

**ADDRESS BY HON. KWAMENA BARTELS, MP, MINISTER FOR THE
INTERIOR, AT A BRIEFING FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC
CORPS ON THE DISASTER IN THE THREE NORTHERN REGIONS AND
WESTERN REGION ON 8TH OCTOBER, 2007 AT THE GHANA
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE IN ACCRA**

Madam Chairperson,

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Hon. Ministers,

Distinguished Invited Guests

Our Friends from the Media,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. INTRODUCTION

As the Chairperson for the Inter-Ministerial Task Force indicated in her opening remarks, Government has been working day and night managing the flood related disaster that has engulfed the three(3) northern regions and Enchi in the Western Region of our country. And at this point I wish to provide an overview of the situation to you.

2. Timing of the Disaster

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the end of the prolonged dry season in many parts of the country marked the beginning of intense rainfall in July, August and early September 2007, with August alone, recording more than 300 millimetres of rainfall. This resulted in severe flooding in the three northern regions. The Western Region was not spared with Enchi and Nine other communities within the Aowin-Suaman district completely submerged by flood waters.

It is important to mention that, the situation was not limited to Ghana alone. Our sister countries, in most part of the African continent, also have had their fair share of this unfortunate calamity.

3.0 Statistics on Destruction

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, permit me at this juncture, to give you the current statistical update in terms of the level of destruction in the affected regions.

3.1 Deaths

In all, Fifty-six **(56) deaths** have been recorded and the break-down are as follows: thirty-one **(31)** persons in the Upper East Region, fifteen **(15)** persons in the Northern Region and ten **(10)** persons in Upper West Region respectively. Fortunately, there was no death in the Western Region.

3.2 Houses

Over **34,878** houses have been destroyed with about **15,069** in the Upper East Region, **18,167** in Northern Region, **1,100** in the Upper West Region and **582** in the Western Region.

3.3 Internally Displaced Persons

The destruction of houses occasioned about **341,360** displaced people with **100,703** in the Upper East Region, **228,812** in the Northern Region, **3,033** in the Upper West Region and **8,812** in the Western Region.

3.4 Roads, Bridges and Culverts

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, a total of one hundred and thirty one **(131)** trunk and feeder roads with a total

length of one thousand five hundred and ten **(1,510)** km have been badly damaged. The Northern Region is the most seriously affected with a total of fifty three **(53)** roads with a length of six hundred and sixty **(660)** km. This is followed by the Upper East having a total of fifty four **(54)** roads with a length of five hundred and forty two **(542)** km. The Upper West which is relatively least affected, had twenty four **(24)** with a length of three hundred and eight **(308)** km.

A total of seventy **(70)** bridges and culverts were affected, fifty eight **(58)** in the Upper East, eleven **(11)** in the Upper West and one **(1)** in the Northern Region. The main ones being the Kulungungu Bridge linking Bawku to Burkina Faso, and Bawku-Garu Bridge.

3.5 Farms and Livestock

In all, **70,526 hectares** with a production potential of **144,430 metric tonnes** were affected. The Northern Region recorded **58,055 hectares**, Upper East – **12,221 hectares** and Upper West – **250 hectares**. Also, a substantial number of livestock were lost. The situation has been compounded by the massive destruction of dams.

3.6 Health, Water and Sanitation

In the areas of health, water and sanitation the major problems relate to lack of clean drinking water as a result of contamination of all water sources; inaccessibility of health facilities as a result of destruction of roads and bridges; and exposure to weather and disease carrying insects including the black flies.

4. GOVERNMENT ACTIONS

4.1 ESTABLISHMENT OF TASK FORCE

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, as indicated by the Chairperson in her remarks, it was on the basis of the assessment reports of the various High Level Governmental Teams that His Excellency the President established an Inter-Ministerial Task Force to serve as a strategic focal point to ensure a more coordinated and effective approach to the management of the disaster. The Task Force which started work on 1st September 2007 was formally inaugurated on Friday 14 September, 2007.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the National Disaster Management Mechanism was actively operational whilst all these assessments were going on. Around the same period, the Regional and District Disaster Management Task Forces were activated under the leadership of the respective Regional Ministers and District Chief Executives, on the instructions of His Excellency the President.

4.2 RELIEF ITEMS DISTRIBUTED BY GOVERNMENT

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, after evaluating the situation, the Government approved an amount of ₵6.1 Billion old Ghana Cedis (GH ₵610M) for the acquisition of additional emergency relief items to supplement the NADMO's Strategic Reserve. This was followed by the establishment of the National Disaster Relief Fund in which government has deposited a substantial amount of ₵62 Billion (GH ₵1.2M) old Ghana Cedis for the

sole purpose of bringing relief assistance to the victims in affected areas within the short and medium terms.

Your Excellencies, Government has so far sent about 500 tonnes of food and non-food relief items to the affected areas. This has been complemented by various relief assistance from other governments through their embassies, the UN System and NGOs. Internal donations from Religious organisations, the private sector and individuals have also been very encouraging.

Already, we have received some initial support from the following Governments and NGOs for the Disaster victims for which we are very grateful but as we have stated we need some more support to assist these victims to restore their lives to normalcy.

1. JAPANESE GOVERNMENT
2. SPANISH GOVERNMENT
3. BRITISH GOVERNMENT - DFID
4. JAPAN INTERNATIONAL CORP(JICA)
5. EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT
6. AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT - WFP
7. PRINCE OF WALES AND SPOUSE
8. CHINESE GOVERNMENT - RED CROSS
9. UN SYSTEM
10. FRENCH GOVERNMENT
11. VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL NGOs
12. KOREAN GOVERNMENT
13. GERMAN GOVERNMENT
14. AMERICAN GOVERNMENT - USAID
15. ITALIAN GOVERNMENT - RED CROSS

4.3. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, in all these, Government saw the need to involve our development partners both local and foreign in the management of the disaster.

As a result, a series of interactions with all stakeholders were undertaken to map out a strategy for a concerted approach towards the management of the disaster. As a result, a joint assessment was undertaken to give all stakeholders a firsthand view of the situation on the ground. This took place on Monday 17th to Thursday 20th, September 2007 for the three northern regions and on 27th September 2007 for Enchi in the Western Region. A joint assessment report has since been issued and this is on the website of the Inter-ministerial Task Force.

4.4. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Government in collaboration with the UN system has instituted various monitoring mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of the disaster management strategy so far. In this regard, government with the assistance of the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) is in the process of conducting an assessment to ascertain the effectiveness of the relief assistance in meeting the needs of the affected people.

5. RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS

Your Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen, as mentioned earlier by the Chairperson, Government is in the process of finalising a

strategic plan for the reconstruction of the affected areas. The plan will be multi-sectorial focusing on Water Resources and Housing, Roads and Bridges/Culvert, Agriculture, Health, Environment and Sanitation, and Education. The success of this plan will largely depend on the support government receives from its development partners.

6. CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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7. CONCLUSION

Your Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen we are faced with a disaster and what is even worrying is the fact that successful recovery from this situation is definitely going to be a difficult.

The people in the affected areas are waiting for Government to act. They are waiting for the entire International Community to support their Government in providing relief assistance to them. They want action now and I hope you will bring this to the attention of your Governments and the leadership of your organisations for them to support us a matter of urgency. Together we can make the lives of these people better and together we can put smiles on the faces of these people. Therefore let us act now.

On this note, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
thank you and May God Bless Us All as we work together to bring
comfort to our affected people.