

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES, AND MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAMONGO CONSTITUENCY, HON. SAMUEL A. JINAPOR, MP, ON THE OCASSION OF THE 2023 AFRICAN BORDER DAY ON, WEDNESDAY, 7 JUNE 2023

Thank you, Rt. Honourable Speaker, for the opportunity to make this Statement, in commemoration of the thirteenth (13th) African Border Day.

Mr. Speaker, African Ministers in charge of Border Issues, at their second Meeting held in 2010, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, adopted June 7, each year, as African Border Day, to promote the importance of the African Union Border Programme (AUBP) to peace, regional, and continental integration. The Day is also used to celebrate the progress we have made, individually as member states of the African Union, and collectively as a continent, in securing and managing our boundaries, and to forge a common path for dealing with the challenges that still lie ahead.

Mr. Speaker, as this House is aware, this year marks exactly sixty (60) years, when thirty-two Heads of State and Government met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and formed the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which later became the African Union, in 2002, with the aim of, among others, promoting unity and solidarity among African States, intensifying cooperation to achieve a better life for the African peoples, and safeguarding the territorial integrity of member States.

And this year, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union has adopted as their theme, "***Acceleration of AfCFTA Implementation.***" At the heart of the implementation of this African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), is cross-border cooperation and regional integration. With our vibrant city of Accra hosting the AfCFTA Secretariat, we have a unique role to play in fostering Africa's integration through efficient and effective border management to accelerate implementation of AfCFTA.

This year's African Border Day celebration is, therefore, very significant. It calls on us to reflect on the importance of our borders to national and regional security, stability, and sustainable development.

Mr. Speaker, boundaries are not just physical barriers that separate countries; they are complex systems that require effective management, coordination, and cooperation among all stakeholders.

As a continent, our efforts at promoting peace, stability, and prosperity along borders, continue to be hindered by several challenges, such as transnational organised crime, terrorism, violent extremism, smuggling and irregular migration. It was to deal with these challenges, accelerate work on cross-border cooperation and peaceful resolution of border disputes, as well as promote efficient and effective integrated border management, that the African Union Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation (also known as the Niamey Convention), was adopted in 2014.

Mr. Speaker, when I spoke in this august House on the African Border Day, last year, I informed the House about Government's commitment to work with the House to ratify this Convention, which we signed in 2017, under the able leadership of President Akufo-Addo. Mr. Speaker, I want to use this opportunity to sincerely thank you, and members of this august House, for your cooperation which saw to the swift ratification of the Convention in the First Meeting of Third Session of this Parliament.

With our eastern and northern neighbours, Togo and Burkina Faso, respectively, having already ratified this Convention, the ratification by our country provides us with an opportunity to leverage on the structures provided under the Convention to promote cross-border cooperation and resolve border disputes, including intelligence sharing, and the establishment of common border governance mechanisms for the free movement of goods and services.

Mr. Speaker, the need to maintain security and stability on our borders, and tackle transnational organised crime, makes this cooperation very imperative. Criminal activities such as human trafficking, drug smuggling, illegal arms trade and piracy pose a significant threat to the safety of our people and economies. It is, therefore, essential that we continue to strengthen our border management strategies to address these challenges and prevent their proliferation.

We must endeavour to solve all legal, administrative, security, cultural or technical impediment likely to hamper the strengthening and smooth functioning of cross-border cooperation. State and non-state actors must continuously engage and consult with each other on border issues.

Mr. Speaker, let me use this opportunity to highly commend the Ghana Boundary Commission, under the leadership of its tenacious Coordinator, Major General Emmanuel W. Kotia, for the hard work they are doing to secure, demarcate and delimit our international boundaries in accordance with the Ghana Boundary Commission Act, 2010 (Act 795).

The Commission has, since 2020, continued to engage our neighbouring countries of Cote d'Ivoire, Togo and Burkina Faso to ensure cross-border cooperation and development. I am happy to report that our maritime negotiations with the Republic of Togo is proceeding steadily. The construction of a land boundary terminus (Pillar 1) on the Ghana – Togo border, as well as the construction of other pillars along the International Boundary Line, are complete, and paves way for the commencement of the second phase of the boundary delineation.

On the western and northern border lines, land boundary reaffirmation exercises with Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso continue unabated, and joint community sensitisations are being conducted in selected border communities along the international boundaries to facilitate the education of border communities on the need for concerted efforts in protecting the boundaries.

I, also, want to thank all the security services that have been involved in this exercise. As we commemorate this day, let us renew our commitment to working together to overcome the challenges confronting our borders. Let us promote greater cooperation among our countries, regional organisations, and international partners to ensure that our borders are secure, stable, and conducive for the prosperity of the Africa peoples.

Mr. Speaker, an efficient and effective border management is *sine qua non* to our noble and historic quest to provide a secured continent to enable us unleash prosperity for the long-suffering peoples of Africa. Particularly, given that, for us here in Africa, our border lines were drawn without our consent and involvement, and without regard to our cultural, traditional and political heritage, boundary issues will remain key to our security, and peaceful coexistence. And by this, I refer to the infamous scramble for Africa following the Berlin Conference held in 1884 and 1885. Mr. Speaker, we remain, in the words of our first President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, “**one continent, one people and one nation.**” Let us continue to work towards effective and efficient border management, and not make our borders barriers that divide us, but bridges that connect us and promote peace, security, and development for our nations and our continent.

And on this note, Mr. Speaker, I, respectfully, call on this august House to support our efforts at fashioning out policies to promote a secured, safe, and stable African border.

I thank you Mr. Speaker.