

**WORLD AT 8 BILLION: STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT
DELIVERED BY THE CHAIRMAN, POPULATION CAUCUS OF PARLIAMENT
15TH NOVEMBER 2022**

Mr. Speaker,

Today, 15th November 2022, the global population has turned 8 billion. This morning, the symbolic welcome of the 8 billionth baby born in Ghana has been organized at the Ridge Hospital in Accra. This was through the collaborative effort of the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), Ghana Health Service (GHS), National Population Council (NPC), the Regional Institute for Population Studies (RIPS) and the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). We commend the collaborative efforts of these organisations and institutions, and the management and staff of the Ridge Hospital especially those of the Maternity Unit of the hospital for the successful delivery of this symbolic 8 billionth child in Ghana. We warmly welcome this child to Ghana and pray for a healthy growth and wellbeing throughout his/her entire life in Ghana and the world at large. We also congratulate the mother that gave birth to this child.

Mr. Speaker,

Permit me to go back into history to refresh our minds on how the global population has grown over the years. It is recorded that the global population hit one billion in 1804 and after that it took 123 years to add another billion to it in 1927. Interestingly, the world's population hit the 3rd billion in 1960 in just 33 years. It is further recorded that the world population reached 4 billion in 1974, taking only 14 years to add another billion to its size in 1960. Since then, the global population has continued to increase and was recorded to be five (5) billion on 11th July 1987 (13 years), six (6) billion on 12th October 1999 (12 years) and seven (7) billion on 31st October 2011 (12 years) and today, 15th November 2022, we are recording 8 billion (11 years).

Mr. Speaker,

The United Nations Population Division estimates that the global population will reach 9 billion in 2037 (15 years) and 10 billion in 2058 (21 years). In 2030 when the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are expected to have been realised, the world's population is estimated to reach 9.7 billion and in 2050 we should expect 10.4 billion to live on this planet.

In Ghana, our population, which was reported at 6.7 million in 1960 has also grown to hit 30.8 million in 2021. Indeed, it has traversed the milestones of 8.6 million in 1970, 12.3 million in 1984, 18.9 million in 2000 and 24.8 million in 2010. This suggests that Ghana's population has increased almost five-fold since 1960 in a period of 61 years. The estimates from the Ghana Statistical Service and our population institutes suggest that by 2030, i.e., seven (7) years from now, our country's population will reach 37.5 million.

Mr. Speaker,

What do these numbers mean for us as a country? Admittedly, more numbers mean a greater work force and a capacity to produce goods, wealth and services for the country's growth and development. While this is positive, this does not automatically happen but demonstrates that there is work to be done to translate these increasing numbers into a good human resource with the capacity to transform the country from a lower middle-income status into a high income one. This demonstrates the central place of population in our nation's socio-economic development in all sectors. This calls for strategic investment in education, health, job creation, environment and sanitation, and the economic wellbeing of each individual Ghanaian that is born.

We also need to strengthen efforts towards empowering women and girls, in particular, to decide if, when, how often, and the number of births they would wish to have without bowing to any societal pressures to do anything to the contrary. This means that we must as a nation strengthen family planning and reproductive health programmes to ensure that no woman loses her life when bringing forth another life. While infant and under-5 mortalities have reduced substantially from 77 and 155 per 1,000 live births in 1988 respectively to 21 and 33 per 1,000 live births in 2021, a maternal mortality ratio of around 300 per 100,000 live births and contraceptive unmet need of almost 25% should be of concern to all of us. There are also serious concerns about teenage pregnancies, child marriages and sexual and gender-based violence going on in the country despite having laws and policies against these acts that debase our human dignity as a people.

Mr. Speaker,

We must further take note of the fact that Ghana is increasingly becoming more urban by our population distribution. The 2021 Population and Housing Census reported that the proportion of the population that is urban is now 56.7%, compared to 23.1% in 1960 and 50.9% in 2010.

Ordinarily, this development should be positive since urbanisation should be accompanied with some level of spatial and livelihood development for the population. However, in our case, urbanization is more accounted for by increasing number of people in a locality beyond 5,000 but not with commensurate development attributes relative to social infrastructure and livelihoods empowerment. Rather, more urban settings are associated with poor housing and slum conditions, poor sanitation, limited access to improved water sources, increases in crime and poverty. According to the 2021 Population and Housing Census, Ghana's housing stock deficit was 1.8 million although this is lower than the 2010 recorded deficit of 2.7 million. There is also increasing environmental degradation mainly through the activities of illegal mining activities aptly described as "galamsey" across the country, resulting in the destruction of our water bodies, farmlands and forestry reserves. The "galamsey" menace should no longer be addressed with lip service but with a renewed determination to crack the whip irrespective of who is involved, devoid of partisanship and selectivity.

Mr. Speaker,

We have also observed the changing age structure of the country from a very broad-based population pyramid in the 1960s to one which is witnessing an increasing size of the elderly population with a shrinking base. This suggests that fertility has declined over the years and life expectancy at birth has also increased, and there are signs of population ageing. At the same time, about 80% of the country's workforce is in the informal economic sector, often with no formal social security support after retirement. The implications are that many elderly people are living with little or no social support systems, thereby condemning many of them into life-long poverty after their retirement. Unfortunately, it is during these periods that degenerative ill-health conditions increase, many of them bothering on disability and mental health challenges.

Mr. Speaker,

The changing age structure also reveals that the country is increasingly depicting a youth bulge and an opportunity to reap the benefits of the demographic dividend through increased investment in education especially relevant skills training and job creation. Already, there is high youth unemployment in the country and that could result in a youth "bomb" if the situation of youth joblessness continues.

Mr. Speaker,

As one of the countries that has endorsed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in September 2015 (Agenda 2030), we need to continue to work tirelessly towards their attainment. It must be noted that each of the 17 SDGs relate directly or indirectly with population and, therefore, efforts towards realising them should be situated within strategies that are geared towards ensuring that the quality of life of the population is increasingly enhanced. This calls for proper monitoring of progress being made towards achieving the SDGs using relevant data to measure the milestones relative to all the specific targets associated with each SDG. This requires accurate and timely data to regularly gauge progress being made. Thankfully, the Ghana Statistical Service has successfully given us enormous data from the 2021 Population and Housing Census to assist us with key indicators at the national and sub-national levels to measure progress across all sectors.

Mr. Speaker,

Let me recall the importance the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) placed on population in the context of development. The conference recommended that in all development planning efforts, population variables should be central. We, therefore, call on all ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) as well as the private sector to ensure that in all their programming activities, the population of Ghana should be at the centre either as the most important resource to generate productivity and wealth or the primary beneficiary of the outcome of development efforts.

Mr. Speaker,

There is also an urgent need to bridge the gap between research and policy. In this context, we invite our Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) to roll out strategies to consistently base their policy and planning decision making on data at their areas of operation. Research institutions are also called upon to develop functional working relations with policy and decision makers at national and sub-national levels to assist in reshaping policy through their operational research activities.

Mr. Speaker,

Let me conclude by re-emphasising the importance of today as the world turns 8 billion. It is a day we as a nation will have to decide as to how we translate our growing numbers into possibilities while acknowledging the challenges we face and advance concrete remedies to address them. We should not just celebrate the birth of the 8 billionth baby but assure him/her and all others of our collective resolve to make this country a comfortable place for everyone to be nurtured to become a good human resource for the country's development, the benefits of which will in turn inure to everyone's benefit, thereby leaving no one behind.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.