

**ASSESSING THE PERFORMANCE OF PARLIAMENT AND
PARLIAMENTARIANS: COULD THERE BE A BEST
APPROACH? STATEMENT BY HON. FRANK ANNOH-
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Parliament remains one of the strong pillars and bedrock of democracy in various countries including Ghana. It is general knowledge that from the inception of parliament into our democracy after Ghana achieved full political independence, the constitution was fashioned after the westerners and over years, we as a country have been able to give space and legitimacy to the creation of parliament and by extension having members of parliament. The inter-parliamentary union defines a democratic parliament by referring to the universal values, which they should all aspire to and which retain their validity, according to the definition, a democratic parliament is a representative of the political will and social diversity of the population and its effective in its legislature, oversight functions, crucially it is also transparent, accessible and accountable to the citizens that it represents.

Mr. Speaker, reference can be made to IPU ground breaking study ‘**Parliament and democracy in the twenty first century: a guide to good practice**’. Parliament from the basic definition is a representative body having the supreme legislative power within a state or multinational organization. Chapter 10 of our 1992 constitution Article 93 states clearly the duties of parliament and by extension the functions of members of parliament.



Mr. Speaker, from the above reference to the constitution the duties, functions and responsibilities of the house and the members of parliament can be deduced as:

- 1) The Representative role, where members of parliament represent their constituents and parliament represent the people of the country.
- 2) The parliamentary oversight role over executive.
- 3) The legislative capacity

- 4) Power of purse or Finam Control Function;
- 5) Deliberative
- 6) Informative
- 7) Approval rights - Treati conventions, etc.

Further to this our standing order spells out clearly how these roles should be carried out and further added on.

Mr. Speaker, parliament and parliamentarian assessment over the past few years has become a worrying concern and a much discussed subject on our social media and news portals to the extent that benefits and gratuity becomes the bench mark for assessment, my concern and the basis for my statement today is to bring the attention of the house to a growing phenomenon where individuals, civil societies, concern groups come out with all sort of assessment criteria to assess parliament and members of parliament.

From my checks and research I can conclude that it is therefore difficult to arrive at a meaningful and universal applicable statistical or similar measurement for the performance of members of parliament since views differ, constituencies vary, the political context of each committee is unique and on that bases it will be unfair for any such organization, civil society, pressure group or a media house to use one performance indicator to measure the general parliamentarian within a given period of time.

Mr. Speaker, these should not be interpreted as my disapproval of assessment and examination of our efforts and performance but to rather say I welcome **fair, transparent**, more inclusive

approach of assessment by individuals, civil societies, groups and the media because their efforts in doing so will or is likely to provide valuable perspectives that will or may enrich our individual self, our parliamentary procedure and our democratic credentials at large.

These bring to mind the following questions, which are as follows

- 1) What criteria is employed
- 2) What process or the participating process
- 3) Time frame (is it a fair representation)
- 4) Source of data(how credible is the source)
- 5) Documenting the procedure (for reference)
- 6) Outcome.

Mr. Speaker, its not surprising to know that members of parliament are assessed by the voter preference their expectations and values personal favors for getting a job, or for local developments, social calls at functions and these are sometimes for and against members of parliaments, very recently a news outfit called the ODEKRO group came out with a publication on the various social media platforms and some key news portals like myjoyonline.com about their ranking of poor and best performed members of parliament and the outcome has gone viral, the repercussions have also gone viral with lots of errors evident of which I can mention, they tendered an apology to HON. Adwoa Safo member of parliament for Dome Kwabenya, my good self and other members of parliament that have received one way or the other an apology from them, and this is very unfortunate.

David Beethan 2008 with the inter-parliamentary union 2008 also the international IDEA state of democracy assessment methodology came out with the following assessment kits for measuring performance and they are as follows

- The MPs representation in Parliament
- His role in the performance of oversight of the executive
- His legislative capacity
- Transparency and accessibility in parliament

The NCCE report in April 2015 (assessing the effectiveness of parliament in Ghana democracy, a work that was organized into six chapters which is

- * Assesses the public's knowledge of the role of Parliament and Parliamentarians
- * Seeks the views of the general public on how well Parliament/Parliamentarians have Performed
- * Looks at the criteria the public uses to measure the effectiveness of Parliament's work
- * Presents the public's view on some hindrances to Parliament's work
- * Examines how Parliamentarians can be made more effective; and
- * Presents recommendations from the public on possible changes to the current Parliamentary system of Ghana to improve its effectiveness

This study covered 72 district and from the study and its findings states that the general public was fairly satisfied with the performance of parliament and parliamentarian in terms of their duties i.e. executives oversight, law making, being the voice of the people and representation.

Mr. Speaker, moving forward parliament should consider and put measures in place to manage these reportage and I recommend the following

- 1) The parliamentary public relations office should set up an educational outfit to help educate the public on the parliamentary duties and proceedings
- 2) The parliamentary public relations office should set up a regulatory body or a well-recognized structure to reconcile various studies and research which will be conducted by civil service, groups and agencies. I.e. independent bodies should pass through the parliamentary structures. To ensure the following:

*cross data

*Cross tabulation

*Validation of data

This however not an attempt to censor the works of supposed independent civil society groups but rather a collaborative, effective way to ensure **fairness, transparent** and quiet a scientific approach.

- 3) The NCCE for which reason I referenced their report should intensify their education work which again is a constitutional mandate to help the general public understand how parliament operates. The misconception about the work of the Member of Parliament needs to be cleared and a clear point made to the general public not to discredit the major committee works of parliament.

