

PRESS BRIEFING

ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE GHANA MARITIME AUTHORITY

19th July, 2019

PURPOSE OF THE CONFERENCE

Ladies and gentlemen of the media, we are all aware that for the past few days, the Ghana Maritime Authority has been in the media not for the right reasons, and the issue has been going on and on and that is why we have found it necessary to call for this press briefing.

The Authority is not here to defend any personality but to set the records straight. We believe that the issues surrounding the allegations against Mr. Kwame Owusu will be set straight when the report of the investigation initiated by the Minister of Transport is concluded.

We have noted with concern that notwithstanding the explanations that were offered when the Authority's saga arose, the discussions are still being centered on falsehood that we believe is bringing the reputation of the Authority into disrepute.

All we seek is to lay bare the truth in the records of the Authority so that we can have more fruitful discussions.

FALSEHOODS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

One of the allegations being peddled by some media is that the Authority under the former Director-General had spent Ten Thousand, Six Hundred and Fifty-Two Ghana Cedis, Five Pesewas (Ghc10, 652.05) to organize lunch for eight (8) people at a single meeting. The Authority reiterates that this allegation is **TOTALLY FALSE**. The said amount was cost of lunch for three stakeholders and management meetings. The breakdown was explained in a press release issued by the Authority and dated 25th October, 2018.

The second allegation is that he had wasted public funds to renovate a two-bedroom house. **THIS IS ALSO FALSE!** The original old structure comprised two bedrooms. However, a completely new

bungalow was constructed and walled. It now comprises an executive residence with four bedrooms, a dining area, a library or office plus a separate guest house for the Authority's visitors on the same compound.

It is worth noting that the bungalow does not belong to Mr. Owusu. It belongs to Ghana Maritime Authority. His initiative has added value to the old dilapidated structure and is now in the Authority's books as part of its assets.

The third allegation is that the Authority's first ever end of year staff party was held at a hotel belonging to the Former Director-General. THIS ALLEGATION IS BLATANTLY FALSE. This party, organized to express appreciation to the staff, was held on the premises of the Ghana Maritime Authority and not at Mr. Owusu's hotel as alleged in the media.

The fourth allegation is that the party was organized for 200 people at cost of One hundred Thirty five thousand Ghana Cedis (GHC 135,000). The truth is that it was for five-hundred (500) people comprising 200 staff and their spouses and 100 persons from the Authority's stakeholder agencies.

SUCCESSSES ACHIEVED BY THE AUTHORITY WITHIN TWO YEARS UNDER THE FORMER DIRECTOR-GENERAL MR. KWAME OWUSU

Notwithstanding these misconceptions against the former Director-General, the fact is that he has been a transformational leader, an astute businessman, a corporate strategist, with a successful professional background as a Chartered Accountant with many decades of experience in management and leadership both in the private and public sectors.

Under his leadership, the Authority has achieved many successes including:

- 1.** Improved financial performance for 2017 and 2018:
- 2.** Acquisition of vessels for monitoring activities within Ghana's maritime jurisdiction

3. Improved safety on the Volta Lake
4. Vessel Traffic Management Information System (VTMIS) and e-Navigation
5. Employment creation, Staff Capacity and Morale
6. Initiative to construct office Complexes at Accra, Tema, Takoradi
7. New beneficial legislations

1. We Improved Our Finances in 2017 and 2018:

Ladies and gentlemen of the media, during the tenure of office of the former Director-General, the Authority was able to record a turnaround in the profit levels in 2017 and 2018.

In 2016 the year before Mr. Owusu took over, the Authority made a loss of GHC 2.2 Million. Within a year – that is at the end of 2017, revenue had grown from GHC68.6 Million to over GHC99.6 Million, that is almost Ghc100 Million.

The Authority's expenditure had been reduced from almost GHC 71 Million to GHC 56 Million. So in contrast to 2016 where we posted a loss of GHC 2.2 Million, we posted a surplus of GHC43.2 Million in 2017. During this period our total Assets grew by 172%.

That is not all. In 2018, the growth pattern continued: Revenue grew by 42% to GHC141 million and posted a surplus of GHC68 million

The Authority also recorded a net profit growth of 69% - (almost 70%), the highest ever in its history.

The authority's assets recorded a further growth of 85%, which shows that the investments in assets are helping to boost our regulatory work, and at the same time generating the necessary revenue to maintain them.

2. We Acquired Vessels to Patrol Our Seas: Ladies and gentlemen of the media, for the first time since the establishment of the Authority, it has been possible to acquire seven patrol speed boats to aid the effective implementation of the functions of monitoring activities at sea and the inland waterways of Ghana. Two

additional vessels are under construction. When completed in August 2019, these will conduct patrol operations on the Volta River. Prior to Mr. Owusu's tenure, the authority had not had a single vessel in 14 years.

In addition, we now have three trash skimmers. These are boats used to clean the ocean of rubbish and minimize pollution.

The boats we now have will be instrumental in ensuring maritime safety, security and prevention of marine pollution because we are now able to intensify our presence on the sea to deter and stop activities inconsistent with the normal and legitimate uses of the ocean. The speed boats will also help the Authority to conduct search and rescue operations where necessary. This will boost the confidence of ship owners since they can be assured of a safe and secured maritime domain to conduct legitimate activities.

3. We Have Made the Volta Lake Safe; No More Accidents:

Ladies and gentlemen of the media, when was the last time you heard of a boat accident on the Volta River? We all recall the rampant boat accidents on the Volta river leading to dozens of people drowning needlessly – including poor market women, struggling farmers and helpless children. It was a regular feature of news reports. Under the leadership of Mr. Owusu, the authority made safety on the inland waterways one of its paramount objectives. Ladies and gentlemen, under this current Government, the Authority commenced in all earnest, the removal of tree stumps on the Volta Lake as part of its regulatory safety functions over the inland waterways in Ghana. This activity has enhanced navigation of water crafts on the Volta Lake and made the recurring boat accidents on the Lake a thing of the past.

The first phase which was executed in December, 2017 involved the clearing of two thousand two hundred (2,200) tree stumps to create safe navigable channels to improve passenger transport from Dambai to Dodoikope.

In the second phase, tree stumps numbering over three thousand five hundred and fifty-five (3,550) were successfully removed on the Yeji-Makango channel crossing which is about eleven kilometers (11KM) long and five hundred (500) metres wide.

The alternate route between Yeji and Awuja-Kope which is ten kilometers (10km) long and five hundred (500) metres wide has equally been cleared of tree stumps. These tree stump removal exercises have significantly increased safety of navigation in these areas by eliminating the possibility of boat accidents in the area attributable to the presence of tree stumps. It also improves the ability of larger vessels to ply the route especially the Pontoon operated by the Volta Lake Transport Company, (VLTC).

Ladies and gentlemen of the media, these initiatives will significantly reduce or totally remove boat accidents on the Volta Lake caused by submerged tree stumps and improve safe and secure navigation. For Ghanaians who live within the vicinity of the Volta River and lake, this is very important; it enhances their livelihood because transportation on the Volta forms a considerable part of their means of transport. And all of these have been done with the Authority's Internally-Generated Funds during the tenure of Mr. Kwame Owusu.

5. **We Have Introduced New Technology and Become a Leader in Africa:** In July 2018, Ghana became the 4th maritime country IN THE WORLD (after Denmark, France and Canada) and the first in Africa to introduce e-navigation. The e-navigation system enhances the safety and security of all users in the maritime domain in Ghana, from large commercial vessels to small fishing vessels. Large vessels now get a graphical overview of navigational warnings instantly, rather than decoding endless lines of positions and plotting them on charts. For the small vessels, all it takes is to have one person in the community who owns a smart phone to get updates of hazards to their navigation in real time.

- 5b. **We Support the Navy, NACOB, Fisheries Commission to Keep Our Waters Secure:** the Authority's Vessel Traffic Monitoring and Information System (VTMIS) which was acquired at a cost of 17.5 million Euros had been on the verge of collapsing. But now, for the

first time since 2012, we have been able to service it and brought visibility to the Ghana Navy for the monitoring of activities on our seas. The system is capable of sighting and monitoring the activities of ships up to One Thousand nautical miles (1,000nm) and beyond and supported by eight (8) remote sensor sites dotted on the coast to ensure that the whole maritime domain is covered from all angles. It enables the Authority, Ghana Navy, marine police, Narcotics and Drug Control Board (NACOB), Ghana Immigration, Fisheries Commission among several other stakeholders to monitor and access information on activities within the country's maritime domain for security purposes and protect Ghana's territorial integrity. The system therefore contributes in improving maritime safety and navigation, maritime security, prevention of maritime pollution as well as aiding search and rescue operations within the maritime domain. The Authority is also in the process of enhancing the features of the VTMIS to guarantee its efficiency and further improve the capacity of the relevant government agencies to monitor the activities of the ships within Ghana's maritime domain.

6. We Have Created Jobs and Boosted Staff Morale:

- i. About 50 qualified and competent permanent staff were employed for various departments and units during the last two years under Mr. Owusu.
- ii. About 70 qualified staff received promotions which came with salary increases.
- iii. The Authority had completed a tender for 27 new cars in 2016 but for more than one year, we could not pay for them because of lack of funds. Upon Mr. Owusu's appointment, the Authority sought a loan of GHC5.8 million and we were subsequently able to pay for them from our internally-generated funds following the improvement in our revenue position.
- iv. Three staff buses were purchased from Internally-Generated Funds and allocated to the Accra, Tema and Takoradi branches.

- v. In addition to these achievements, he created another employment avenue to mirror NABCO at the Maritime Authority in 2018 by engaging 40 graduates for a GHC1,000 allowance per month, higher than that received by NABCO staff in other organizations.
- vi. Besides, in support of creating opportunities for the youth, the Authority was able to accommodate 34 national service persons in 2017/18, the highest number ever in the history of the Authority. Some of these personnel were subsequently retained to join the NABCO programme at the Authority.

7. We are investing in an Office Complex: Ladies and gentlemen of the media, Mr. Kwame Owusu initiated and commenced the process of constructing offices at the head office in Accra and its branches at Tema and Takoradi to provide decent office accommodation for staff to enhance productivity and befitting an organization of national and international importance. Consequently, land was acquired and the statutory procedures completed to commence construction of the offices.

8. We Are Making New Laws to Create Opportunities for Ghanaians: As a regulatory body, one of the Authority's core mandates is to ensure that there are relevant maritime legislations in place to regulate the maritime industry to ensure that it contributes effectively to the development of the country. To this end, the Authority initiated a number of domestic legislations including:

The draft Ghana Shipping (Cabotage) Regulations: this Regulation is intended to reserve indigenous shipping for Ghanaian citizens and companies owned by Ghanaians. This Regulation if it is passed provides a regime whereby Ghanaian citizens and companies may acquire vessels and all vessels operating within the jurisdiction will be manned by Ghanaian seafarers. However, in limited circumstances, the law allows foreign registered vessels to perform certain maritime activities where there are no Ghanaian owned vessels suitable

enough for the activity. This Regulation is currently at the office of the Attorney General for review.

In conclusion Ladies and gentlemen, the Ghana Maritime Authority has been significantly transformed over the past two years in many respects. We felt that it was our responsibility to correct the persistent false information that was put in circulation which the DG sought to correct but which have been revived again. We believe that it impinges on our reputation as men and women who work with the Authority and who, as living witnesses to the facts, have a responsibility to share them with Ghanaians.

We are grateful to you for coming.