
**STATEMENT ON ILLEGAL FELLING AND HARVESTING OF
ROSEWOOD
AND ITS ATTENDANT DESTRUCTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN
BUILSA SOUTH DISTRICT**

BY
HON. CLEMENT A. APAAK,
MP FOR BUILSA SOUTH

Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is with great humility that I accept this opportunity to make a statement on the illegal harvesting of rosewood and its attendant destructive effect on the environment in the Builsa South District.

Mr. Speaker, the importance of our natural environment to our very survival as a species (homo sapiens sapiens or wise wise man) and the need to protect it, is well known and has been given substantial attention in two major speeches by President Nana Akufu Addo: the State of the Nation Address and in his speech on our nation's 60th birthday.

Mr. Speaker the President noted the following: "The other area of our lives in which we can and should start making a change is the care of the environment. We are in danger of destroying our blessed country. Ours is a beautiful country. If we claim to love our country, we must take care of the lands, the trees, the water bodies and the animals" (SONA2017).

Mr. Speaker, on the 60th birthday of our beloved nation, the President stated the following: "It is turning out to be a constant refrain, but, on a day like this, we cannot ignore the state of our environment. We are endangering the very survival of the beautiful and blessed land that our forebears bequeathed to us. The dense forests, that were home to varied trees, plants and fauna, have largely disappeared" The President added that, there is nothing we can do better to pay homage to those who fought to free us from bondage than to dedicate this 60th independence anniversary to protecting our environment and regenerating the lands and water bodies" (Independence day 2017)

Mr. Speaker, sadly, I can confirm that illegal loggers are actively pillaging the remnant forest patches in the savanna zone, including ours in Builsa



South, and are felling Rosewood, an endangered tropical hardwood species, in spite of the recent directive by the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources banning the logging and export of rosewood.

Mr. Speaker, a brief background! ROSEWOOD is a fine grained timber used principally for the production of high-end expensive furniture for the elite across the world, especially in Asia (China). It is used also for making chess pieces as well as parts of musical instruments. It is estimated that China alone imports close to 96% of all rosewood lumber exported out of Ghana.

Rosewood harvesting and trade in Ghana started with salvage logging during the construction of the Bui hydro power dam, and later the construction of the Fufulso-Sawla Road. What started as legal salvage activities for the removal of trees of commercial value within the catchment of the Bui dam has turned into the biggest illegal harvesting and trade in any timber species ever in the history of Ghana, according to **Daryl Bosu, an Environmentalist** (article published in June 2014 on Ghanaweb).

Mr. Speaker, efforts were, and are still being made to deal with this challenge. Mr. Speaker, only last month, February 2017, Government through the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources issued a directive banning the harvesting and export of rosewood. However this ban, like others before it, has proven to be ineffective due to lack of robust enforcement. The first ban was announced in 2012. This ban was followed by the confiscation of illegal rosewood by a task force set up to bring to a halt the illegal harvesting and export. The second ban was announced in September 2013 to take effect in 2014. Mr. Speaker, a third ban was announced in July 2014, again prohibiting the felling, harvesting and exportation of rosewood.

In spite of the current ban, the fourth, Mr. Speaker, rosewood logging is on-going in my constituency: Fumbisi, Uwasi, Weisi, Doninga, Bachonsi, Kanjaga, Wiesi, Gbedembilisi, Yepala and several other communities in the Builsa South District. Only a few days ago, the Presiding member of the Builsa South District assembly alerted me to the fact that efforts by the assembly to stop the illegal logging are not being complemented by the

police or the forestry commission. In fact, Builsa South has no forestry officer!

Mr. Speaker, my checks, confirmed by the Presiding member and several other constituents indicate that these illegal loggers and criminals have started using Togo and as an outlet to get the criminal booty to designated destinations. The stolen logs are transported to Togo via Bawku for export, to circumvent the ban on export from Ghana.

Mr. Speaker, the impact of these illegal logging activities on our already precarious ecological conditions and livelihoods, need no further illumination. But, if the practice is allowed to continue, we all, in the very near future, will come to grips with worsening climatic conditions, a declining agrarian economy, and serious migration of environmental refugees from the savanna to the south. Mr. Speaker, we can expect more kayayee!

Mr. Speaker, as leaders and representatives of the people, we cannot afford to watch unconcerned and allow these illegal loggers to make huge financial profit at the expense of the poor masses whose daily livelihoods depend on a healthy environment. This callous, cruel and wicked environmental carnage is not only the result of utter ignorance but that of sheer greed for money and insensitivity to and total disregard for the fragile ecosystem of Builsa South.

Mr. Speaker, it is an insult to our nation when unscrupulous businessmen and their accomplices engage in colossal ecological destruction in an area where successive governments have advocated and strongly emphasized the importance of tree planting and environmental stewardship. Mr. Speaker, how do we mitigate the hazards of desertification and climate change with the onslaught of illegal logging activities such as these?

Mr. Speaker, if we are give effect to H.E's call to protect our environment, a call I agree with, then, we must work to bring an end to the illegal harvesting of rosewood and to bring the criminals to book. This carnage must stop! This widespread environmental destruction in Builsa South and other parts of the northern savannah woodland ecological zone must end.



Mr. Speaker, with all modesty, I seek your permission to make the following recommendations:

1. A thorough investigation be conducted by the BNI into the illegal logging of rosewood in the Builsa South District and the perpetrators brought to justice accordingly. In addition, they should be made to plant and nurture trees to maturity in the affected areas as a compensatory measure;
2. The District Police Command be instructed to arrest anyone felling rosewood in the Builsa South District. Those apprehended should be prosecuted. The Police should work in collaboration with the Assembly and the forestry commission to enforce the ban on rosewood logging.
3. A Forestry Officers be assigned to the Builsa South District immediately. Currently, Builsa South has no Forestry Officer and my investigation suggests that neither does our sister District of Builsa North.
4. A national taskforce be formed to investigate why the illegal harvesting of rosewood continues in the savanna zone. The taskforce should have representation from the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, the Parliamentary sub-committee on Lands and Natural Resources, the BNI and the Office of the President. The outcome of the work of such a taskforce should be considered in possible policy changes or modifications.
5. That the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources furnish this House with a report on how many containers of Rosewood have been impounded since the ban, their places of origin, how government intends to dispose the impounded Rosewood, and whether or not the affected communities will share in the proceeds.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you sincerely and hope that this worrying issue will be tackled as a national issue. Protecting the environment is the duty of all of us!
