SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE MUNICIPAL CHIEF EXECUTIVE, HON. DR. ANTHONY AVORGBEDOR DURING THE CELEBRATION OF THE 38TH FARMERS' DAY AT DZODZE – PENYI ON 2ND DECEMBER, 2022

Let me start by recognizing the presence of:

- **Our Chairman – Torgbuiga Dadzie V;**
- **Our Revered Chiefs and Elders Present;**
- **Hon. Presiding Member and Assembly Members Present;**
- **Our Gallant Farmers;**
- **Heads of Departments and Units Present;**
- **The Media;**
- **Distinguished Invited Guests and Participants;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

Good morning!

I am very happy to be part of the Ketu North Municipality version of the 38th edition of our National Farmers' Day celebration being held here in Penyi. My happiness stems from the fact that the day accords us a unique opportunity to celebrate our gallant farmers who continue to work harder to put food on our tables. We say thank you and may the good Lord continue to strengthen your bones.

Torgbuiga Chairman, kindly permit me to seize the opportunity to extend the sincere greetings, congratulations and well wishes of H.E President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo – Addo to our gallant farmers on this National Day Celebration. It is indeed gratifying to celebrate this day to show gratitude to our farmers whose toil and sacrifices have kept our economy growing from strength to strength and keeping food on our tables. If you could eat at least a meal in a day, then, thank the farmer.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, the theme for this year's celebration is ***"Accelerating agricultural development through value addition"***. I see the theme to be very appropriate resonate with the times and refreshing. It is because the concept of value addition in agriculture presents a very good opportunity for additional revenue generation, job creation, foreign exchange earnings and effective post-harvest management.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as a country, we have over the years relied on the export of traditional commodities such as gold, cocoa, timber, bauxite among others which have not yielded us the expected revenue to expedite our developmental agenda.

We need to begin to re-look at other potentials and non – traditional commodities such as oil palm, cashew, cassava, fish and fishery products, coconut and rice processing among others that we have competitive advantage in, as a Region and add the required value to meet acceptable standards for export in order to shore – up our foreign currency for development.

This is the surest way we can change the structure of our economy from raw material exportation and import dependency to production and export – driven economy that create the needed jobs and prosperity for all Ghanaians. The economic challenges we are facing is simply as a result of the structure of our economy and the time to have it changed is now.

Torgbuiga Chairman, as a Municipality, we have realized the need to complement government's effort in its structural transformational agenda. Hence, the Assembly has collaborated with the Ghana Export

Promotion Authority (GEPA) with funding from the Ghana-EXIM Bank to identified cassava as a major agricultural product for value addition.

The project, when started, is expected to boost our local economy and create numerous jobs along the cassava production value chain. The project will be executed within the framework of National Export Development Strategy (NEDS) and Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) to boost the country's export from USD 2.8 billion to USD 25.3 billion by the end of 2029.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the contribution of agriculture to the sustenance of our economy and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) cannot be overemphasised. It is in this regard that government continues to invest heavily in the sector and facilitate the creation of the required enabling environment that promotes increased productivity through its flagship programmes of Planting for Food and Jobs (PFJ), Planting for Export and Rural Development (PERD), One-District-One Factory (1D1F) among other policies aimed at ensuring food security and reducing hunger and poverty by the end of 2030.

To ensure increased yield in rice production, the government is collaborating with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to rehabilitate the Weta Irrigation Scheme under the Food System Resilient Project which is aimed at contributing to enhancing the capacity of vulnerable households, families, communities and food systems within the country in order to withstand and respond effectively to shocks as well as to recover and adapt in a sustainable manner.

Government is also partnering with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to implement an emergency support to rural livelihoods and food systems exposed to COVID-19 with the overall goal of contributing to protecting the livelihoods, incomes and resilience of

target groups from the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic and from climate change. The support is expected to provide employment to 6,000 women and youth across the country and improve the nutritional quality of the targeted households in the municipality in the poultry value chains.

Distinguished Guest, Ladies and Gentlemen, my address will be inconclusive without touching on climate change. The phenomenon of climate change has become global but its impacts are varied and mainly detrimental to the largely tropical dry and semi-dry areas as in the sub-Sahara Africa that is most vulnerable, with negative developmental consequences for the continent as a whole and its people.

As a country we have not been spared of the negative effects of the issue of climate change ranging from perennial rise in our sea levels that often displace the people living along the coastal and fishing communities to perennial drought especially across the northern part of the country.

The negative impact of climate change on food production and sufficiency cannot be glossed over. The majority of our population are living in the rural areas and mostly depend largely on agriculture for their livelihoods. This livelihood option also depends on climate-sensitive factors such as favourable weather conditions, however, the rising weather temperatures and changes in rainfall patterns have often directly affected agricultural productivity and human security.

In this regard, I entreat all of you farmers to continue to engage closely with the Agricultural Extension Agents within your communities and find creative and innovative ways of dealing with this global menace of climate change in order to improve agricultural productivity and food sufficiency for our growing population. Do not engage in farming practises that are detrimental to the environment. Rather, we should

adopt and adapt to new and sustainable farming methods and techniques.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as we mark World AIDS Day, today, it affords us a unique opportunity to raise awareness about HIV-AIDS. We have a once in a life time opportunity to end the HIV pandemic for good but we must also continue fighting the stigma still experienced by people living with HIV.

I entreat you all to get screened and tested in order to receive early treatment. Let us work together to end HIV now! The Municipality is experiencing increasing rates of HIV/AIDS infections across all age brackets. The reality is that, people have long forgotten about risky lifestyles that predispose us to contracting the disease. Let us rethink our attitude and lifestyles so we could end this pandemic once and for all.

At this juncture, ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to commend the 38th Farmers' Day Planning Committee for the successful organisation of this year's celebration. I wish to also commend our development partners: Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), World Bank, Ghana-EXIM Bank, and Ghana Export Promotion Authority (GEPA) for their immense support towards agricultural development in the municipality.

Finally, I wish to congratulate all award winners for the great feat you have chalked. For those who were not fortunate to have won an award this year, I say better luck next time.

On this note, I wish you all a happy 38th Farmers' Day Celebration and a Merry Christmas and Prosperous New Year in advance.

Thank you for your attention!