

**A SPEECH DELIVERED BY BROTHER KOFI ASAMOAH,  
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF GHANA TRADES UNION CONGRESS  
(TUC) AT THE 10<sup>TH</sup> NATIONAL QUADRENNIAL DELEGATE  
CONFERENCE OF TEACHERS AND EDUCATIONAL WORKERS  
UNION (TEWU) UNDER THE THEME: “PURSUING ADEQUATE  
COMPENSATION FOR QUALITY SERVICE DELIVERY” AUGUST  
18, 2011**

Brother Chairman,  
Honourable Ministers,  
General Secretary,  
Deputy General Secretary  
Members of the National Executive Committee,  
Executive Board Members present,  
Brothers and Sisters,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Executive Committee and on my own behalf, I bring you greetings and felicitations from the membership of the Ghana TUC and the working people of Ghana. Let me congratulate you for your hard work in the last Quadrennial which has enabled your union to serve its constituents well in the last four years and also enabled the union to meet its constitutional obligation of organizing yet another impressive and well attended conference. Bringing together such large numbers of delegates in a conference of this nature is not an easy task. The financial and human resources and logistics as well as the organizing skills required in putting together such a conference is huge and difficult to quantify. As unions we have always dedicated ourselves in mobilizing such resources in pursuit of our constitutional mandates. We demonstrate our commitment not only to internal democracy but equally importantly our commitment to democracy at the national level whenever we gather in such conferences. I hasten to remind delegates and members of this great union of the sacrifices your leaders have put in to make this conference a reality. To those of you in leadership we recognise and salute you for your diligence and dedication to the course of teachers and educational workers of Ghana.

Brothers and sisters, your delegate conference is coming off at a very momentous time both in the history of your union and our country, Ghana. For the union and without prejudice to the outcome of this conference, a very efficient and dedicated leadership that has served the union well is about to hand over the mantle of leadership to new crop of leaders. This is

an important transition for TEWU, the TUC and our members. But before addressing the opportunities and challenges that we face in this transition, permit me few minutes of your time to speak to the theme of this conference and to highlight some of the immediate challenges that face our members – workers and their families.

Honourable Ministers, the Single Spine Pay Policy is in its second year of implementation. The policy was among other things meant to remove distortions in the public sector pay and to free resources that will allow government to significantly enhance pay levels in the public sector on the principle of equal pay for work of equal value. Two years on the popular refrain among working families is “times are hard”. Even with Single Spine, the truth is that incomes from work do not match the prevailing costs of living and workers continue. It is therefore heart warming that TEWU chose the pursuit of adequate compensation for quality service delivery as its conference theme. The theme is timely and crucial and I urge you to deliberate and resolve to pursue it in the coming quadrennial. We are all aware of the agitations of workers in the education sector following their migration unto the Single Spine Salary Structure early this year. The exclusion of majority of non-teaching staff in the payment of the Retention Premium is unfair and I call on the Minister of Education and Fair Wages and Salaries Commission to ensure that non-teaching staff are paid such an allowance. We must not fail to realise that teaching is a team work and that effective teaching depends on both services of teaching and non-teaching staff.

Comrades, organised labour has always maintained that the surest way to improve productivity and promote quality service delivery in this country is to first improve wages and salaries. Government and for that employers, should, invest in training of their workers, pay them well and demand hard work. It is common knowledge that employers that pay their workers wages above the market rate attract the best workers in terms of skills and experience. Such employers are also able to reduce worker turnover and increase productivity. They are much more competitive and profitable in the long run.

Honourable members we deny this common knowledge when we asked workers to first increase productivity before asking for better pay. Let me state that the debate about low pay in Ghana has gone well beyond the so-called chicken and egg puzzle. Pay levels are so low that it is illogical to ask workers who cannot put soul and body together to raise productivity. The

familiar official response that inflation is inflation is falling and that no one dare say that the cost of living is high no longer sounds credible. The basic problem about cost of living and wages and salaries in Ghana is that they all have very little to do inflation whether it is falling or rising. The truth is, the absolute cost of living is high relative to incomes and increasing regardless of whether the rate of increase is slow or fast. The Salary of the typical public sector worker is not sufficient to allow him/her to rent a decent accommodation, feed the family, and pay for transport, school fees and healthcare. For the average worker, whether inflation is single or double digit the fact is their salaries do not allow them to meet the basic needs of their family; pure and simple!

Brothers and sisters the TUC and its affiliate unions certainly share growing concerns about poor attitudes to work and inefficiencies. But we also recognise that many of these challenges are the result of poor remuneration, weak supervision and training. Delays in implementing workplace policies/decisions and excessive bureaucracy have become common feature of our public service. Taking measures to streamline procedures and improving supervision combined with better remuneration will ensure better service delivery in support of the Better Ghana Agenda.

Ladies and gentlemen, in a few hours from now, TEWU will witness change of baton in terms of leadership. On behalf of the TUC and the working people I pay special tribute to the Out-going General Secretary, Brother Ayim Antwi. It is a difficult moment for the TUC and for TEWU as the hour of parting draws near. But you will agree with me that after many years of dedicated service to the union, Brother and indeed his family deserve a break from active trade union work. We salute him for the selfless service, the leadership he provided and the experience he has shared with all of us. We believe that Brother would continue to be of great service to the union even in your retirement. As we always say: “experience is the best teacher” and “once a trade unionist, always a trade unionist”. I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to past General Secretaries of the TEWU, both the living and those of blessed memory. The TEWU we see today is the fruit of their labour.

Brothers and sisters, the greatest tribute we can pay to the memory Brother Antwi and previous leaders is to manage the leadership contest we are about to witness in the spirit of comradeship. As members and delegates of TEWU are at the decision point where we are called upon choose our

leaders for the next quadrennial. The decisions we make here at this conference would determine the future of our union. Unlike four years ago, you are now faced with aspiring leaders you may not be sure of but I trust your sense of judgement even as I urge sober reflection as you make your decision. To those aspiring to lead the union, I counsel you to conduct yourself in a manner that will ensure after your possible victory you will have less task of uniting the union for the struggle that lie ahead of all of us. On this note, I wish you very fruitful conference.

Long live Solidarity  
Long Live TEWU  
Long Live TUC  
Thank you!