

## **SPEECH BY THE CHAIR FOR THIS OCCASION AND BOARD CHAIR OF THE MENTAL HEALTH AUTHORITY (MHA)**

I extend warm greetings from the Mental Health Authority Board. It is really a pleasure and honor to stand before you today, entrusted to Chair this momentous event—the inaugural launch of our annual May Mental Health Awareness Month campaign, aptly named '**Purple Month**'.

Thank you all for gracing the occasion and for the opportunity to shed light on a cause that is not just urgent but deeply personal: mental health awareness in Ghana.

Today marks a crucial juncture in our nation's journey, where the well-being of our citizens transcends individual concerns to become a collective national priority. Mental health, long shrouded in stigma and silence, is finally stepping into the limelight of the public discourse. It is demanding the attention and care it rightfully deserves. It is against this that we introduce a groundbreaking initiative, the '**Purple Month**', aimed at amplifying and sustaining the collective voice to advocate for mental wellness across the country.

My heartfelt commendation goes to all stakeholders who have collaborated with the Authority to make this vision a reality.

This year, our campaign embraces the theme "**Movement: Moving More for Our Mental Health**". It is a rallying cry that underscores the profound link between physical activity and mental well-being. Movement, in essence, signifies not just physical motion but also progress, transformation and growth.

In the realm of mental health, movement symbolizes our shared journey towards understanding, acceptance and support for those grappling with mental health challenges.

Countless studies have underscored the transformative power of regular physical activity on our mood, stress levels and even the structure of our brains. It serves as a natural yet potent antidote to depression, anxiety, and stress.

Personally, I have found solace in movement—morning exercise on my recumbent bike to clear my mind or yoga to unwind after a hectic day, others like to walk. These simple acts of movement have been steadfast companions in my own mental health journey.

As we kick off **Purple Month** in May each year, it also serves as an occasion to reflect on the remarkable strides made in the field of mental health in our country over the years.

The enactment of the Mental Health Act, 2012 (Act 846), which gave birth to the Mental Health Authority, was groundbreaking. It marked a pivotal moment that reflected the government and stakeholders' commitment to prioritize mental well-being.

The Authority has tirelessly laid the groundwork for a comprehensive mental healthcare system. The mental health law serves as a beacon of achievement. It guarantees the human rights of individuals with mental health conditions and ensures they receive the care they deserve in accordance with international best practices. It also acknowledges spiritual and herbal treatment for mental disorder.

However, amidst our achievements, we must not overlook the myriad challenges that lie ahead—the lack of sustainable financing for mental health promotion and insufficient human resources. The encroachment on land and infrastructural challenges faced by our mental health facilities and the brain drain of our mental health personnel. The persistent human rights abuses and discrimination faced by individuals who have mental health disorders are also a problem.

As an Authority, we remain steadfast in our commitment to address these challenges head-on. We constantly seek sustainable financing for community mental healthcare. We need to amplify the voices and safeguard the rights of those who live with mental health challenges. We must invest in inclusive programs, policies, and legislation and currently the Board is engaged in post-legislative scrutiny of the Mental Health Act to ensure that it continues to be responsive to the mental health challenges of the county, ten years post enactment.

Together, we have the power to build a Ghana where mental health is not an afterthought but a cornerstone of our health system. A Ghana where every individual, regardless of his or her mental health status, is treated with dignity and respect.

To close, I urge each of us to find our own rhythm in movement. It does not have to be a marathon—sometimes, it's a dance in your living room or choosing to walk a few extra steps. Let's move more, in whatever way brings us joy and peace to link physical activity and mental well-being.

As we embark on this campaign, let us move together—not just for our physical health but for our mental health. Let's create a wave of movement that propels us toward a future where mental well-being is not just a possibility but a reality for all. Let us unite in this noble cause, for the health of our people, the strength of our nation, and the future we envision for Ghana. A Ghana free of the stigma of mental health as we appreciate that mental disorder does not discriminate and any of us in this room can have a mental health challenge.

Thank you.