

GHANA TRADES UNION CONGRESS

A SPEECH BY BRO. KOFI ASAMOAH AT ONE DAY OIL AND GAS SEMINAR FOR WORKERS OF GTPCWU, 18TH AUGUST, 2010

The Honourable Minister of Energy, the Chief Executive officer of the National Petroleum Authority, Comrade General Secretaries of the General Transport, Petroleum and Chemical Workers' Union and the Construction and Building Workers' Union, Comrades and fellow workers, I bring you greetings from the Ghana Trades Union Congress (TUC). This seminar under the theme; *“Petroleum Workers Repositioning themselves for the Production of Oil and Gas”* could not have come at a better time in Ghana's History. As we all know, Ghana is preparing feverishly towards commercial production of oil and gas in after many years of search.

Ladies and gentlemen, you will agree with me that the importance of this seminar cannot be overemphasized especially at this crucial moment in our national lives. The seminar offers unique platform and opportunity for learning and sharing of experiences. Brothers and sisters, trade union work in our contemporary times has become knowledge based. In our own time have attempted to remove trade unionism and industrial relations from the restrictive confines of the streets to the boardroom where hard facts and evidence are marshaled to back our positions and demands. But this does not mean that we will not go on to the streets when there is need to. Demonstrations and strikes remain integral part of our toolkit in the struggle for social and economic justice.

Seminars of this nature are part of what we do generate ideas, knowledge and information for our advocacy. I would therefore on behalf of the Executive Board

of the Ghana TUC congratulate the leadership of the GTPCWU for the foresight in organizing this all-important seminar and doing so in timely fashion. I have no doubt that this seminar would go a long way in arming the participants with the knowledge and information that will allow them and the trade union movement effectively engage in discussions on Oil and Gas production.

Brothers and sisters, as has been stated by many well meaning Ghanaians and non-Ghanaians, Ghana's oil find presents both opportunities and threats to our national development efforts. It is said that our nascent democracy remains threatened and so is our national security. However, I am optimistic that Ghana's oil and gas industry would offer us opportunity to improve the living conditions of Ghanaians especially when we have the benefit of all the good and bad lessons of oil and gas production to learn from. We cannot and must not fail. I believe that discussions of this nature which bring stakeholders together are necessary, if we as a country, are to avoid the curse of oil and gas resources which has plagued almost all oil-producing African states.

Honourable Minister, ladies and gentlemen, averting the curse associated with the oil and gas industry requires transparency in both revenue management and oil and gas contracts. We at the Ghana TUC have been following developments in the oil and gas sector and are extremely concerned about the seeming secrecy surrounding oil and gas contracts. Oil and gas resources are held by the Government of Ghana in trust for the people of Ghana. It is therefore only appropriate that Ghanaians get to know the content of Oil and Gas agreements and contracts entered into by the Government of Ghana on their behalf.

We should not over emphasis the oil and gas industry to the neglect of the other sectors. Rather, given that oil and gas industry in itself has limited employment capacity, it is important that we take opportunity of the oil revenue to improve the other sectors of the Ghanaian economy. We should create the conditions which are necessary of industrialization. It is only when we create critical linkages among the sectors of our economy that we can create jobs for our young men and women.

Honorable minister, ladies and gentlemen, before I take my seat permit me to raise our initial comments on the proposed oil-related bills that have been laid before parliament or about to be presented to parliament. I am referring specifically to the proposed oil revenue management bill and the oil exploration bill. The TUC will very soon presents its comprehensive views on these views to government. A few and concerns will do for now.

The TUC finds it difficult to understand the fact that organised labour is not represented on the oil revenue management board. This in our view is an anomaly and we call on government to address that anomaly. Second, the TUC is deeply concerned about the sweeping discretionary powers vested in the Minister for Finance in the allocation of oil revenues. We are equally concerned about the designation of upstream oil sector as essential service and therefore off-limit to trade unions.

On oil exploration rights we would have liked to see a situation where we as a people put our house in order in terms of legislative and institutional frameworks before granting further exploration rights. Ghana is now acknowledged to have oil and this must reflect in a superior bargaining position as we grants exploration rights. We believe that these issues need to be addressed. But, as I have said, the

TUC will soon presents its comprehensive views on these issues to government and the appropriate state agencies.

Let me once again congratulate the leadership of the GTPCWU for this seminar. I wish you a fruitful discussion

Thank you very much and God bless us all.