MEET-THE-PRESS

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER
MINISTRY OF SANITATION AND WATER RESOURCES

Honourable Minister for Information
Honourable Deputy Ministers
Chief Directors
Directors and Heads of Departments and Agencies
Friends of the Media
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

First of all, let me add my voice to that of the Minister of Information in welcoming you to this maiden Meet-the-Press session of our Ministry, which in itself is a new ministry. We are also delighted about your attendance and may I, on behalf of my two deputy ministers as well as the entire Ministry, take this opportunity to express our gratitude to you for your attendance.

Honourable Minister, members of the media, it must be stated, that His Excellency the President recognizes the role and significance of water and sanitation and how they enhance the national development effort and so has, in his wisdom, set up this new ministry to give focus and attention to these two sub-sectors to ensure that we are able to deliver these vital services to the good people of Ghana. I must also add, that whereas Ghana has made significant gains in the water sub-sector, hitting 89% access, our performance in the sanitation sub-sector has been one of the lowest in the world, at only 19% of access to improved sanitation. These findings are based on the Joint Management Programme (JMP) report of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children and Education Fund (UNICEF).

Given that these two areas have been referred to as “siamese twins” due to their complementarity, it is only natural that they should be under one roof within the governance structure of the country, and that is exactly what the President has done. Ladies and gentlemen, in this step therefore, the intention of the President was quite clear and so is his commitment to deliver on this front. Additionally, his political will has also been amply
emphasized through various statements made in his inaugural address as well as the State of the Nation Address and the declaration of Accra to be the Cleanest City in Africa. All reaffirm this desire to transform the sector’s landscape in Ghana.

Having demonstrated this so far, members of the media, the question that remains to be addressed therefore is, “How will this vision be realized?” and that is why we are assembled here this morning.

Ladies and gentlemen, granting that these goals are laudable and must be pursued with all the energy that is required, it has to be noted also, that the road to achieving them will not be smooth. The challenge is indeed daunting as it is set against the backdrop of a new Ministry with its teething problems such as lack of adequate capacity in many respects and which also requires a well-structured and coordinated approach, to be supported by significant resources.

Distinguished members of the media, on the matter of sanitation, it has been our collective desire as a nation, to see our cities cleaned up regularly but that seems not to be the case yet. The entire value chain of waste management has not yet been well structured nor has the financing of those services streamlined in such a manner as to facilitate easy collection, haulage and treatment before final disposal. There is also the matter of outstanding financial obligations that have to be paid.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to bring to your attention that in the immediate, what has stood in the way of the timely and efficient provision of waste management services, or the collection of refuse for that matter, was an outstanding debt of Eight Hundred and Ninety-Two Million Ghana Cedis (GHc892,000,000) which the Ministry inherited from the previous government owed to waste management companies. This debt accrued from the provision of fumigation services, compensation for GYEEDA employees and Sanitation Guards, provision of landfill management services as well as debts arising out of contracts with the Ministry of Local
Government and Rural Development and the Municipal, Metropolitan and District Assemblies. This huge debt needed to be settled before effective delivery of services could be carried out.

Honourable Minister, ladies and gentlemen, I am glad to announce that the government has not only successfully negotiated the settlement of these debts, but has indeed commenced payment and also made resources available for the emergency evacuation of the heaps of refuse which have piled up especially in Accra and our all the regional capitals. The Ministry of Finance has released funds for the immediate evacuation of waste would be carried out in the next few days. The evacuation will also bring in its wake, the closure of the illegal dumpsites dotted throughout the capital of Accra.

Members of the media, the absence of mini waste transfer stations, strategically located throughout the cities and towns usually constructed as stop gap measure to take on the waste within the neighbourhoods from where it would then be conveyed and transported to the major transfer stations such as in Achimota or to the final disposal sites such as Kpone. This is also a major contributor to the current filthy situation in Accra and has to be addressed. Again, the Ministry of Finance has also released the sum of fifty million cedis (GHc50,000,000) to construct fifteen (15) mini transfer stations in addition to the evacuation for a start.

Additionally, the attitudinal aspects of our lifestyle as well as the lack of cooperation of an emerging group of players in the waste haulage business, known as ‘borla taxis’ who are helping with conveyance of waste but do not often comply with the established guidelines have also contributed to the problem. The need to formalize, regulate and integrate the ‘borla taxis’ into the waste management business value chain coupled with their compliance with laid down guidelines would no doubt improve the sanitation management situation, especially in the neighborhoods where the big trucks cannot get in. In all instances, the youth have created businesses for themselves, are earning incomes and we must support them to be more effective. We will be meeting them soon to understand how best to work with them.
Ladies and gentlemen of the media, the above notwithstanding, I wish to make it clear that with a sector such as ours which has not been well-structured before, but now merged with the water sub-sector, it is imperative that strategic road map be laid to guide the sector’s operations. It is also necessary to include all stakeholders in the formulation of that plan for the sake of ownership. Members of the media, here again, I am glad to announce that the Sector Ministry has been able to undertake stakeholder consultations which have resulted in outcomes that are set to assist the sector operators work more effectively and efficiently.

Besides applying the Sector-Wide Approach to develop a comprehensive and integrated strategic plan with an Action Plan, the Ministry has also been able to complete a Draft Policy Paper for the approval of Cabinet to establish a National Sanitation Authority with a supporting Sanitation Fund to serve as a dedicated agency to regulate and lead the implementation of the sanitation policies of government as well as provide reliable and regular funding to support effective service delivery. The policy also makes provision for the establishment of a dedicated enforcement team under the Authority to be called National Sanitation Brigade that would ensure compliance to laid down laws and regulations. Ladies and gentlemen, an assessment of the entire value chain of waste management business system in Ghana with a view to restructuring the sub-sector for efficient operations has also been undertaken. These activities have all been undertaken to develop the right architecture and operational modalities for delivering the President’s agenda.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, in this sector, the need to transform the attitudes of our citizenry with regards to sanitation can certainly not be overemphasized. Again, through stakeholder consultations, a Total Sanitation Campaign Strategy has been drawn up and would be launched very soon by the President. This would be spread throughout entire country and would also penetrate the entire strata of Ghanaian society down to the lowest level and would get everyone involved in the national drive to make our nation clean. A specific plan has been designed within that campaign to support the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area Assemblies to
ensure that Accra becomes the cleanest city in Africa. I might also add that proposals have been completed on how to deal with the plastics situation.

Honourable Minister, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the Ministry has also secured funds and is evaluating proposals to roll out the construction of household, institutional and market toilets to improve Ghana’s rating internationally on improved sanitation. Such funds would also be used to develop new sewerage systems as well as re-open old ones in addition drilling more boreholes. The African Development Bank, the Chinese Eximbank Bank as well as the World Bank are among some of the sources of development financing secured to undertake these projects. The Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA) project as well as the GASSLIP (Greater Accra Sustainable Sanitation and Livelihood Project) and the Sustainable Rural Water and Sanitation Project (SRWSP) are among a few of the projects being pursued by the Ministry.

Ladies and gentlemen of the media, may I also share with you, a major aspect of the policy direction of the government in the sector’s strategic plan. Considering that waste is now regarded as a resource, the processing of waste into by-products, is high on the agenda of government. The Ministry, is currently in consultation with various investors to convert our waste into various value added products such as energy, compost fertilizer and recycled plastics and paper. This will reduce the final residue of waste to a minimum level which would not require huge landfill sites to dispose of waste.

Honourable Minister, ladies and gentlemen, the ministry is on course to deliver rural water as well as to complete ongoing water treatment plants and commission them. Those to be commissioned soon include Cape Coast, Wa and Essakyir. Funds have also been sourced, awaiting statutory approvals to undertake new projects to further expand access to water so as to deliver “water for all”. The drilling of boreholes is ongoing and more funds have been earmarked to further improve on access to water.
Ladies and gentlemen of the media, with the extensive stakeholder consultations and the strategic planning having been completed, as well as the initiatives that have been crafted and have received funding, the new Ministry of Water Resources and Sanitation is poised to take off to deliver on the vision of the President and as well as the pledges made in the New Patriotic Party Manifesto.

We are grateful for your attention and also trust that you would participate actively in the launch and roll out of the Total Sanitation Campaign to be embarked upon soon.

God Bless Ghana. God Bless us all.

Thank you.