**UPPER WEST IN OUR HEARTS**

**(THE UPPER WEST AGENDA; TRUTH, HONESTY, COMMITMENT)**

 **P. O BOX 562,WA. TEL:0392020599**

**24th April, 2020**

**RE: INVESTIGATE DR OSEI KUFFUOR AFREH, THE UPPER WEST REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF HEALTH SERVICES FOR CSM OUTBREAK, BAD LEADERSHIP AND MISAPPROPRIATION OF FUNDS.**

The attention of the good people of the Upper West Region has been drawn to a lengthy statement circulating on social and traditional media which is supposed to be a press statement authored by the enviable group called “COALITION OF CONCERNED CITIZENS OF UPPER WEST” and under the signature of its convener Mr Issahaque Suleman. Ordinarily, we should have been supporting this group in this journey like I have done in previous other endeavors of the group such as the spirited fight to give autonomy to the Wa Campus of the University for Development Studies which has bore fruits already with the birthing of the D. S DOMBO UNIVERSITY FOR INTEGRATED BUSINESS STUDIES.

Unfortunately, we are unable to do so due to very copious, glaring and convincing reasons. It is a fact that our beloved Upper West Region like the rest of our Motherland Ghana is not in ordinary times owing to the ravaging Covid-19 pandemic which is causing havoc across the globe and threatening not to spare our nation. The case of the Upper West Region is compounded by the increasing number of CSM cases with a death toll of over forty. This is a clear manifestation that the region more than anything else needs an all-hands-on-deck approach to help us navigate our way into safety.

It is therefore mind-boggling and incredible that a group that is supposed to primarily focus on championing the course of the Upper West Region through the force and mental strength of the youth would resort to the use of the dreaded divide and rule tactics at this critical moment of the life of the average, vulnerable Upper West Citizen. We cannot fathom the rationale behind this infamous decision of our colleagues. The youth must serve as the binding force capable of supporting officialdom to lead for us all to enjoy the needed goodies.

It is important to state that the statement authored by the group was based on pure conjecture, factual inaccuracies and outright lies geared towards denting the image of Dr OSEI KUFFOUR AFREH and to cover up for the shortcomings of some other individuals and institutions. Dr Afreh as we all know is a professional who is guided by ethics and a code of conduct. He is not a law unto himself and although he is the Regional Director of Health Services, he is answerable to several structural arrangements established by the command structure within the Ghana Health Service. What has been the complaints or queries from these structures on the so-called allegations made against Dr Afreh by the group? Where did they obtain their so-called facts and evidence from?

**Amateurish Leadership**

Is it not laughable and untenable that a professionally trained and certified medical doctor in the caliber of Dr Afreh would be referred to as amateurish? A man who has gone through the mill and rises through the ranks from positions such as Medical Superintendent, Medical Director, District Director, National President District Directors Group, Deputy Regional Director of Health and now to his current position of a Regional Director of Health Services be termed an amateur? Surely, he could be something else but not an amateur in terms of health administration and health care delivery. The group should come again with something convincing.

**Recruitment At The New Regional Hospital**

Did the group say that Dr Afreh manipulated the process of recruiting staff for the Upper West Regional Hospital? How we wish they had not said this. Are they suggesting that the Ghana Health Service and the Ministry of Health have no standard recruitment procedures and qualifications criteria for vacancies in a facility like the Upper West Regional Hospital which occupies a very lofty and enviable position in the health care delivery chain? Even the lay man knows that the process involves applications and interviews amongst others through the Public Services Commission. We are not sure, Dr Afreh had unfettered powers to unduly influence the various interview panels. So how could he be accused of packing the Hospital with his preferred staff when the interview panels have not stated so at any point in time? If there is anything to the contrary in the possession of the group, we need to know as well.

**Disrespect For The Hon Regional Minister**

In their attempt to cause disaffection and friction between the Hon Regional Minister and the Regional Director of Health Services, the group alleged that the Director doesn’t respect the Hon Regional Minister. And the basis for this assertion is lame, weak unthinkable. That Dr Afreh held an engagement with the media to brief the public about something that had already been done by the Hon Regional Minister. Are my friends not following the nationwide fight against covid-19 and seeing for themselves the standard practices being employed? As the technocrat and professional that he is, Dr Afreh is enjoined to elaborate, explain and expatiate the salient technical details of collective fight of the corona virus after the political head has given a raw summary of it. That is why Hon Kojo Oppong Nkrumah brings all the technocrats to his periodic press briefings. This cannot amount to a disrespect of the Hon Regional Minister. Why would the Hon Regional Minister not query Dr Osei Kuffuor Afreh for his conduct if the Hon Regional Minister felt disrespected? Let’s not try to make a mole out of an anthill. This isn’t the time to distract any of these two people who are a big part of the regions fight against covid-19 and CSM.

**Poor Handling of Covid-19**

This allegation can best be described as much-ado-about-nothing. How could anybody with a fair knowledge and insight about the Covid-19 situation nationwide, single out one man for blame in the Upper West Region for our own case of covid-19? Dr Osei Kuffour Afreh visits the COVID-19 cases, in the hospitals and homes and he has even been seen carryibg samples of suspected cases so they can be tested. Can the group draw any lines of difference among and between all the regions that have so far reported confirmed cases of covid-19? What is being done differently in the other regions but is not done in the Upper West Region? Our country’s handling of covid-19 has been up for debate right from the day we recorded our first positive case up to today. The debate is raging between those who are satisfied with the measures put in place and those who are still skeptical about the measures. But why accuse a hardworking and selfless man of usurping the powers of the Hon Regional Minister for briefing the press because he does not have the power and turn around to accuse of being the one not handling the situation well!? The same situation that you say he doesn’t have power over? Or there is something we are not getting?

**Blame For CSM Upsurge**

We equally enjoined to remind our colleagues that no one man can take the blame for the upsurge in CSM cases as they are seeking to do. Which one of them doesn’t know what CSM is? Which one of them doesn’t know that it is an annual ritual? Of course, the infection figures have changed but that cannot be hang on the neck of the Regional Director of Health Services. It is on record that the Regional Director and his team of medical experts have been able to prove that the meningitis strains have changed and cannot be vaccinated against anymore in this interim window. So there is technically speaking, no vaccine against it. So the nurses and doctors are compelled to manage reported cases in order for patients to recover. This discovery is no mean achievement for Dr Osei Kuffuor Afreh and his team of doctors. Dr Afreh who is good at bringing resources to thr Upper West Region, has been able to mobilise 7500 Ceftriazone to be used to treat Meningitis cases. It has thrust him into national glory as he is being sought after to bring his expertise to the Ghana Health Service Headquarters in Accra. This cannot be a man who does not know what he is about or can be described as an amateur.

**Retired Chief Pharmacist Still At Post**

On the matter of the retired Chief Pharmacist still being at post, i am reliably informed that thr senior officer handed over his position on 28th February 2020. However it is no news at all. Who does not know that professionals with some specialized training and expert knowledge are entitled to contracts upon attaining the compulsory retirement age? Once he has done nothing untoward in his line of duty, his compulsory retirement cannot be any tangible basis to call for the Regional Director of Health Services to be investigated. At least we know that Dr Edward Gyader stayed on after his compulsory retirement because his expertise was needed. Let’s hasten slowly in our attempt bring sanity into the system or else we may up denying our dear region of some valuable services. The position of Chief Pharmacist obviously requires some criteria to be met. Once that criteria is met and the position is vacant, it would be filled appropriately. Why must Dr Osei Kuffuor Afreh take the blame for this one too? Give a dog a bad name in order to hang it.

**Financial Mismanagement**

It is a fact that public officers must be held accountable for their actions or inactions in their line of duty and Dr Afreh is no exception. Fortunately, Ghana has over the years taken stringent steps to protect the national kitty from the long hands of unscrupulous public officers such as the Internal Audit Agency Act and the Public Financial Management Act. With these acts in place, no public official can just dip his or her hands into public purse and go unpunished. If not now but ultimately. What has been the audit findings concerning the Ghana Health Service under the tenure of Dr Afreh? Has he been indicted or cited for wrongdoing by any audit report or special investigation report? Where is the evidence upon which all these allegations are being culled from? Let the evidence play out for the ordinary citizens of Upper West to know the facts. The number of cheques signed in a day cannot just be the basis to accuse someone of financial mismanagement even though there is proof that the cheques went through the standard established financial management procedures.

If management takes a decision to turn a residential workshop into a non-residential workshop due to very tangible reasons captured in the workshop report with all financial details, how could you accuse the Regional Director of financial mismanagement? No donor agency gives out money for projects and goes to sleep. It is far more easier to mismanage Government of Ghana funds than donor funds. But it is within the right of the group to go ahead and petition whoever they want to petition on their allegations.

There is no gain repeating that our dear Ghana is in extraordinary and challenging times and the Upper West Region is not spared. There must be a conscious effort to rally the citizenry around the collective fight against the twin pandemic of Covid-19 and CSM. This is the time the region needs the support and sacrifices of its youth to educate and sensitize the public to cut down on the possibility of infections of the two diseases. This is not the time to distract the focus and attention of officialdom as well as the citizenry. It is therefore most unfortunate that our friends from “COALITION OF CONCERNED CITIZENS OF UPPER WEST” stooped so low to engage in this kind of needless media escapade drawing disdain to themselves. We implore the group to quickly abandon this path of destruction and assume the path of development and progress for which the group is famed for. Dr Osei Kuffuor Afreh may leave the region one day just like every other Regional Director of Health Services. But he would leave without a baggage of concocted allegations intended to smear his image and bring his hard earned reputation into disrepute.

…. Signed…

Abu Issah

(Secretary)

… signed….

Mahama Abass.

(P. R. O)