

PRESS CONFERENCE BY THE NDC MAJORITY CAUCUS IN PARLIAMENT, ADDRESSED BY THE HONOURABLE MAJORITY LEADER, HON. CASSIEL ATO FORSON (Ph.D)

SUNDAY, 20TH OCTOBER, 2024

1. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, our friends from the media and fellow countrymen and women,
2. You will all recall that on Tuesday, 15th October, 2024, on behalf of the NDC caucus in Parliament, I brought to the attention of the Rt. Hon. Speaker, the following facts:
 - Hon. Peter Yaw Kwakye-Ackah, Member of Parliament for Amenfi Central, who was elected on the ticket of the NDC, has filed to contest the upcoming 2024 parliamentary elections as an Independent candidate with the Electoral Commission;
 - Hon. Andrew Asiamah Amoako, Independent Member of Parliament for Fomena, and until recently the Second Deputy Speaker, has filed to contest the 2024 parliamentary elections on the ticket of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) with the Electoral Commission;
 - Hon. Kwadjo Asante, Member of Parliament for Suhum, who was elected on the ticket of the NPP, has filed to contest the upcoming 2024 parliamentary elections as an independent candidate with the Electoral Commission; and
 - Hon. Cynthia Mamle Morrison, Member of Parliament for Agona West, who was elected on the ticket of the NPP, has filed to contest the upcoming 2024 parliamentary elections as an independent candidate with the Electoral Commission.
4. I did so pursuant to Order 93 of the Standing Orders of Parliament. That Order, in part, allows a Member of Parliament to make a statement on a matter of urgent public importance.
5. I brought this matter to the attention of the Rt. Hon. Speaker because I believed that it was a significant public interest matter.
6. I further drew the attention of the Speaker to the constitutional implications of the conduct of the four (4) individuals involved and concluded that by the provisions of article 97(1)(g) and (h), they had vacated their seats as Members of the 8th Parliament.
7. Article 97(1), (g) and (h) reads as follows:
 - (1) A Member of Parliament shall vacate his seat in Parliament -

(g) If he leaves the party of which he was a Member at the time of his election to parliament to join another party or seeks to remain in Parliament as an Independent member; or

(h) If he was elected a Member of Parliament as an Independent candidate and joins a political party.

8. Order 18 of the Standing Orders of Parliament mandatorily places sole responsibility on the Speaker to communicate vacancy of seats in parliament.
9. Order 18 reads as follow “the Speaker shall inform the House of the occurrence of a vacancy of the seats of a Member under clause (1) (b) to (e), (g) and (h) of article 97 of the constitution”.
10. I also cited the Saturday, 7th November, 2020 precedent where a similar facts occurred, coincidentally involving Hon. Andrews Asiamah Amoako.
11. The then NPP Member of Parliament had gone to file his nomination for the December 2020 parliamentary elections as an independent candidate.
12. Based on those facts, Hon Andrews Asiamah Amoako’s Party, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) wrote to then Speaker Mike Aaron Oquaye to communicate those facts.
13. In that communication to the Speaker, the NPP indicated that Hon Andrews Asiamah Amoako had forfeited his membership of the NPP party.
14. This led to his immediate removal from Parliament by the Rt Hon Mike Aaron Oquaye, the then Speaker of Parliament.
15. Rt Hon Mike Aaron Oquaye concluded that article 97(1) automatically kicked in without the need for any court order. Indeed, no one legally questioned his decision.
16. My statement drew some comments from the floor as allowed by our standing orders.
17. After listening to the comments of members which often turned into arguments, the Speaker of Parliament, Rt. Hon. Alban Sumana Kingsford Bagbin, requested for two (2) days to ponder over the statement, comments and arguments that ensued to enable him give a considered response.
18. On Thursday, 17th October, 2024 the Speaker responded to the Statement and agreed that the facts contained in the statement were indeed true.
19. This is because the Notice of Polls issued by the Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana in respect of those constituencies confirmed that the said individuals had indeed engaged in the conduct alleged in my statement.

20. On the bases of the facts not being in dispute, Mr Speaker proceeded to evaluate the circumstances and decided that their conducts breached article 97(1)(g) and (h).
21. Pursuant to Order 18 of the Standing Orders, the Rt. Hon Speaker, communicated to the House, the vacancies of the four seats.
22. For the avoidance of doubt, the Speaker's decision to declare the four seats vacant is a lawful exercise of his responsibility derived from the 1992 constitution and the Standing Orders of Parliament.
23. The effect of the Speaker's declaration is that, currently;
 - We no longer have an Independent Member of Parliament
 - The NPP has 135 Members of Parliament
 - The NDC has 136 Members of Parliament and
 - There is no 2nd Deputy Speaker of Parliament
24. This effectively alters the configuration of the 8th Parliament.
25. The NPP group in Parliament are now the Minority Caucus as defined by the relevant section of Order (6) of our Standing Orders.
26. "Minority Caucus" means the Members of the Party or Parties that have the second largest number of seats in the House.
27. The NDC MPs in Parliament now constitute the Majority Caucus, in line with the Standing Orders of Parliament.
28. Fellow country men and women, the NDC now constitutes the Majority Caucus in this 8th Parliament.
29. We will jealously protect our new Majority status and will not bow, retreat nor surrender our lawfully earned status.
30. We will also not abdicate our responsibility to the people no matter what!
31. Nothing, absolutely nothing, will change this position!
32. We are fortified that the "proceedings" of Parliament "shall not" be "impeached or questioned in any court or place out of Parliament."
33. Any interference with the business of Parliament is unlawful, unacceptable and shall be resisted.
34. We have never hidden our position that we are in this Parliament for the ordinary Ghanaian.

35. It is indeed true that we will use our new majority numbers to benefit Ghanaians by introducing private members bills to remove the e-Levy to reduce the suffering of the people.
36. It is also true that we will use our new majority to remove the betting tax and other nuisance taxes.
37. Already, this NPP government has made Ghana a high tax regime and that is affecting the survival of businesses and the people.
38. We assure you that we will use our new majority to protect businesses and the people of Ghana, as we have always maintained.
39. We are confident that the Rt Hon Speaker has acted fairly, firmly and lawfully in a matter that is perfectly within his province.
40. Speaker Bagbin has had a distinguished and unprecedented 32 year career in the Parliament of Ghana.
41. Rt Hon Speaker Alban Bagbin is a courageous and resolute leader.
42. We stand with him, pledge our full support and urge him to protect the dignity and sanctity of the Parliament of Ghana.
43. In the same vein, we call on Ghanaians to stand by the Speaker and to resist oppressor's rule.
44. From day one, we have not reneged on our fight for the people of Ghana.
45. The opportune time has come and we are determined to immediately commence the process of reversing the Akufo-Addo/Bawumia mess and put our country back on track.
46. The people of Ghana can count on us and be rest assured that the NDC majority will protect their interest.
47. Thank you.