing of the building has been advised by the Consultant, Messrs ADK Consortium and the Parliamentary Service Board met during the recess to approve of the award of the contract. Leadership has informed the Contractor of the urgency of the work and also, the need to plan the work in order not to affect plenary sittings of the House. Our Sitting hour will also be looked at accordingly. I will therefore entreat you to bear with any inconvenience that may arise thereof.

Honourable Members, let me slightly expand the matters raised above. Our Parliament has come of age and we should progress.

The need for the establishment of a Legal Department in the Parliamentary Service to assist the House in drafting legislations, motions,

amendments, Private Member's Bills and also assist in general legal counselling has been agreed, at least in principle by the Parliamentary Service Board

As our current Chamber has reached its structural capacity to accommodate further expansion, it is deemed appropriate to have a new modern Chamber with bigger capacity and facilities that will help Parliament discharge its mandate with dignity. The Parliamentary Service Board has given approval to the idea and we shall soon advertise for prospective consultants to help us with a befitting design that will stand the test of time. A very good contractor will subsequently be selected using laid down processes.

Honourable Members, it is sad to note that most of Parliament lands in prime areas of the city of Accra are being encroached upon or been have illegally

taken over by some corporate entities. The Parliamentary Service Board has taken very serious view of this development and requested the Department of Development of the Parliamentary Service to as a matter of urgency, undertake an audit of all Parliamentary lands and report to the Speaker's Office so that we can recover those encroached on as well as get proper titles to those that are untitled.

I had a familiarisation meeting with the Staff of the Parliamentary Service. I listened for over two hours and acquainted myself with relevant concerns which related to inadequate office and residential accommodation, training, catering and counselling services, salaries, travel and other allowances, promotion etc.

Of course, staff welfare impacts heavily on the work of the House as a whole and I will work tirelessly with the Clerk and Leadership to ensure that the concerns raised by staff are promptly and adequately addressed. In fact, steps are already being taken to resolve some of these at once.

Honourable Members, there was a postponement of the invitation to the Speaker, Leadership and some senior Clerks of Parliament to visit the Houses of Parliament in Westminster due to the impending general elections in the United Kingdom (UK). A new date for the visit will be confirmed soon. I am following this up. However, the Speaker and the Principal Assistant Clerk in charge of Parliamentary Relations and Protocol had very useful meetings with the Clerk and some principal officers of the House of Commons. Lessons learnt

encompassed the British Committee system which a Member only serves one Committee, leading to specialisation.

I am happy to inform the House that pursuant to the UK visit, the British has given invitation to two Honourable Members of our House: The Member of Parliament for Offinso South, Hon. Abudallah Banda and the Member for Klottey Korle, Hon. Dr. Zenator Agyeman-Rawlings to observe the UK General Elections.

The Speaker also led a Parliamentary delegation to visit the Kingdom of Morocco at the invitation of the President of the Lower Chamber of the Parliament of the Kingdom of Morocco. During the visit, the Speaker and his delegation had the opportunity to observe proceedings to enhance relevant comparisons to be made when reviewing the Standing Orders. The Speaker and his delegation

also had a number of meetings with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Minister of Tourism, Air Transport, Artisanal and Social Economy, the Minister for Agriculture, Marine Fishing, Rural Development and Waters and Forestry and Ministry of National and Urban Planning, Housing and City Policy.

I noted during the interactions with the Ministers of the expertise and huge comparative advantages that the Kingdom of Morocco has over Ghana in the provision of affordable housing, production of cement and phosphate fertilisers, agriculture irrigation, fisheries and tourism. There is the need to have more collaborations with them for enhancing our socio-economic development.

Notably, we are deepening cooperation with friendly nations and also with our development partners.

Visits by our Members of Parliament to the UK, USA, India and the Kingdom of Morocco will soon be announced. These will enable us sharpen our tools with the best practices. I look forward to maximising the participation of all Members in these exchanges.

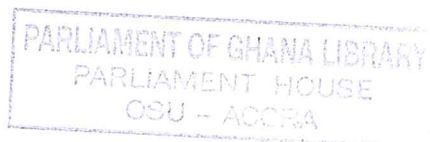
Honourable Members, I will expect the House to conclude work on the review of the Standing Orders during the Meeting as the revision has taken too long to complete. Parliament as I indicated earlier, has come of age now and we need to move on as a matured entity. It will be of interest to House to have a thorough look at the entire Committee system and to find best means that would enable Honourable Members specialise at best, on a Committee instead of the current system which

inundate Members and prevents them from specialising.

I have begun discussions with Leadership over this suggestion and also the need to strengthen the Committees in efficient service delivery.

Parliament will sign a Memorandum of Understanding with STAR-Ghana next week, Monday, 5th June at 2.00pm which will facilitate the institution develop its capacities in a number of critical areas of our work as a measure of deepening parliamentary democracy in our country.

As we begin a new Meeting, I will expect of you all to give maximum attention at upholding the dignity of Parliament and the Office of a Member of Parliament.



Hon. Members we had regularly pondered over broadening the horizon of political participation and deepening democracy. The unexamined life is not worth living.

Thank you

God bless us all as ~~we~~
faithfully serve.