

COMMUNIQUE

BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE GHANA

A Communique Issued by Paramount Chiefs, Divisional Chiefs, Queen Mothers, the Clergy, the Academia, Civil Society, Women and Youth Groups at the end of Dialogue on ‘Building an Inclusive Nation’ organised by the National Peace Council at Dambai and Ho in the Oti and Volta Regions from 21-25 November 2022

The Paramount Chiefs, Divisional Chiefs, Queen Mothers, the Clergy, the Academia, Civil Society, Women, and Youth Groups from the Volta and Oti Regions:

Background

Validating the National Peace Council's report on 'Building an Inclusive Nation: Dialoguing with Volta and Oti Regions' generated from the first-ever structured appreciative enquiry to understand the origin, sources, nature, salience, and implications of the perception of discrimination and marginalisation of the Ewe ethnic group, *noting* Ghana's international recognition as an oasis of peace in an otherwise violent regional neighbourhood despite the fast-approaching imminent threat of violence from terrorists and violent extremist groups, and *further noting* that the dynamics of the ongoing violence in the West African sub-region may be different from those of the 1990s, but are still linked to the perception of identity-based discrimination and marginalisation, *thank* the National Peace Council for their work towards building an inclusive Ghana.

Expressing that within the sub-region, the claims of ethnic discrimination and marginalisation that have contributed to violence in the subregion often revolved around the denial of tangible human needs, such as the provision of social services and infrastructures of all types (Road, Health, Education, Social, etc.) and intangible needs such as security, recognition (Culture, History, Ethnicity, Religion, etc.), or empowerment, and *further expressing* concern that in many of the troubled neighbouring countries, claims of discrimination and marginalisation have been allowed to escalate into violence because those who feel marginalised and discriminated against were not encouraged to share their stories and experiences, let alone to have the claims documented and addressed.

Underscoring that Ghana is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural society, *noting* that the exploitation of these social divisions is a risk to inclusion, cohesion, and peaceful coexistence, and *reiterating* that national cohesion around multi-ethnic, multiparty and tolerance in diversity are ingredients for national development, *commend* the Government of Ghana through the Ministry of National Security for supporting the National Peace Council's initiative, allowing for an open and frank discussion on such difficult but important issues of citizenship, negative stereotyping, employment, development, education and security to make recommendations to the Government of Ghana and relevant stakeholders.

Citizenship

Reaffirming that the Eve and other ethnic groups from the Volta and Oti Regions are bonafide Ghanaians whose forebears mainly inhabited the Trans-Volta Togoland joined the Gold Coast through a plebiscite in 1956 to form Ghana on 6th March 1957, *expressing* serious concerns about a long-held erroneous perception among some Ghanaians that the Eve are aliens or non-indigenous Ghanaians who came from Togo to join Ghana after independence, and *noting* with concern that such erroneous misinterpretation of history by some tribal bigots and demagogue politicians have occasioned adverse discrimination against the Eve in the administration of Birth Certificate, National Identity Card, Passport, Voters' Registration, and Elections in contravention of Constitutional and other legal provisions on Ghanaian citizenship;

Negative Stereotyping

Condemning the persistent and deliberate stereotyping of the Eve and the use of abusive and denigrating discourses and clichés against the Eve, *noting* that such stereotyping discourses lead to scapegoating and dehumanisation, which are interlinked to social-psychological processes that tend to create and nurture enemy images, and *further noting* that these social-psychological processes frequently work together against social cohesion and become the precursors for mass violence, *determine* that such stereotypical discourses deliberately targeted at denigrating the Eve positive self-identity are threats to national cohesion and sustenance of the peace of Ghana;

Employment

Strongly condemning instances where very qualified and public-spirited citizens of the Volta and Oti Regions have been sacked from their jobs and replaced by people from other ethnic groups, *affirming* the provisions on reasonable regional and gender balance in recruitment and appointment

to public offices under Article 35 (6) (e) of the Constitution, 1992, *noting* that the two Regions do not get a fair share of appointments to public offices, *expressing* concerns over discrimination against the Ewe in employment in all spheres of public sector jobs, especially in recruitment into the security services, *further expressing* concern that a large army of unemployed youth has engendered a flourishing of intermediaries, job contractors, fraudsters, and extortionists in the acquisition of jobs, and *noting* with grave concern that unemployment is the single most crucial factor in the indoctrination and recruitment of the unemployed and restive youth into the Western Togoland Secessionist Group, who are being promised security and other employment prospects in an independent Western Togoland state, enticing some to engage in the regrettable September 2020 violent attacks on some vital state installations in the Volta Region, leading to the arrest and incarceration of many young men, with 52 now languishing in prisons for over two (2) years without trial;

Development

Expressing concern that the main bane of the Volta and Oti Regions is the lack of development, *noting* that the underdevelopment of the two regions is the push factor that drives the Ewe and other ethnic groups from the Regions to other parts of Ghana in search of jobs and makes them vulnerable to denigration and discrimination, and *further noting* that the marginalisation of the people and the two regions are manifest in the non-exploitation of the regions' mineral resources, cessation of the sea defence expansion projects along the eastern coast, delay in construction of the Eastern Corridor Road, non-completion of other government projects, and the non-implementation of the 'One District One Factory (1D1F)' policy in the two regions;

Education

Expressing deep concern over the relatively poor and insufficient school infrastructure in the Volta and Oti Regions, and *noting* the limited or no supply of teaching and learning materials, dwindling government scholarship opportunities, lack of tertiary education opportunities, and non-appointment of supervisory directors have worked against the attraction and retention of good teachers and students;

Security, Harassment and Violence

Noting that security has longed been broaden to entail freedom from fear, *condemn* in the strongest possible terms the harassment of citizens of the Volta and Oti Regions because of the long-held

wrong perception among some Ghanaians that people of the two regions, particularly the Eve, are not indigenous citizens of Ghana, *noting* that this blatant erroneous interpretation of history has resulted in a discourse of violence against the Eve and deliberately putting them under constant fear through 'over' deployment and inundation of the two regions with security personnel, which surged during the closure of the Ghana-Togo border, denying free movement and eking of livelihoods, and *further condemning* the numerous and unnecessary security checkpoints and deployment of immigration posts cited deep inside towns in the two regions (instead of the borders), where the security personnel demand citizenship identifications and, in some instances, ask the Eve to speak *twi* language to prove their Ghanaian citizenship at every checkpoint and the general unprofessionalism, such as sexual harassment by some of the personnel.

Recommendations

Determining that the Ghana project cannot succeed without inclusivity, greater national unity, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence:

1. *Call upon* fellow Ghanaians who still hold the erroneous perception that the Eve is not a bonafide Ghanaian to discard such falsehoods forthwith;
2. *Welcome* the National Peace Council's ongoing initiative and *call upon* the National Commission for Civic Education and other state institutions with public education mandate to team up with the National Peace Council to intensify education on hate speech and intemperate language and direct sensitisation on building an inclusive nation;
3. *Underline* the responsibility of the state to, from time to time, identify conducts that could impede the realisation of its aspirations and then legislate against such conducts, *call upon* the Government of Ghana to promulgate a law to be called "Fair Appointment and National Cohesion Law" along the lines of Kenya's National Cohesion and Integration Act, 2008, to give effect to Article 35(6) (b) of the Constitution, 1992, and *urge* that the said law should prohibit recruitment and appointment to public offices of people from the same ethnic group beyond the percentage point for the largest ethnic group in Ghana, regulate the ethnic composition of officials deployed to the countryside during national exercises with the percentage point of the largest ethnic group as the benchmark or ceiling and criminalise ethnic-based negative stereotyping, harassment and abuse;
4. *Reiterate* regret over the luring of some innocent unemployed youths into participating in the September 2020 violent attacks on state installations in parts of the Volta Region, *find*

nothing wrong with prosecuting the real culprits of the attacks, *note* Ghana's international reputation and commitment to human rights and *call upon* the Government of Ghana to immediately release and cause to be counselled all the 52 citizens detained for their alleged roles in the 2020 attack as their continued detention without trial for over two (2) years is a gross violation of their human rights;

5. *Urge* the Government of Ghana to hasten the completion of the Eastern-Corridor Road and all other major roads that are under construction and prioritise construction of the Keta Sea Defence Expansion Project and the Keta Port to create jobs for the teeming unemployed youth, resource the Ho Teaching hospital and put up a Regional hospital in the Oti Region, improve and upgrade the Ho sports stadium to international standard and replicate the same in the Oti Region;
6. *Call upon* the Government of Ghana to take steps to complete the uncompleted educational infrastructure in the Volta and Oti Regions, ensure fair and adequate distribution of teaching and learning materials, ensuring fair distribution of personnel and support this with motivation and incentive packages;
7. *Recall* the recent announcement by the Government of Ghana that some mineral resources deposits in the Volta and Oti Regions are to be exploited and *encourage* the adoption of clean, scientific and environmentally friendly technologies and beneficial contractual practices in the mining sector;
8. *Reaffirm* that security entails freedom from fear, *request* the removal of nuisance-in-land, fear-invoking security and immigration barriers and checkpoints at communities such as Asikuma, Leklebi, Liati, Sogakope, and Juapong and *encourage* strengthening security presence and patrols at the borders;
9. *Suggest* an established framework on deployment orientation for security personnel, particularly the military before deploying them to perform police duties in the communities; and
10. *Note* the relative peace being enjoyed in Alavanyo and Nkonya communities, *commend* the Traditional Leadership and the people of the two communities, the National Peace Council and the relevant state security working for the peace gains and *call upon* the Government of Ghana to revisit the proposed establishment of a Military Training School in the area to entrench peace and security in the two communities.