

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT ON THE ILLEGAL FELLING AND HARVESTING OF ROSEWOOD AND ITS ATTENDANT DESTRUCTION ON THE ENVIRONMENT IN BUILSA SOUTH DISTRICT BY HONOURABLE AHMED IBRAHIM, MP FOR BANDA - 4 JULY, 2017**

Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to make a few comments on the Statement. In commenting on the Statement, I would have to congratulate the Hon Member who made the Statement for being bold enough to come and speak on this illegal felling of Rosewood in his constituency. It takes a very bold and courageous Member of Parliament to speak against such a problem in his Constituency. We do not know those who are involved in it but I believe he has gone ahead to say that some foreign companies are also part of the problem; I believe it is a national problem.

Mr Speaker, an issue I would want to speak to is the origin of the problem and that is where Ghanaians felt the need to go into that industry and the importance of Rosewood as an economic tree. Mr Speaker, going through the Statement, Hon Apaak who first made the Statement has made it clear that, the market for Rosewood started when the Fufulso – Sawla Road was being constructed, especially, when the Bui Dam was also being constructed. We all know that the Bui Dam was constructed by a firm called Sinohydro Corporation from China. The Fufulso–Sawla Road was also constructed by a Chinese company.

My worry is that, as a nation, why should we sit down for these Chinese companies to travel here and initiate projects in certain parts of the country before the economic viability of Rosewood was identified? This calls for a holistic search for the economic values of most of the trees nationwide, not only Rosewood.

Mr Speaker, the Hon Member who made the Statement has said that, because of the successive ban that has been placed on the illegal felling of Rosewood, those involved have found a way of transporting them to the port through Togo.

As a nation, we find it very difficult to protect the economic trees of the country or to protect our economic resources since when we place a ban that people cannot transport them through our ports, they can find a way of transporting them through our neighbouring countries.

This calls for a serious concern and it brings to notice that the protection of the environment is not the core duty of only the security services. As a nation, we must all be on board; protecting the environment should be a shared responsibility.

Mr Speaker, when we go to those areas, siting timber industries or saw mills in the Savannah zone, when it does not rain, we begin to blame it on certain fictitious activities, that it is not raining because of this or that. It is no wonder that these trees serve as windbreaks in the Savannah zone which sometimes cause rainfall and supply water for our rain fed agricultural activities.

I believe the Hon Member's concern about the protection of these Rosewood trees in our Savannah zone and to harness their economic importance, social and other importance, is a call in the right direction.

Mr Speaker, in making a few comments, I cannot end without calling on all other Hon Members concerned that we should not leave the matter to only the Hon Minister for Food and Agriculture that he should just place a ban on these activities but we must all be on the lookout and make sure that we protect the economic resources of this country. Mr Speaker, I remember the last Parliament passed the Geological Survey Bill.

Mr Speaker, my concern was about the economic importance of much of the geological resources that we have in this country. This is one of them, it is not only rosewood but there are other economic trees that are used for charcoal.

I believe that before the emergence of the Chinese, most of these rosewoods were used for charcoal. But Mr Speaker, these are the trees that we depend on. These are the trees that serve as windbreaks. These are the trees that cause rainfall for the many subsistence farmers that we have in the north. Therefore, the call for the protection of the trees is a call in the right direction.

Before I end, I must once again congratulate the Hon Member for making this Statement and I believe we would proceed in the right direction.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity given me.