

**ADDRESS BY HON. IGNATIUS BAFFOUR AWUAH (MP),
MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR RELATIONS ON
THE OCCASION OF "WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH
AT WORK" HELD ON FRIDAY, 27TH APRIL, 2018 AT THE
TEMA METROPOLIS AT 9:00 AM.**

Mr. Chairman;

The Chief Inspector of Factories;

Heads of Occupational Safety and Health Institutions;

Rep. of Organised Labour;

Rep. of Ghana Employers Association;

Distinguished Invited Guests;

Friends from the Media;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It gives me great pleasure and honour to be here once again to deliver this address on the commemoration of "**World Day for Safety and Health at Work**". What is more exciting is the fact that, we are not only commemorating World Safe Day but World

Day Against Child Labour as well. Without a doubt, I'm glad these celebrations tie in very well with my responsibilities as the Minister for Employment and Labour Relations.

Mr. Chairman, the theme for this year's celebration "**Generation Safe and Healthy Environment**" is more than apt and fit-for-the-occasion. The urgent need to end child labour and improve the safety and health of young workers cannot be overstated and it is for this reason, a joint global campaign is being championed to address these growing concerns. Statistics from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) show that, 2.78 million workers die every year as a result of occupational accidents and work-related diseases. Out of this number, 2.4 million (86.3 per cent) of these deaths are due to work-related diseases, while over 380,000 (13.7 per cent) result from occupational accidents. That notwithstanding, each year, there are almost a thousand times more non-fatal occupational injuries than fatal occupational injuries. Non-fatal injuries are estimated to affect 374 million workers annually, and many of these injuries have serious consequences for workers' earning capacity in the

long term. These figures are no different from the Ghanaian situation.

Mr. Chairman, the significance of Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) at the workplace is indisputably key to the full attainment of decent work agenda in Ghana. However, there is overwhelming evidence to the effect that, Ghanaian workforce particularly young ones being exposed to workplace risks and hazards is on the ascendancy. In recent times, there have been countless accidents at workplaces, many of which are obviously avoidable had the necessary OSH management systems being in place. These accidents do not only present huge costs to individuals or enterprises but government as well. As we commemorate days like these, these worrying figures need to be on the decline otherwise our celebration will be an exercise in futility.

Distinguished Invited Guests, it is vital we acknowledge that, investment in the employment, education, training, skills

development and job creation of young people is increased to accelerate the rapid economic transformation we envisage. It is even more critically important to include OSH in these programmes. As a matter of fact, young workers under the age of 18 are recognized in law and policy as vulnerable group of people who are to be provided with special protection, on the other hand, young workers between the ages of 18 and 24 do not receive comparable legal recognition or levels of protection in their workplace, despite their continuing and increased risk of injury. Globally, it is estimated that, about 541 million young workers (between the ages of 15 and 24) account for 15 % of the world's labour force. Out of this number, it is estimated that, about 40% are subjected to more non-fatal occupational injuries than those above the age of 24 and these injuries pose a threat to their lives. In Ghana, the Ghana Living Standard Survey Round 6 (GLSS 6) estimates that, about 1.9 million children in Ghana between the ages of 5 and 17 are involved in child labour. Out of this number, 1.2 million children in the same age group are engaged in hazardous forms of child labour. This trend continues to worsen as more children get involved in child labour. The

observed increasing trend signals government, social partners and stakeholders to take comprehensive and urgent actions to address the canker. To this end, we must intensify our action towards the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8.7 and 8.8 if we are indeed committed to building a generation safe and healthy workers. We cannot but support this joint campaign towards the realization of the said goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen, worrying as these statistics may be, these figures represent only the record of reported cases of workplace injuries and accidents. Even more inexplicable, there are many accidents and injuries which occur unreported within the informal sector where young people abound. Ironically, Article 24 (1) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana stipulates that, "Every person has the right to work under satisfactory, safe and healthy conditions". Additionally, Article 36 (10) states that, "The State shall safeguard the health, safety and welfare of all persons in employment, and shall establish the basis for the full deployment of the creative potential of all Ghanaians". It is against this backdrop that, I am unwavering in my commitment to implement

OSH Standards and end all forms of child labour in all sectors of the economy. More importantly, when I assume office as the Sector Minister, I underscored the significance of addressing these concerns by submitting a Memorandum to Cabinet on the issues for consideration. Consequent to that, Cabinet unanimously approved the Memorandum on child labour for implementation and stayed the Memorandum on OSH on condition that, the Department of Factories Inspectorate's (DFI) institutional capacity is strengthened within the context of best practices to enforce OSH standards.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in view of this, a Technical Working Group has been constituted to lead the process and revert to Cabinet as early as practicable. It is my expectation that, the approval and subsequent implementation of OSH Policy and Bill will help transform and harmonise the current uncoordinated and almost chaotic OSH management regime for improved workplace safety and employee welfare in Ghana.

Mr. Chairman, it is worth knowing that, despite government's numerous interventions over the years, OSH remains highly non-existent in the informal sector and the informal sub-sector such as domestic work. We cannot promote OSH without paying significant attention to the informal sector. Regrettably, we have not mainstreamed OSH in these vulnerable sectors although they form an important part of the labour market. In this vein, we have developed a road map on the transition to formality in addition to a Labour (Domestic Workers) Regulations to formalise the domestic work space. This regulation will be laid in Parliament for passage once sitting resumes. The ultimate goal is to recognize domestic work as regular work that conforms to decent work standards for which OSH is a part of. These initiatives are in response to the changing face of the World of Work where workers are growing more and more conscious of their rights and responsibilities and looking for employers who will provide them with a safe working environment. Employees want to work in an environment where their safety can be assured. Employers on the other hand, are seeking men and women with demonstrable

safety consciousness to hire or engage, knowing that reliable assurance of safety is a guarantee of business development.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, having said this, let me reiterate that, this celebration should enlighten and strengthen our collective efforts to pursue strict compliance to OSH policies and regulations. It is therefore important we do not lose sight of the fact that, behind every policy, law or regulation on safety and health, lives, human lives remain the core object that we seek to secure and protect.

Before I assume my seat, we should be mindful of the fact that, there are things we can do today to prevent undesirable incidents from happening in our workplaces; and as we come together every year to commemorate this day, we should have something to show as evidence of improvement.

I thank you all for your attention and for having me.

GOD BLESS US ALL.