

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HON. BENITO OWUSU-BIO, MP  
DEPUTY MINISTER FOR LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
AT THE PRESENTATION OF EMISSION REDUCTION PAYMENTS  
TO BENEFICIARIES OF THE GHANA COCOA FOREST REDD+  
PROGRAMME  
THURSDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2023  
FORESTRY COMMISSION TRAINING CENTRE, KUMASI**

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The Ashanti Regional Minister, Honourable Simon Osei-Mensah,  
The Forestry Commission Board of Commissioners,  
The Chief Executive of the Forestry Commission, Mr. John Allotey,  
The Representative of the Chief Executive of Ghana Cocoa Board,  
The Representative of the World Bank Country Director,  
Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives  
The Representative of the World Cocoa Foundation,  
Deputy Chief Executives of the Forestry Commission,  
Our Beneficiary Farmers and Forest Fringe Communities,  
Nananom,  
Distinguished Invited Guests,

Our Friends from the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I extend the warm felicitations of the sector Minister, Hon. Samuel A. Jinapor, Member of Parliament for Damongo Constituency, to you on this special occasion, who wished to be here but for other equally important national assignments he is not with us today.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Cocoa/Forest REDD+ Sika no aba! This is a wonderful feat achieved by Ghana, being the second African country after Mozambique to receive REDD+ results-based payments from the Carbon Fund of the World Bank.

In 2018, as the Deputy Minister for Lands and Natural Resources and also Chairman of the Natural REDD+ Working Group, I led a technical team of experts to Paris, France, to successfully defend the acceptance of the Ghana Cocoa-Forest REDD+ Programme (GCFRP) into the Carbon Fund portfolio during the 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Carbon Fund. As a result, I am particularly elated this morning to witness the disbursement of the first carbon payment under the GCFRP, to agreed program beneficiaries.

In line with the 2012 Forest and Wildlife Policy and as the Premier programme in Ghana's REDD+ Strategy launched in 2016, the GCFRP seeks to halt and reverse deforestation and

forest degradation, driven by expansionist Cocoa production activities, illegal mining, illegal logging and wood fuel extraction. The program anticipates that if these measures are done at a jurisdictional scale, about 10 million tonnes of emission reductions will be realized in six years. It is important to note that the program is designed to produce both carbon and non-carbon benefits. The non-carbon benefits are direct increases in Cocoa yield and other food crops production and provision of alternative livelihoods while the Carbon payments represent negotiated Carbon payments for third party verified Emission reductions, the reason for our gathering today.

Today, as we celebrate the achievement of this first milestone and the receipt of the first tranche of Carbon payments, we also recognise the hardwork, dedication and relentless efforts of by all stakeholders.

I would, therefore, first of all extend the gratitude of the Government of Ghana and the Ministry for Lands and Natural Resources to the Forestry Commission and its coordinating partner, the Ghana Cocoa Board for making the implementation of this program a reality. Carbon payments were thought to be a figment of imagination and in October, 2019, when the President of the Republic, H. E Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo launched this program, the question on many minds was; "how

will this be done”?. Today it has been done and the efforts of these two state institutions since the REDD+ Readiness Phase is highly commendable.

Many thanks also to the traditional authorities, farmers, particularly Cocoa farmers and local communities who believed in the fight against deforestation and forest degradation, the adoption of climate-smart practices, have made it possible for all these interventions and ideas, to be realised. Today we celebrate your efforts, but more importantly, we are happy that you are receiving your benefits directly into your own bank accounts without any third party interference.

I also immensely appreciate our CSOs and NGOs, other Government Agencies and the Private sector for providing both financial and technical support and not relenting in their dedicated support to this program.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the GCFRP Carbon payments were received in the Country in January this year. However, a number of due diligence processes and requirements had to be fulfilled according to the World Bank due process to enhance accountability and transparency in the disbursement of funds. Therefore, as part of the in-country governance arrangements, a REDD+ Dedicated Account Steering Committee was

constituted with Government, Traditional Authority, Private Sector and CSO representatives.

This group is chaired by the Ministry of Finance and today, I also appreciate the work of this Committee and particularly the Ministry of Finance for chairing the Committee excellently to a time as this when we can transfer and make payments.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the World Bank has been Ghana's donor and partner since day one of entering into the global REDD+ mechanism process. The World Bank has supported many processes and projects in the Forestry sector in the past and their footprints are visibly evident in many projects and programs across the forest landscape of Ghana. The Government of Ghana is very grateful and appreciative of the World Bank and today, we say a big thank you for all their support and continue to call on them to support this process and others.

Ladies and Gentlemen, eventhough we celebrate this milestone today, Ghana's forest resources continue to face pressures from agricultural expansion, unsustainable logging, excessive wood harvesting for charcoal production and firewood, illegal mining, wildfires and poaching.

With the achievement in Carbon payments, it is imperative that we spread the message to different stakeholders to promote the preservation of forests for other ecosystem functions such as

carbon sequestration which will produce carbon payments, rather than destroying the very resources we have been blessed with for now and future generations.

It is my hope that, all gathered here will spread the word and support Government in the fight against illegal mining, farming and logging. We need such increased actions to help the attainment of the 10 million tonnes of Emission reductions signed under this program and even for other programs in other parts of Ghana's Forest Landscape to attract large-scale Carbon and Climate Financing. By so doing, we will also be significantly contributing to global efforts to achieve 1.5 degrees celcius under the Paris Agreement. As we may all be aware, deforestation and forest degradation are major contributors to global greenhouse gas emissions; however, nature-based solutions have the capacity to contribute a third of the global climate solutions being sought after by 2030.

The success story of the GCFRP is therefore a great source of gratification and also an indication that our quest to salvage our environment from the ravages of deforestation and forest degradation is not a lost cause. It greatly compliments several other Government interventions tailored to restore our environment to appreciable levels, such as the flagship Green

Ghana Project, which is an aggressive afforestation and reforestation agenda to restore degraded forest landscapes.

Since its inception in 2021, over 40 million tree seedlings have been planted across the country as part of the country's contribution to the global fight against climate change and also national efforts to restore lost forest cover.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I cannot end my address without calling on all and sundry to put their shoulders to the wheel in our quest to protect, preserve and restore our forests and natural resources in general. The task is huge but collectively we can attain the results we desire with commitment and dedication as exemplified by the Ghana Cocoa Forest REDD+ Programme.

I congratulate all beneficiaries and urge them to work harder to generate more Carbon payments.

Ladies and Gentlemen, AMPA, Cocoa Forest REDD+ Sika no aba! Yenkyesoaa na 3mbraa saaaa!

Ayekoo.

Thank you and may God bless our home land Ghana and make us great and strong!