



**STATEMENT BY HON. JOHN ABDULAI JINAPOR**

**MP YAPEI KUSAWGU CONSTITUENCY**

**THREAT OF HUMAN ACTIVITY ON HIGH TENSION CABLES AND POLES IN GHANA**

Right Honourable Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to make this statement.

Mr. Speaker, the benefits derived from electricity across the globe cannot be over emphasised. Electricity and for that matter energy continues to be the catalyst for economic growth and development.

The Africa Energy Outlook, in a Special Report in the 2014 World Energy Outlook series, revealed that more than 620 million people in sub-Saharan Africa (two-thirds of the population) live without electricity, and over 600 million people rely on dangerous, inefficient forms of cooking.

In sub-Saharan Africa, only about 27% of the population have access to electricity, according to the World Bank. Indeed excluding South Africa, the entire installed generation capacity of sub-Saharan Africa is only 28 Gigawatts, equivalent to that of Argentina.

Lack of electricity hinders the growth of businesses, affects the storage of vital medicines by health facilities and also prevent free and safe movement of people within their communities.

However the situation in Ghana can be described as that of a positive story. Through our collective and concerted efforts over the years, Ghana is today ranked amongst few countries that have the highest rate of access to electricity in Africa. Ghana has an electricity access rate of about 84% with an installed generation capacity of about 4,000MW today. This has culminated in an appreciable level of stability in electricity supply compared to most African countries.

Mr. Speaker this otherwise enviable achievement in the midst of a continent with a high deficit of energy supply is under serious threat due to human activity which is threatening the very foundation for the supply of electricity.

In recent times the pylons and poles of the Ghana Grid Company, the agency responsible for the evacuation and transmission of electricity from wholesale suppliers to bulk customers and also to provide fair and non-discriminatory transmission services to all power market participants in the energy supply chain continue to be damaged by uncontrolled human activity.

GRIDCO has warned of dire consequences for the country's electricity transmission and distribution system if this unhealthy and hazardous human activity is not addressed.

Mr. Speaker stealing of aluminium cables, human settlements under high tension cables, activities of illegal mining, vehicles running into electricity poles resulting in the collapse of the transmission lines continues to pose a major threat to the supply of reliable, adequate and sustainable electricity for the citizenry.

Mr. Speaker I wish to state with seriousness that if this trend is not reversed, it could cause the collapse of the country's power transmission system.

Mr. Speaker, the rate at which drivers run into electricity poles has been on the rise. These have resulted in the collapse of some pylons in many areas across the country.

The slightest winds or rainfall poses danger to lives and properties from falling poles. This results in extra cost to the company and government since new materials have to be imported to replace the lost metals.

The metal bars stolen are traced to the shops of scrap dealers and metal workers. They are used to fabricate all sorts of metal-based items including body parts of commercial vehicles.

Mr. Speaker illegal miners work so close to high tension poles, that they weaken the base and foundation of the poles. This poses a serious threat not only to the miners themselves but also to the communities and inhabitants in those areas in the event of collapse of the transmission lines.

Bush burning especially during the dry season is a common practice by different groups of people for varied purposes.

For instance, herdsmen, are said to often set fire to the dry bush to engender the fresh springing up of grass to feed their cattle, while farmers prefer bush burning (a better and cheaper option of clearing their farms) to hiring labourers to weed for a fee.

Grasscutter hunters often set the bush on fire to force the animals out of their hideouts. Honey hunters and cigarette smokers are also among the tall list of people who intentionally set the bush on fire.

Mr. Speaker as a result of these practises, it is a common sight during the dry season to see flames consuming the bush as well as high and low tension poles (which are mostly wooden). This is even more common in the Northern parts of the country where poles have been damaged and need to be replaced at very high cost to GRIDCO, VRA, ECG and ultimately to the state.

Any time a single pole is brought down through these activities, it comes down with several other poles since they are connected together. This has led to the associated huge cost of reconstructing these lines.

Another disturbing development has been the rise in human settlement springing up under high tension pylons within our cities.

Mr. Speaker in most parts of our cities one cannot fail to notice several crowded slums and other unauthorised structures under these transmission lines

Mr. Speaker these settlements pose an imminent danger not just to the country's national electricity grid but also to the inhabitants residing under these cables as these structures emit high electricity voltages that can kill instantly.

Mr. Speaker the country is sitting on a time bomb if these human developments are not checked.

Mr. Speaker while acknowledging that the Ministry of Energy has been at the forefront with other stakeholders to address this canker, I deem it a duty to call on Executive, Parliament,



the Judiciary, the Media and all Ghanaians to join me in this noble crusade of ensuring that this unfortunate development is tackled head on and with urgency and deep seated commitment.

Mr. Speaker in dealing with this challenge, I wish to recommend to the executive, Parliament and other stakeholders in the energy sector to consider the enactment of a specific law to protect these sensitive assets from undesirable human activity to avert any future calamity.

It is also important that we intensify public education on the need to protect these poles and pylons.

Mr. Speaker in other jurisdictions, farmers are encouraged to cultivate vegetables under these pylons. This is done to ensure these fields are cordoned and protected from houses springing under them. We may adopt this strategy as a country to help mitigate the challenge.

With these few words, Mr. Speaker, I thank you gratuitously for the opportunity to make this statement.