

**ADDRESS DELIVERED BY MR. CLEMENT K. BOTWE, THE PRESIDENT OF THE
ASSOCIATION OF HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATORS, GHANA, AT THE
2008 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION, HELD AT EUSBETT
HOTEL, SUNYANI, ON 13TH NOVEMBER, 2008.**

*Nana Chairman
Hon. Regional Minister,
Hon MCE-Sunyani Municipal Assembly
Director General Ghana Health Service,
Brong Ahafo
Regional Director of Health Service
Representatives of Professional Associations
Representatives the Media Houses,
Colleagues
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Almost a year ago at the ultra-modern Capital View Hotel in Koforidua, the mantle of leadership of our great association fell on the shoulders of a new team led by my good self. Permit me at this juncture to reiterate the sincerest appreciation of my team to you for the confidence reposed in us. By the grace of God we have gone through yet another year successfully without any adverse report about members of the association. I wish therefore to commend all members for their roles in moving health care delivery in the country forward.

It is heartwarming, Nana Chairman, that we have been able to assemble here at an Annual General Conference and Continuing Professional Education session under the theme” The Challenging Phase of Health Delivery in Ghana: Human Resource Issues”, review our performances of the past year, make suggestions to help shape policies of the Ministry of Health and strategically position ourselves to confront the challenges in the coming year. On behalf of the National Executive Committee of the association I welcome you all to this meeting.

Nana Chairman, the year under review presented some challenges (or a lot of opportunities for leadership to grow and mature disguised as problems), while some strides were made with respect to our corporate image. We would like to commend the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Ghana Health Service (GHS) and for that matter the government for the support it continues to offer health staff including members of the association.

There has been improvement in the salaries and conditions of service for health staff, though there are few problems; the ministry continues to support post-basic, in-service and further training of which our members continue to benefit; there have been increases in numbers and improvement in infrastructure in health training institutions to turn out more health professionals; provision of personal cars on hire purchase basis to health staff etc.

We also wish to commend the Ministry/GHS, CHAG and the Quasi-government institutions for the support they continue to give to the association for its AGMs by releasing and sponsoring Health Service Administrators (HSAs) to these conferences.

Nana Chairman, while we commend Ministry for the aforementioned achievements, we will like to share some concerns.

The MoH has always acknowledged the critical, important and strategic role the HSA plays in health care delivery. It is ironical, however, that this acknowledgement does not translate into the appointment, remuneration and general conditions of service of the HSA.

The proposed Single Spine Salary Structure to be implemented possibly from next year, for instance, has placed the HSA lower in comparison with the other analogous professional grouping in the health sector with whom we have always progressed, with the reason that we are non-clinical staff.

The relativity and equivalencies salary structure in the health sector has been distorted and we are so demoralized. The Consultant who did the work has stated in an answer to our enquiries that she arrived at that decision based on materials received from the Human Resource Division of the Ghana health Service.

We have already questioned the authenticity of this statement, since we are aware that when the health sector job evaluation was done, administrators were placed within the same category of bands with the other health professionals who have now been raised higher under the single spine.

The impression among some people, Nana Chairman, is that the position of the Health Service Administrator is a mere administrative position and that anybody with a degree can perform that function. For the avoidance of any doubt the Health Service Administrator is a cadre of staff purposely trained for the health service. The specialized nature of their work differentiates them from the others.

We therefore urge the Ministry to correct this anomaly soonest to ensure that the HSA is placed with analogous staff who are on the same scale in the health salary structure and on the GUSS previously.

There is long delay in the appointment of newly qualified HSAs. There are some colleagues who have completed their housemanship for two to three years but have not been officially appointed. The reason always cited is that there is no financial clearance for them. But we believe the ministry finds it difficult to obtain financial clearance for the appointment of HSAs because the ministry has wrongly designated HSA as not essential staff category in the ministry. We call on the MOH to reconsider its decision and re-classify HSA as an essential staff category in the ministry and recognized as such to facilitate the appointment of newly qualified HSAs. We make this call based on the fact that HSAs are specially and professionally trained

for the health sector. There are inadequate numbers of HSAs to fill all the vacant positions being occupied by non-professional HSAs. We again call on the MOH to appoint more HSAs to fill all the vacant position in health institutions and health administrations.

The association reiterates that the health sector is multi-disciplinary and so requires team work and mutual respect for each team member. When one member of the team thinks erroneously that they are more important than the others and behaves as such, the team disintegrates and health care delivery is affected. The patient suffers as a result. We call on all health professionals to see each other as playing complimentary roles for the benefit of our patients. We therefore want to submit that teamwork and team-building require that equity, and the earlier that is ensured the better it will be for us all.

On the positive side Nana Chairman, it is the pleasure of my team to report that work on the AHSAG Secretariat block which was temporarily halted resumed within the period. Contract for Glazing and burglary proof works has been awarded. The original specification for the main entrance door has been changed from casement to Swing door to be able to contain the amount of human traffic. The project coordinator will brief us fully at the appropriate time.

Other positive strides were also made to seek registration of our Association trademark(Logo), develop unique registration numbers for members, resumed work on the publication of the Association's mouthpiece journal (the Health Service Manager), as well as the revision of the AHSAG Handbook. We also resumed our networking with other associations. We are also pursuing the Group Insurance Plan with the Social Security Insurance Company started during the tenure of my predecessor.

Our gratitude goes to the untiring team that worked around the clock in these areas.

Nana Chairman, permit me to shift attention for a moment to the implementation of the National Health Insurance Scheme, which without any shadow of doubt is the single most important poverty alleviation strategy ever introduced.

AHSAG cannot agree more with His Excellency the President, when he admitted in an address to the recent 50th Annual Conference of the Ghana Medical Association in Accra "the challenge now is how to improve the efficiency of its management so that as coverage and access improve, quality of care, reimbursement of providers and health facilities will also improve accordingly".

As fulcrums around whom the administrative machineries of the various health facilities revolve we will like to propose for consideration that for now the schemes should try and reimburse all providers on submission of their bills between 60-70 percent of the amount involved, as they hold on to the balance against the vetting of the claims. We make this submission cognisant of the fact that the margins of error will not be more than 30-40 percent. The request is to ensure that the facilities are not unduly stretched financially as we are going through presently.

The theme for our Annual General Conference and Continuing Professional Education session, Nana Chairman, is "The Challenging Phase of Health Delivery in Ghana: Human Resource Issues". There is no gainsaying the fact that the driving force behind the realization of the envisioned transformation of Ghana into a middle-income country by the year 2015 is her human resource base, and which as managers is of critical importance.

The lamentation of His Excellency the President of the Republic at the meeting earlier cited over the severe human resource shortage in the health sector that continues to be a constraint to some of the laudable initiatives by his administration should reinforce our collective feeling of a sense of urgency and national responsibility to confront and discuss the problems head-on. Facilitators at this meeting would be leading us to look at some of the challenges including Recruitment and Retention, Labour Regulations and the Safety of the Patient.

It is my considered view that at the end of the session some answers would have been found to the following leading questions:

1. What are the barest desirable numbers and mix of each cadre of health staff that we need as a nation at any given time?
2. What are the desirable ratios of some of the health staff (e.g. medical officers, Nurses) to the populace as a nation)
3. What mechanism/strategies are in place to ensure that we work towards that goal?
4. Are we effectively utilizing the inadequate numbers of the health professionals?
5. How can we fast-track the bureaucratic machineries to reduce in not eliminate the amount of frustration new entrants go through?

In conclusion, Nana Chairman it is my firm belief that if we address this critical issue dispassionately, it will be the best recipe for the success story.

We are grateful to all who have contributed in diverse ways to make this meeting a reality. To the management of Eusbett Hotel, we say ayekoo for hosting us.

Thank you Nana Chairman, Hon Minister

