

THE NEED FOR CONVENTION TO PLAN, CONTROL AND MANAGE DISASTERS IN THE SUB-REGION AND THE WORLD.

Delivered by Honorable Annoh-Dompreh, Frank.

Chairman, Parliamentary Select Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Right Honorable Speaker, I rise to make a case on the need for an appropriate convention for the planning, controlling and management of disasters in the sub-region and the world at large.

I want to begin my statement with a quote from Petra Nemcova, a Czech Republican model who once survived a Tsunami in 2004 and I quote "We cannot stop natural disasters but we can arm ourselves with knowledge, so many lives wouldn't have to be lost if there was enough disaster preparedness". Fortunately, we do not have tsunamis, but we have floods, fires, pests, droughts and other disasters prevalent in Ghana and the sub-region.

Right Honorable Speaker, we all agree that disasters occur when hazards and vulnerability meet, and that is a statement of fact. It is on record per statistics available that out of every 100 disasters reported worldwide, only 20 occur in Africa, but Africa suffers 60% of all disaster-related deaths. This is probably due to the type of hazards that affect this continent, to under-reporting, and the fact that under the circumstances prevailing in Africa, it is easy for any disaster to escalate and multiply its impact. Worse still, we do not prepare for disasters and without planning and preparation, our chances of meeting and surmounting the challenges of disasters is left to chance.

Africa's natural hazards are mainly epidemics, endemic diseases, drought, floods, agricultural pests and bush fires. Parts of our continent are also susceptible to earthquakes, cyclones and volcanic eruptions. The natural hazards interact with manmade ones, such as armed conflicts, air, road and railway incidents, other industrial hazards such as mining accidents, chemical spills, etc., and with widespread vulnerability speak volumes of a time-bomb of danger that lurk around us.

MR SPEAKER

Sir, vetted for your consideration
and admission. *(Signature)*
Maj. Chief Whip
18/10/17

PARLIAMENT OF GHANA LIBRARY
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
OSU - ACCRA

The context is one of rapid population growth, forced movements of population, environmental degradation, precarious urbanization, food insecurity, poverty, fragile economies, poor infrastructures and weak institutions, and cultural and political instability. The 53 countries of the continent are highly susceptible and vulnerable and our over 1.2 billion population exposed to both natural and manmade hazards. Through complex causal effects, disasters have physical, emotional and economic impact on our people directly and indirectly.

Mr. Speaker, typical examples within our sub-region are those of Niger, Nigeria, DR Congo and recently Sierra Leone just to mention a few. In Sierra Leone for instance, three days of torrential rains resulted in a mudslide, toppling the regent community in Freetown, Sierra Leone, on August 14, 2017. This unfortunate occurrence has been deemed the nation's most devastating natural disaster in recent years, destroying homes, burying locals and killing more than 1,000 people and over 600 people missing.

I want to commend those Nations that demonstrated immense love and support especially the present Government of Ghana under the leadership of the President, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo for showing extensive benevolence.

Mr. Speaker, in Benue, Nigeria, also, more than 100,000 people were forced to flee their homes following massive flooding in the central state of Benue. Close to 3,000 homes were submerged, leaving thousands of locals homeless. The list goes on and on Mr. Speaker, and at this point I think it is worth mentioning and acknowledging the support from International Communities and agencies, both public and private in a quest to assuage the suffering of the victims of these situations.

Mr. Speaker, apart from the cheque donations and other forms of support from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) among other African regional bodies or organizations, I think various states ought to attach more importance to making sufficient budgetary allocations towards some of these unforeseen circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, we would agree that Africa is highly limited and virtually handicapped when it comes to disaster Management. The extent of damage caused by a hazard is related not just to its severity but also to the capacity of

people living in disaster-prone areas to prepare for and resist it. Efforts to reduce disaster risks therefore, focuses in part on developing early warning systems to provide timely and effective information that enable people and communities to respond when a disaster hits. Early warning systems are usually combinations of tools and processes embedded within institutional structures, co-ordinated by international and sometimes national disaster agencies.

Whether they focus on one particular hazard or many, these systems are composed of four elements: knowledge of the risk, technical monitoring and warning services, dissemination of meaningful warnings to at-risk people, and public awareness and preparedness to act. Warning services lie at the core of these systems and how well they operate depends on having a sound scientific basis for predicting and forecasting, and the capability to run warning news accurately and consistently.

Mr. Speaker, while we expect these regional bodies to increase performance in assisting disaster situations, I urge and advocate that more consistent measures be put in place to prevent such situations or at least, build our support system to adequately respond to such unpleasant situations when they, thus, my positionality on the sufficient budgetary allocation.

It is important that African states strengthen their Disaster Risk Management systems by developing appropriate laws and policies that adequately build capacities in the various ministries such as the ministry of health; build community preparedness and resilience structures, strengthen awareness and develop national standards for response. This will ensure that the health system is prepared and will be able to provide adequate health sector response to emergencies and reduce their likelihood of becoming disasters.

Mr. Speaker, the non-existence of international and local conventions to address some of these situations is a great disadvantage and the need to procure one is long over-due. We all know how conventions work to support relevant matters such as these and so it is surprising that at this age and time, we lack it.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I wish to remind International bodies, stakeholders and all people that matter in this enterprise that while natural disaster capture headlines and national attention in the short-term, the work of recovery and

rebuilding is long-term and hence there is an urgent need to initiate policy moves at procuring and establishing such conventions within the shortest possible time.

A word to the wise they say is enough. Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity.

