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PRESS RELEASE

**RESPONSE TO THE ISSUES RAISED BY THE COALITION OF CONCERNED
TEACHERS AT A PRESS CONFERENCE HELD ON 27TH MAY, 2015**

The Ministry of Education wishes to express concern over issues raised by the Coalition of Concerned Teachers (CCT) at a press conference held on Wednesday, 27th May, 2015.

It is shocking that the CCT chose to hold a press conference to attack the Minister on the very issues that the Ministry and the Unions are working hard and tirelessly to address. A meeting was held on May 13 with the Unions and attended by the President of CCT, Mr. Ernest Opoku as well as three of his executives: Mr. King Ali Awudu (Vice President), Mr. Godfred Sepenu (Organizer) and Vida Sapabi (Women's Commissioner) at the Ministry of Education.

The meeting discussed teachers' vehicle maintenance allowance, transfer grants, rationalization of teachers, payment of incremental credit arrears among others. These issues surprisingly were the concerns raised by the CCT.

It is interesting to note that the Minister for Education introduced quarterly meetings with Unions to ensure that challenges and issues are addressed for cordial and effective solution to the satisfaction of all.

These meetings are usually attended by the Unions of the Ministry of Education including the CCT, Fair Wages and Salaries Commission, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MoFEP) Controller and Accountant-General, the GES and the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE).

It was at the May 13 meeting chaired by the Deputy Minister in charge of tertiary Education, Hon. Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, at the instance of the Hon. Minister, Prof. Naana

Jane Opoku-Agyemang, that the GES reported the lifting of the ban on payment of incremental credit effective January, 2015. Arrears for 2011-2014 were yet to be paid. However, January 2013 to May 2013 arrears for some GES staff which comprise CCT members have been paid.

On the issue of non-payment of three months salary arrears, the Unions were made to understand that nine (9) out of the ten regions have been validated for payment. Currently the GES has forwarded the last region (Northern) to the Auditor- General for validation. It is interesting to note that copies to that effect have been given to the Unions including CCT for true reflection of the state of affairs.

The teacher trainees' allowances were replaced with the Students Loan to pave way for increase in enrollment in the various Colleges of Education (CoEs). As a result of this policy, we now have 14,522 students who are being trained in our CoEs as opposed to a yearly 9,000 students under the old system. The Ministry is working with MoFEP for the release of the Feeding Grant.

It must be noted that in all the above issues, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning plays a major role in the release of funds.

As has been explained several times, the teacher rationalization exercise is a process to ensure that gaps created in schools are filled, thus the GES embarked on the exercise to bring equity in the distribution of teachers across the districts, regions and the nation at large. This has resulted in children in some remote areas now having teachers.

Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs) for the 2014/2015 academic year have been sent to schools. For instance, seventy five (75) deprived districts have been provided with funds to purchase their TLMs. The rest of the districts have been provided with the items from GES Headquarters. We urge CCT executives to update themselves on current issues regarding the provision of TLMs. Since early May 2015, the GES has been working on the 2015/16 academic year TLMs to avoid delays.

Under the leadership of the Hon. Minister, the MoE has achieved many laurels which include the reduction of absenteeism among teachers from a scaling 27% in 2013 to 11% as at the end of December 2014. That was achieved through enhancing supervision in the schools.

It is also to be noted that through the leadership of the Minister, over 2,000 Science teachers and 1,000 Mathematics teachers have been re-trained to promote effective teaching and learning of Mathematics and Science in our Pre-tertiary Institutions.

As such, the Science Resource Centre Project is being expanded to cover all public Senior High Schools (SHSs) in the country.

Under the Secondary Education Improvement Project (SEIP) the Ministry is supporting quality improvement in 125 beneficiary SHSs with emphasis on the teaching and learning of Mathematics and Science; providing scholarship to over 10,500 needy students.

The heart beat of the Minister is to get all children of school going age not only in classrooms but to make them literates and numerates. Thus, the GES and USAID project is to ensure that 2.8 million children from KG1-P3 improve their reading skills, and 51 000 teachers re-trained.

The Hon. Minister is also co-coordinating projects such as the Secondary Education Improvement Project (SEIP), Complementary Basic Education (CBE), construction of Community Day Senior High Schools (CDSHSs), training of Mathematics and Science teachers, training of teachers in ICT and distribution of laptops to schools and teachers among others.

It is therefore, not appropriate for the CCT to attempt to tarnish the image of a Minister who has been able to reduce teacher absenteeism rate from 27% to 11%, facilitating the conversion of Polytechnics into Technical Universities and has also been globally recognized for hard work and contribution to education.

As partners, we advise the CCT to be civil in their language, base their assertions on facts and avoid unwarranted personal attacks so as to uphold the image of the noble profession.

The Minister's open door policy remains unaltered.

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