

Address By The Chief Executive Of The Mental Health Authority On The Inaugural May Mental Health Awareness Month Media Launch At The NMC Rev. Veronica Darko Conference Room, Shiashie. 29th April 2024.

Madam Chairperson, Madam Estelle Appiah; HRH Lady Julia;; Ladies and gentlemen of the press; esteemed guests, it is with great pleasure and profound purpose that I stand before you today as we embark on a transformative journey in mental health awareness. It is particularly exciting for me to see an idea which was birthed some five years ago, while I was still the Hospital Director of Accra Psychiatric Hospital, unfold right before my eyes.

Today marks the launch of a ground-breaking initiative—the inaugural Mental Health Awareness Month, fondly known as **Purple Month**—an endeavour that signifies a significant stride towards prioritizing mental well-being in our beloved nation, Ghana.

Under the auspices of the Ministry of Health and with the support of a consortium of dedicated stakeholders, including the World Health Organization, Ghana Health Service, Christian Health Association of Ghana, the Psychiatric Association of Ghana, the Ghana Psychological Association, other agencies of the health sector and many other organizations, the Mental Health Authority of Ghana has taken a bold step forward by designating May as **Purple Month** – a month-long campaign dedicated to raising awareness about mental health. This initiative aligns Ghana with other global leaders in mental health advocacy, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, who also observe May for similar purposes.

This decision to extend our focus beyond the traditional observance of World Mental Health Day on October 10th underscores our commitment to addressing the multifaceted issues surrounding mental health. As has already been iterated in our earlier communication on May as an awareness creation month, *"A single day, or even a week, is not enough to address the complex issues surrounding mental health. By expanding our focus to the entire month, we can make a more substantial impact."*

Madam Chair, HRH Lady Julia, ladies and gentlemen, the Mental Health Authority's choice of May as **Purple Month** is strategic, aiming to overcome previous challenges associated with October's overlapping observance of an equally important healthcare

condition, the Breast Cancer Awareness Month, which often diluted the spotlight on mental health issues. By shifting our focus to May, we maximize the impact of our awareness campaign, ensuring that mental health receives the attention it deserves. The Authority will however continue to observe the 10th of October's Mental Health Day and further devote more effort to collaborative projects supporting the October National Breast Awareness campaign, with a focus on mental health implications.

Inspired by the successful model of the Mental Health America's initiative, started in 1949, Ghana's **Purple Month** aims to boost mental health awareness, combat stigma, and celebrate recovery. The significance of the colour purple, emblematic of the Mental Health Authority since its inception, cannot be overstated. It symbolizes a blend of the calming stability of blue with the vibrant energy of red, reflecting our commitment to providing hope and support to those affected by mental health conditions.

Madam Chair, HRH Lady Julia, this year's theme, "***Movement: Moving More for Our Mental Health***," underscores the profound connection between physical activity and mental well-being. "*The campaign aims to increase awareness about the significance of mental health and the beneficial impact of physical activity on psychological well-being.*" Incorporating regular physical activity into one's routine is not only beneficial for physical health but also crucial for maintaining optimal mental well-being. Indeed, mental health awareness is paramount for the holistic well-being of individuals across various dimensions of life. Yet, stigma and lack of understanding often hinder individuals from seeking the necessary help, diminishing their quality of life and productivity. In the long term, this does not only affect the individuals and their families, but our communities and the nation as a whole. **Purple Month** seeks to change that narrative by advancing mental health treatment and behavioural health education.

Throughout Purple Month, the Mental Health Authority will focus on several key outcomes including enhancing understanding of mental health symptoms, diminishing stigma surrounding mental health, promoting mental health knowledge, and fostering mental well-being as a proactive approach to emotional health and cognitive agility.

I urge each of you to engage wholeheartedly in the **Purple Month** activities, including media campaigns, local events, educational programs, and social media initiatives. Let us embrace **Purple Month** as an opportunity to foster a supportive environment

where mental well-being is prioritized, and every individual has the opportunity to thrive.

Madam Chair, HRH Lady Julia, before I bring my address to a close, I would like to acknowledge these wonderful institutions who have in many ways, supported us in successfully pulling together this **Purple Month** celebration; World Health Organization, Ghana Somubi Dwumadie, Alliance Media, EOCO, the Church of Pentecost, UGMC, Databank Foundation, Life Healthcare Clinic (Accra Mall). Indeed, you have been wonderful collaborators and the mental health fraternity applauds you. Ladies and gentlemen, I implore you to be on the lookout for **Purple Month** messages on LED screens across the city, courtesy Alliance Media. May I also take this opportunity to once again acknowledge the MHA's main funder, FCDO, whose support continues to sustain the Authority's operations.

Finally, Madam Chair, HRH Lady Julia, Ladies and Gentlemen, as we embark on this transformative journey, let us prioritize the mental well-being of the citizens of our nation and let us inspire each other with our commitment to mental wellness.

Please take some time to peruse our specially arranged activities for the month and do well to participate in as many of them to make this maiden **Purple Month** celebration a success and bring hope to our many brothers and sisters who in one way or the other have been plagued by some mental health condition.

Week 1: Maternal Mental Health Week to raise awareness on the importance of maternal mental health and its numerous impact on family and community.

Week 2: School Mental Health Awareness Programs to raise awareness among the youth on the importance of mental health education in their general development.

Week 3: Community Engagements with special focus on the Eastern Region

Week 4: Engagements with Corporate Organizations for Workplace Mental Health Awareness creation.

Week 5: Health Walk and rounding up of Purple Month Activities.

Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to the collective impact we will make during **Purple Month** and beyond.