

TRADES UNION CONGRESS (GHANA)



[DRAFT FOR COMMENTS]

PRESS STATEMENT ON THE SALARIES OF SPOUSES OF PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT

We have followed the ongoing spirited public debate on the payment of salaries to spouses of presidents and vice presidents.

Here are the facts we have gathered so far:

- 1) The payment of allowances to spouses of presidents and vice presidents was introduced by the first Government of 4th Republic under the late former President Rawlings.
- 2) These allowances have been handled administratively by the Office of the President.
- 3) The Presidential Emoluments Committee chaired by Professor Ntiama-Baidu recommended that, henceforth, the wives of presidents and vice presidents should be paid monthly salaries at the level paid to cabinet ministers, as part of the privileges recommended for presidents and vice presidents.
- 4) The 7th Parliament, which was dissolved on 6th January 2021, approved the recommendation by Ntiama-Baidu's Committee to convert these allowances to monthly salaries.
- 5) Salary arrears dated back to January 2017 have since been paid to the wives of President Akufo-Addo and Vice President Bawumia, in accordance with the Committee's recommendation which was approved by NDC and NPP Members of Parliament.

The spouses of presidents and vice presidents are not specified under Article 71 of the Constitution of Ghana. The question is: why should they receive salaries pegged to emoluments and privileges for office holders specified under Article 71?

It is true that salaries of some presidential staffers not specified under Article 71 receive emoluments that are the level of ministers or even higher, in accordance with Presidential Office Act, 1993(Act 463), Legal Service Act and other acts. But it should be noted that the duties and responsibilities of Article 71 office holders and all jobholders in the public service, including presidential staffers, are clear. The spouses of presidents and vice presidents have

not been officially assigned any such duties and responsibilities. Therefore, they are not qualified to receive salaries from the public purse.

Ghanaians appreciate what the first and second ladies are doing to support women's rights, child rights, and other noble initiatives towards social and economic development of our country. But neither the Constitution of Ghana nor the laws of land assign them any official duties and responsibilities.

Therefore, the Trades Union Congress cannot support the payment of salaries to the spouses of presidents and vice presidents even if the Ntiamao-Baidu's Committee recommended the payment of such salaries. It is simply not right for anyone who has not been officially assigned duties and responsibilities in the public service to receive monthly salaries. The Committee probably sought to regularize the payment of allowances which were being paid already. But you cannot regularize the payment of allowances which has no legal basis.

The ongoing passionate debate indicates clearly that this issue is very important to Ghanaians. We would like to advise President Akufo-Addo to use all the powers accorded him by the Constitution of Ghana, first, to stop the payment of the salaries to his wife and the wife of the Vice President immediately, until they are officially assigned duties and responsibilities. The President should also ensure that all such payments made to his wife and the wife of Vice President are refunded immediately.

When the time comes for spouses of presidents and vice presidents to be assigned official duties and responsibilities that will qualify them to receive salaries from tax payers' money the executive arm of government should remember the spouses of the Speakers of Parliament (the heads of the legislative arm of government) and the spouses of Chief Justices (the heads of the judiciary arm of government). They can also perform some official duties.

We would also like to advise the President to initiate a process towards the establishment of a Committee/Commission made up of experts from various fields to advise government on salaries for all jobholders in the entire public service to ensure fairness. The current system appears to favour politicians at the expense of other jobholders in the larger public service in terms of salaries, allowances and other job-related privileges. Under no circumstance should sections of the public service receive unfair advantage over others in the same public service. The wrongs that have been perpetuated over nearly past three decades at the blind side of taxpayers must stop now.

[SIGNED]
DR. YAW BAAH
SECRETARY GENERAL
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11TH JULY, 2021, ACCRA.