

STATEMENT BY
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Mr. Chairman, members of the Pest and Insect Infestation technical committee, our donor partners, the media, ladies and gentlemen. I am happy that you have accepted our invitation to come for this important emergency Technical Committee meeting.

For the past few days, there have been reported outbreaks of Army worm in the Ashanti, Brong Ahafo and the Eastern region of Ghana. These outbreaks are having a devastating effect on cash crops like cocoa, food crops and cereals. Even though these outbreaks occur annually, I understand through the media and technical reports that this year's outbreak is unprecedented in recent times as it has affected vast areas (three regions at the same period of time). As such, there is the need to quickly arrest the situation to prevent further outbreak or spreading to other regions. That is why there is the need for this emergency technical committee meeting and media briefing, to recommend measures to deal with this current situation and also to prevent future outbreaks and if possible curb the annual reoccurring

outbreaks. And for the media to know what we are doing, what we intend doing and to report accurately.

Government has a vision of making Ghana self-sufficient in food production through the **“Planting for food and Jobs” project**. For this project to be successful, it is incumbent that we put in place measures to mitigate or if possible prevent these and other infestations in the country. We therefore, owe it as a duty as technical men and women to make the appropriate recommendations to make this possible.

Currently, Regional Officers including local district NADMO, MOFA and the media have already paid visits to the affected farms and families and are assisting with the needed relief and also supplying them with some agro-chemicals for spraying. COCOBOD has also assisted with some quantity of insecticides, but all these are woefully inadequate due the vast areas affected.

In Ashanti region alone, an estimated 6,400 hectares of cocoa plantations belonging to about 4,000 famers in the Sekyere Central, Ejusi-Juabeng and Mampong Municipality have been seriously affected by the outbreak. The infestations have also been identified in fifteen (15) other districts and municipalities in the region, affecting food crops. In Brong Ahafo and Eastern regions, an estimated 787.20 and 6 hectares of farmland are affected respectively.

We are expecting two teams of Technical committee members to pay a working visit to the affected communities later this

week for their technical assessment of the situation and make appropriate recommendations. Government on its part is making arrangements to buy the needed agro-chemicals to spray the affected farms **free of charge** for the farmers in an environmentally friendly manner.

Also, based on the recommendations of this meeting and the subsequent field assessment visit, we are hoping that we will find a lasting solution to these outbreaks to improve on food security in the country.

I therefore thank you all very much for coming and I wish you a fruitful deliberations.



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