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PRESS RELEASE

July 4, 2019

Proposed construction of a new chamber for Parliament, a misplaced priority – CDD-Ghana

The Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) has taken due notice of media reports, including reported statements from the leadership of Parliament, to the effect that the Parliamentary Service is planning to construct a new 450-seat chamber for the House. CDD-Ghana acknowledges the important constitutional tasks and roles assigned to Parliament and believes, with many Ghanaians, that the Parliament of Ghana must be adequately empowered and resourced to discharge its responsibilities and roles effectively.

In this regard, CDD-Ghana notes with satisfaction, efforts made by successive governments of the Fourth Republic, despite the country's perennial fiscal challenges, to meet the essential physical needs of the House and its members. Notably, over the past two decades, Parliament has benefited from (i) the construction of an administrative block that includes offices and meeting rooms for its Select and Standing Committees; (ii) the completion of the State House Tower Block, popularly known as 'Job 600', which has provided office accommodation and meeting rooms for Parliamentarians; and (iii) the expansion and refurbishing of the legislative chamber to accommodate the increase in the number of Parliamentarians following the creation of new constituencies in the 2012 elections. All things considered, CDD-Ghana believes Parliament is relatively well resourced at the present time and for the foreseeable future, in terms of its physical needs. What Parliament lacks but needs to make a credible part of a system of constitutional checks and balances and a true policymaking partner to the Executive are not mere fancy brick-and-mortar; but to assume its proper place in our governmental system through appropriate institutional powers, prerogatives, and self-governing rules that would enable Members to initiate legislative solutions to public problems and exercise meaningful oversight of the Executive and public administration.

Consequently, CDD-Ghana does not believe that construction of a new and expanded chamber at an estimated cost of \$200m is reasonable or justifiable at the present time. In the face of the numerous basic needs facing communities across the country, including a lack of safe and decent physical structures, facilities, and fixtures for many basic schools, a chronic shortage of beds in public hospitals, the deplorable condition of many of the country's roads, and sundry other basic infrastructural and material deprivations facing various populations of citizens, construction of a new edifice for Parliament is a clear case of misplaced priorities. Moreover, it paints the picture of

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a political class that is either out of touch with the people's everyday needs and struggles or is more concerned with providing for their own material comforts than with the existential needs of citizens and deprived communities across the country. CDD-Ghana is of the view that, Government's "Ghana Beyond Aid" vision would suffer a loss of credibility as long as scarce public resources continue to be spent on self-serving projects of the political class at the expense of the persistent and widespread developmental challenges and needs of the people.

CDD-Ghana hereby calls on Parliament, the Parliamentary Service and the Government to heed justifiable citizen opposition to this proposed project and halt on-going preparations to construct a new legislative chamber. We risk making our democracy unpopular when we make it needlessly expensive.

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