**Mr. President,**

**ADVANCE QUESTIONS**

Allow me to now address some of the advance questions received from Member States.For clarity in the delivery of our responses, the issues raised have been clustered thematically as follows:

**Protection of Human Rights in Ghana**

1. Germany seeks to know the steps Ghana is undertaking or will undertake in order to safeguard the principle of human rights for all in Ghana.
2. Ghana is generally committed to respecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons. The National Report highlights the measures Ghana is undertaking and has undertaken to safeguard these rights and freedoms, some of which have been mentioned earlier this afternoon. Indeed, Ghana aims to continue to develop new initiatives in this regard.

**Protection of LGBT+ Persons**

1. In response to the questions raised by the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland regarding the protection of the human rights of LGBT+ persons and the measures Ghana is using to address discrimination against such persons, as mentioned earlier, Ghana is committed to ensuring the protection of all persons from violence. As indicated already, the State abhors all forms of violence and brutality targeted at any group of persons in Ghana, including all minority groups. All crimes of violence, when reported, are effectively investigated by the necessary authorities, and the perpetrators are brought to justice.

**Freedom of Expression and Protection of Journalists**

1. Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland seek to know the measures Ghana is taking to protect the freedom of press and journalists.
2. Ghana firmly upholds the values of free, independent and pluralistic media. A conspicuous symbol of Ghana’s freedom as a nation, is the presence of a free, dynamic and ever-highly critical press. The media have been free to comment and publish on virtually any topic at all, uncensored. A random search on TV, radio and other social media platforms reveals an enthusiastic populace willing to communicate and share their views in the media on matters of national interest even where, most of the time, same will be supposedly offensive to the Government.We are convinced that without freedom of expression, our collective drive for an informed, active and engaged citizenry for peace and sustainable development would be a fleeting illusion.
3. In order to continue protecting the safety of journalists and to aid in the fight against impunity, Ghana has established a Coordinated Mechanism for the Safety of Journalists under the independent National Media Commission. The multi-stakeholder framework brings together journalists, security agencies, prosecutors, legal experts and civil society to cooperate on the prevention and protection of journalists. A dedicated secretariat has been fully resourced to secure the safety of journalists. The Secretariat has developed a specialized software which tracks threats to media safety. The Secretariat is also training journalists to rectify vulnerabilities in the system that undermine their safety. Additionally, Ghana has mainstreamed safety of journalists into communications policy through a requirement by the National Communications Authority that applicants for broadcasting frequency authorization must practically demonstrate measures to secure the safety of journalists from attacks, harassment and intimidation.
4. With respect to the question raised about internet freedom in Ghana by the United States of America, I state that according to the 2021 Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) report on internet freedom, Ghana’s internet penetration rate reached 50%, bringing the country close to the global average of 62%. There has since been further improvement to make the situation even better. Some of the considerable steps taken by Government, together with other stakeholders within the past few years to ensure and improve internet freedom in Ghana are that:
5. The Government has initiated the Digital Ghana Agenda, a program to digitize the Ghanaian economy and extend internet coverage to as many deprived communities and persons as possible. Under this initiative, the Government is expanding ICT infrastructure and targeting total broadband connectivity for the unserved and underserved segments of society. Passport, National Health Insurance, schools and university applications, ports operations, water and electricity payments, land and business title registrations have all gone digital. This is in line with the broader framework of the ICT Policy for Accelerated Development (ICT4AD), Ghana’s ambitious blueprint for a digital transformation that was adopted in 2014.
6. In addition to extending internet reach to deprived societies, the Ghana Investment Fund for Electronic Communications (GIFEC) is working towards the provision of more cell sites to connect approximately 3 million people to voice and data services by the end of 2023.
7. In July 2020, Ghana launched its national assessment process of UNESCO's Internet Universality Indicators. The process is a holistic approach for individual countries to assess their internet ecosystem against, and to operationalize the four ROAM principles (Rights, Openness, Accessibility to all, and Multi-stakeholder participation).
8. In recent times, the country has rolled out several initiatives aimed at building and reinforcing its digital capacities. It has established a National Cybersecurity Authority (NCA), responsible for the implementation of the Cybersecurity Act, 2020 (Act 1038), including cybersecurity development, and cybersecurity incidents response coordination within Government and with the private sector. The Cybersecurity law was passed in 2020 to protect critical cyber infrastructure and activities online. This law also makes some provisions that largely protect women and children online.
9. In an effort to bridge the gender divide and ensure women’s safety and protection online, the Ministry of Communications and Digitalization (MoCD), and Huawei Technologies Ghana, have embarked on a project dubbed Girls-in-ICT. This involved a series of training and capacity building for a total of 60,000 female students in Senior High Schools in three regions in the country. The program seeks to provide ICT education to girls in the second-cycle institutions, as well as equip them with cyber security fundamentals to help them stay safe in cyberspace. The project also saw the National Cyber Security Authority introduce the short code 292 to the students to call for emergency assistance when confronted with any threats online.
10. In addition to the ongoing efforts that the Government is making, there have been some suggestions and recommendations that we hope will further facilitate internet freedom in Ghana. They are:

* Ensure that the digital rights of all persons are respected and protected.
* Improve access to the internet at all times.
* Desist from abusive use of power or influence to cause arrest and detention of journalists for merely publishing critical articles online.
* Thoroughly investigate incidents of cybercrimes, and arrest and prosecute the perpetrators.

**Death Penalty**

1. Panama and Liechtenstein seek to know the state of play of Ghana’s actions to abolish the death penalty.
2. The Constitution, the Criminal Offences Act, 1960 (Act 29) and the Armed Forces Act, 1962 (Act 105) impose the death penalty as punishment upon conviction for certain offences. In 2022, a Member of Parliament introduced the Armed Forces (Amendment) Bill, 2022 and the Criminal Offences (Amendment) Bill, 2022 in Parliament. The Bills seek to amend Act 29 and Act 105 to substitute the death penalty with the penalty of life imprisonment. The Bills were laid before Parliament on 25th July 2022 and referred to the Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs for consideration. The Bills are still being considered by the Committee.
3. Articles 3 (3) and 13 (1) of the Constitution, which provide for the death penalty for the offence of treason, are entrenched provisions of the Constitution and will need to be subjected to the process for the amendment of an entrenched provision of the Constitution under clauses (2) to (5) of Article 290. This process includes the organisation of a referendum at which at least 40% of the persons on the voters register must vote, and out of which at least 75% must vote in favour of the issue.

**Freedoms of Religion and Belief**

1. The United States of America seeks to know the measures Ghana is implementing to safeguard the freedoms of religion and belief.
2. Government remains committed to upholding these rights. Article 17 (2) of the Constitution of Ghana prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, and Article 21 (1) (c) of the Constitution stipulates that all persons have the right to freely practise any religion and to manifest such practice. Article 21 (1) (b) of the Constitution also provides that all persons have the right to the freedom of belief.
3. In addition to the constitutional provisions, Ghana is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states, in Article 18, that everyone shall have the right to freedom of religion and belief. No one has so far been persecuted in Ghana on account of his or her religious beliefs.

**Discrimination/Witchcraft**

1. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland also wishes to have information about the continued existence of witch camps, where exiled women have been accused of witchcraft. Concerning the witch camps, seven exist in the Northern and Northeast Regions of Ghana. Efforts are ongoing to close them. However, the challenges which exist are the slowness of the process and the difficulty in making the camps habitable. In the meantime, Ghana’s Gender Ministry has embarked on sensitization programmes, awareness–raising campaigns and relief support interventions in the camps and communities.
2. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland further wants to know how the Government will uphold social protections for the most vulnerable in the face of the current economic challenges. International human rights principles guide the Government’s commitment to human rights. In this regard, Ghana has introduced several programmes and public policies to ensure the inclusion of vulnerable groups in order to make certain that no one is left behind, especially in these current economically challenging times. They include:
3. The Ghana School Feeding Programme, which provides daily meals to beneficiary pupils in all districts of the country;
4. The Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty (LEAP) programme, which provides cash grants to poverty-stricken households;
5. The National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme, which provides an integrated national support for start-ups and small businesses;
6. The revision of the Guidelines for the Management and Disbursement of the District Assembly Common Fund to Persons with Disabilities to ensure that the fund is easily accessible by persons with disabilities; and
7. The launch of a National Baseline Assessment on Business and Human Rights, and the establishment of a multi-stakeholder steering committee to develop a National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights. The National Action Plan is expected to provide a framework for the State to enact legislation on business and human rights.

**Fulbe People in Ghana**

1. Germany requests that Ghana elaborate on the legislative framework regarding the issuance of birth certificates and national identity cards for the Fulbe people in Ghana, as well as the implementation of these legal frameworks.
2. Under section 17 (1) of the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 2020 (Act 1027), a parent or person responsible for a child is required to register the birth of that child in the district in which the child is born. According to section 21 of Act 1027, following registration, the District Registrar of the Births and Deaths Registry shall issue a birth certificate. The law applies to all persons living in Ghana, including non-nationals. There is no separate law for the Fulbe people in Ghana.
3. Regarding the legislative framework on the issuance of national identity cards, Regulation 1 of the National Identity Register Regulations, 2012 (L. I. 2111) provides that Ghanaian citizens, foreign nationals who are permanently resident in the country, foreign nationals who are resident in the country for a cumulative period of at least ninety days, and Ghanaian citizens with dual citizenship are eligible to register for a national identity card, popularly known as the Ghana card. Once a person meets these requirements, he or she is permitted to register for a Ghana card. No separate regulations exist for the Fulbe people in Ghana.

**Crime of Aggression**

1. Liechtenstein desires to know the steps Ghana has taken to ratify the Kampala Amendment to the Rome Statute on the crime of aggression.
2. The Office of the Attorney General is preparing an International Criminal Court Bill to give effect to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and to fully incorporate the statute as part of the domestic laws of Ghana. Once enacted, steps will be taken to incorporate the Kampala Amendment into the national law.

**Statelessness**

1. Panama wishes to know the steps that have been taken to implement the commitments made at the Ministerial Conference on Statelessness in West Africa, which was held in Abidjan from 23 to 25 February 2015, and the actions taken to ratify the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.
2. Ghana has not ratified the conventions relating to stateless persons but has made the commitment to accede to the Abidjan Declaration made on 19th May 2015, in Accra, Ghana. Ghana is yet to accede to the two conventions and has no laws on statelessness. However, its citizenship laws are very progressive. Ghana is implementing policies on issues, such as lack of proper documentation of births and deaths, which would aid in the eradication of statelessness.

**Mr. President,**

1. I have, in my statement, updated you on the efforts and some strategic initiatives adopted and implemented by Ghana in her firm commitment to promote and protect the human rights of all persons living in Ghana. The safeguarding of respect for fundamental human rights occupies a central place in the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana. Ghana has come far in the quest to promote and protect human rights but there is still room for improvement in a few areas. We assure the international community of our commitment to effectively address all challenges and gaps in order to further improve the human rights situation in our country.
2. Mr. President, my delegation looks forward to a constructive dialogue, and we stand ready to respond to any further comment or question from the delegations present here.

I thank you.

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