

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY THE HON. MINISTER OF GENDER, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL PROTECTION, OTIKO AFISAH DJABA TO MARK THE CELEBRATION OF SENIOR CITIZENS DAY AT THE ACCRA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE ON SUNDAY, 1<sup>ST</sup> JULY, 2018.**

**THE CHAIRPERSON,**

**H. E THE VICE PRESIDENT**

**SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT**

**THE CHIEF OF STAFF**

**HON. SENIOR MINISTER**

**MINISTERS OF STATE**

**MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE**

**MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT**

**MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS**

**NANA NOM**

**SENIOR CITIZENS**

**MEDIA**

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

The 1<sup>st</sup> of July of every year is set aside to celebrate the immense contributions of our senior citizens to the development of our great nation, Ghana. We say “ayeekoo” to all our ageing and aged across the length and breadth of Ghana. The Ministry, on behalf of all aged persons in our country is grateful to the Almighty God for your lives, because “payin ani WO fi Dua, Na payin ewo wo fia oye” (to wit if there is no elder in your house we are sorry for you, but where there is an elderly person you are deemed blessed). We also thank our President of the Republic of Ghana Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo for arranging this get together to celebrate our gallant senior citizens once again.

**Distinguished guests,**

We were all young once, but for everybody, once you are born, you are bound to grow old. This makes old age inevitable, and therefore issues affecting older persons must be of outmost importance to all of us.

**Chairperson,**

The population of the elderly in Ghana has increased by more than seven-fold since the 1960 census. Rising from 213,477 in 1960 to 1,643,381 in 2010. The roles of the elderly in traditional society cannot be underestimated. In our society we are brought up to respect our elders because they are the embodiment of knowledge, wisdom, profound experience and pillars of our unique extended family system. In our development we have the National Council of State, Council of Elders, and in the selection of chiefs the elders of the community are usually consulted. Thus, senior citizens are vital role models who are our backbone, our rock and who are still deemed as very useful. They still impart knowledge, pass on skills and experience, usher and nurture our young men and women into adulthood with their rich life experiences and examples.

**Mr. Vice President,**

Our Senior Citizens are faced with challenges concerning in particular, their health, pensions, accommodation, feeding and lack of structured engagement. The efforts being made by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to better manage these challenges and issues affecting the aged include;

The draft Aged Person's Bill. The Ministry has been engaging in stakeholder consultations to finalize the draft bill, will present same to Cabinet for approval and then lay it in parliament this 2018 to be passed into law

25,000 Eban Elderly Welfare Cards have been issued in all ten regions to facilitate easy access to public social services.

Plans are far advanced to introduce the 'Freedom Pass' for the aged to will help them gain priority access to facilities such as banks, transport operators, hospitals and other service the elderly might require.

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In collaboration with SSNIT their pensions in the formal and informal sector are being reviewed to meet emerging issues

The Ministry, through its Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty programme, collaborated with the Ghana National Health Insurance Authority to register 304,183 elderly persons, (65 years and above), onto the National Health Insurance Scheme across the nation.

The Ministry is also providing LEAP cash transfer grant to 259,853 to persons who are 65 years and above in extreme poor households to smoothen their daily consumption.

To better improve the health of aged persons on the LEAP programme, the Ministry is engaging with health workers to provide health screening in the area of cancer, blood pressure, diabetes, obesity and education for the elderly during LEAP bi-monthly cash payments.

As part of the Ministry's effort in addressing the health care needs of the aged, we are again collaborating with the Ministry of Health and the Ghana Health Service to mainstream geriatrics care into the health care delivery system in Ghana.

Twelve percent (12%) of the elderly has one or more type of disability or other. The Ministry has therefore developed the Ghana Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment to ensure that all public institutions are disability friendly, as well as to older persons.

The Ministry is also in the process of ensuring that as a new initiative all the ten regions in Ghana will be equipped with a day recreational center for the aged. This would provide them with a social center that would accord them the opportunity to interact with each other, socialist and share experiences with the younger generation. We could expand it to One District One Senior Citizens Center

**Chairperson, Your Excellency the Vice President,**

As we mark this year's special Senior Citizens Day, the Ministry has planned a month-long series of activities to commemorate their input. This would be launched next week as the Senior Citizens Month.

Beyond that I challenge all of us to support all our elderly through volunteerism and collective responsibility in the wellbeing of our elderly. We must take action to stop the discrimination, marginalization and demonization of our elderly, particularly the old ladies who are alleged to be witches and maltreated or burnt to death.

I salute all older persons, especially our own President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo and my mother. Ghana is very grateful to all our Senior Citizens. So please where ever you are just turn round and give an elderly person a hug, some food and show some love. AYEEKOO once again.

**Long live our Elders,  
Long live the Ageing  
Long lived the aged.  
Long live Ghana.**

**Thank you for your kind attention.**