

COMMUNIQUE FROM REGIONAL MINISTERS CONFERENCE

**FIRST REGIONAL MINISTERS' CONFERENCE
ORGANISED IN KOFORIDUA FROM 13TH – 16TH
AUGUST, 2009**

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1.0 Preamble

We, the ten (10) regional ministers appointed by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Ghana, Prof. John Evans Atta Mills;

- Having participated in the first conference of Regional Ministers in the fourth government of the Fourth Republic held in Koforidua from the 13th to the 16th of August, 2009 under the theme “The Role of the Regional Minister in the New Policy of A Better Ghana”;
- Having been acquainted with the state of the economy, the implications of the oil find and natural resource endowments, cabinet decisions and policy positions on such issues as education, auditing of public funds, communicating government, critical issues in ongoing social development programmes, including school feeding, national youth employment and relations with key stakeholders such as the media and parliament;
- Having been given an opportunity to reflect on the role of the region in the decentralization process, its challenges, potentials and their roles in delivering more responsive, accountable and equitable development and promoting the ideals of a social democratic government;

Wish to communicate the following.

2.0 Gratitude

The Conference of Regional Ministers wishes to express its gratitude to all who contributed to making this meeting a success namely:

- His Excellency the President of the Republic of Ghana, John Evans Atta Mills for his words of inspiration and guidance which set the tone for our reflections
- The host Minister, Regional Coordinating Council and the good people of the Eastern Region for providing us with such a conducive venue
- In particular, Professor Emeritus Daasebre Oti Boateng, Omanhene of the New Juaben Traditional Area and President of the Eastern Regional House of Chiefs for gracing the opening ceremony with his august presence.

3.0 We are gratified that

- Our government is making every effort to inject sanity into the economy while considering how best to ensure sustainable and equitable socio-economic progress

- Our government while doing its utmost to make Ghana a major supplier of energy in the sub region is also diversifying our exports.
- Strenuous efforts are being made to revamp such important development interventions like the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), the National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP) and the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP).

4.0 We recognize that

- There are high voter expectations and demands by the public for accountability,
- The role of the Region is one of the weakest and least understood aspects of our decentralization arrangements being non-policy-making, non-legislating and non-taxing;
- Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs) have a key role to play in the implementation of the policies of the government in order to deliver on the promises of the NDC government
- There is the need for Regional Ministers (RMs) who are nearer the grassroots to communicate what government is doing about delivering on its promises: transparency and accountable governance; purposeful infrastructure; jobs for the people.

5.0 We hereby resolve to

- Initiate mechanisms to facilitate horizontal and downward accountability as a reflection of our party's commitment to deepening local democracy and facilitating local level development and empowerment;
- Maintain cordial and mutually respectful relationships with members of parliament (MPs), traditional authorities, religious and faith-based leaders and other key actors in socio-economic environment, paying attention to protocol, encouraging them to accord the RCC the same regard;
- Acknowledge the technical capacity of our administrators, encouraging them to offer their fullest cooperation and support to our efforts;
- Undertake closer supervision of MMDCEs of districts within our jurisdictions as well as regular, rigorous performance assessments;

- Work assiduously to mobilize information on regional level developments and successes and collaborate with the Ministry of Information in this regard;
- Infuse the “Better Ghana” concept into all of our communication which will be consciously coordinated and encourage media reportage of development programmes in order to prevent voids in information dissemination;
- Endeavour to strengthen our communications teams and our relations with the media whilst maintaining confidentiality and good sense, to this end;
- Support the National Media Commission (NMC) in facilitating media monitoring in the regions through the provision of premises and other resources within our limited means;
- Play key leadership roles in the delivery of education in our regions by taking keen interest in relevant infrastructural projects, performance reviews and support for inter-district initiatives that will foster learning;
- Carefully consider financial decisions of assemblies at regular intervals in order to identify irregular happenings and instances of malfeasance and assure ourselves beyond all reasonable doubt;
- Support the re-organization and delivery of the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) in our respective regions for it to achieve the basic objectives that underlie its establishment namely, (a) improving access (b) reducing hunger and malnutrition (c) boosting domestic food production;
- Endeavour to support the implementation of the Youth in Agriculture Programme in our regions, in collaboration with our MMDCEs, traditional authorities and landowners;
- Undertake awareness-raising and sensitization of MMDCEs and other key actors in all of these commitments.

6.0 We respectfully request

- With humility, His Excellency the President to direct a clarification of the roles of the RM in the Greater Accra Region vis a vis sector ministries, central and metropolitan agencies including re-visiting the idea of a Capital District out of the Greater Accra Region (GAR).
- Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) to provide a mechanism with our active involvement to develop guidelines to provide some uniformity in the RCCs and RMs conflict resolution role vis a vis the assemblies

- MLGRD to collaborate with Parliament and other stakeholders and with our active involvement initiate a framework to guide relations between RMs, MMDCEs, MPs and other key players
- That the above indicated framework should preferably be a legislation
 - clearly outlining the scope and responsibilities of RMs and their deputies;
 - designating responsibility for supervision and performance assessment of MMDCEs as that of the RMs
 - making the regional level a policy planning level; and
 - reviewing the location of the region as part of central or local government
- MLGRD to strengthen its coordination, facilitation, policy formulation and policy review in decentralization roles in relation to the RCCs
- MLGRD continue to act as a coordinating secretariat for regional ministers conferences.

7.0 We propose and /or recommend as appropriate, that

- The Honourable Minister for MLGRD designs the impending decentralization review stakeholder conference in a way that fully include regional consultations;
- The Honourable Ministers for MLGRD and Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MoFEP) make proposals for making the RCCs financially autonomous with clear budgetary allocations;
- The Honourable Ministers for MLGRD and MoFEP initiate steps to institute regional composite budgeting frameworks;
- Parliament considers an overhaul of the Public Procurement and Internal Audit Act to make it more responsive to the circumstances of local government as distinct from central government and be more accountable to the people in the spirit of Ghana's decentralization process;
- The Auditor-General and suitable agencies undertake further public education on assets declaration, as well as the various types of audit (performance versus propriety audits), their benefits and their implications for fostering local governance
- MoFEP undertake studies of the impact of axle-load measures and their implications for increasing economic austerity especially, in the poorer, more distance regions
- MOFEP re-examine the import duty regime and the process of clearing goods at ports

and the impact on the people;

- MOFEP and other relevant actors find ways to reduce price differentials in parts of the country in relation to such development resources as cement;
- Respectfully, that cabinet initiates a strategy session to identify some short-term, high impact relief interventions that reflect the social democratic character of the NDC Government;
- The Minister for MLGRD provides the necessary support and stimulus to the Local Government Service Council to provide clear guidelines for establishing the regional bodies of the Council so that the RCC and the RM can actively play their roles in the management of human resources/public servants for the RCCs and assemblies;
- Teachers in rural areas should be given priority consideration in the allocation of study leave with pay;
- GETFUND is re-organised in line with the original mandate that informed its establishment;
- Clear supervisory arrangements are made and the assemblies given this responsibility for sanitation services delivered under the various public-private arrangements at the district level;
- The authority and responsibilities of assemblies with regard to the NYEP and NHIS are clarified especially in relation to local circumstances;
- The Minister for MLGRD and the GSFP Secretariat pay urgent attention to recommendations from the regions for re-directing the application of the school feeding programme away from regional and national capitals to more under-served, vulnerable areas;
- NYEP and NHIS, undertake to sensitize RMs and MMDCEs at regular intervals.

We also urge

- The National Media Commission (NMC) and the National Communications Authority (NCA) to collaborate more effectively to manage the content of media reportage in the interest of our dear nation
- The NMC to do its utmost to facilitate and advocate the supervision and professional development of journalists
- All concerned to support the passage of the Freedom of Information Bill, while recognizing that all concerned parties have responsibilities in guarding the integrity, harmony and well being of our dear nation

- That the opportunities provided by the oil find be utilized to the utmost to enhance the economic well-being of all of our people, carefully exploring and identifying possible forward and backward linkages, building technical and managerial capacity in the oil and gas sectors and in the process strengthening our local institutions
- The Ministry of Energy to ensure that communication on the sector with Regional Ministers, relevant parties and the public at large is regular as we prepare our people for the prospects ahead.
- Members of Parliament to take a keen interest in assisting teachers who have adopted the distance learning track.

8.0 Finally, we wish to assure

- His Excellency the President that we recognize the enormity of the responsibility he has entrusted us with and will endeavour not to do anything that will bring him and his government into disrepute
- His Excellency the President that his admonition to us to recognize that the Regional Minister's position as one of serving and servant leadership rather than one of lordship is well taken
- The good people of Ghana that the various commitments made by the NDC to enhance their well-being will be met.

DATED: 16TH AUGUST, 2009 AT KOFORIDUA, EASTERN REGION

**PARTICIPANTS LIST FOR CONSULTATION WITH REGIONAL
MINISTERS**

| No. | NAME | REGION |
|------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. | Mr. Opoku Manu | Ashanti Region |
| 2. | Mr. Nii Armah Ashitey | Greater Accra Region |
| 3. | Mr. Nyamekye Marfo | Brong - Ahafo Region |
| 4. | Mrs. Ama Benyiwa Doe | Central Region |
| 5. | Mr. Samuel Ofofu Ampofo | Eastern Region |
| 6. | Mr. S.S. Nanyina | Northern Region |
| 7. | Mr. Mark Woyongo | Upper East Region |
| 8. | Mr. Mahmood Khalid | Upper West Region |
| 9. | Mr. Joseph Amenowoude | Volta Region |
| 10. | Mr. Paul Evans Aidoo | Western Region |