

PRESS RELEASE

GHANA INTEGRITY INITIATIVE CALLS FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF THE ADMINISTRATOR GENERAL

June 3, 2015 - The Ghana Integrity Initiative, (GII), would like to draw the attention of the President to the crucial need to immediately appoint an Administrator-General to replace the late Mr. Joseph Donkor Issachar, who previously held that position but unfortunately passed away in September 2014. Since that time, the position of Administrator-General has been left vacant. However, there is an urgent need to appoint a new one in order for the person to have adequate time to prepare for the transition process after the 2016 elections. Irrespective of which ever political party wins power in 2016, there will still be a transition process. An existing government will leave office and a new government will assume office, even if the individuals are the same people.

In 2012, a transfer of political power was regulated by a legal blueprint, the Presidential Transition Act, 2012 (Act 845). However, the implementation of this legal blueprint faced several challenges and concerns from sections of the society. It is, therefore, necessary to address these challenges by setting up the institution, filling the relevant positions and fine-tuning future political transition processes to enhance the effective implementation of the law. This is definitely an integral part of the good governance that the government keeps promising Ghanaians. It also possesses the potential of closing a chapter in the country's dismal history of democratic transitions marred with several problems, including lack of adequate accountability for state assets.

Past transitions have faced several challenges, including administrative lapses, refusal of outgoing officers to surrender official state assets which often leads to forced evictions and ad hoc seizure of official vehicles from outgoing officers, all of which stem from lack of precedent to guide such transitions. These mistakes resulted in social and political acrimony, tension, ill-feeling, bad blood and intense interparty hostility but most importantly, huge losses to the state. Both academics and politicians have admitted that the situation is not desirable and should not be allowed to repeat itself.

As accountability is the centerpiece of the Presidential Transition Act, the law made provisions for periodic stock-taking and an inventory of executive assets, especially during a transition. This requirement covers state assets in both the official and private residences of senior public

officers, including the President, Vice President and Ministers of State. The Act provides for the submission of handing-over notes covering a broad range of public offices to the Administrator-General not later than 30 days before a Presidential election. This provision was aimed at ensuring good record-keeping so as to provide the new leadership in key government institutions with essential background knowledge to undertake their functions.

The Administrator-General is the Head of the Estates Unit, which, according to its statutory mandate is to:

- a). take and keep an inventory of the assets and properties of the Government which are assets and properties not vested in the Lands Commission established under Article 258 of the Constitution;
- b). Ensure that assets and properties of the Government are maintained in good condition and tenantable repair; and
- c). Ensure that where relevant, the assets and properties of the Government are transferred in good condition and tenantable repair.

Most important of all, the Administrator-General is required to make recommendations to the President in accordance with provisions in the Constitution, for budgetary allocations required in a transition for passing the reins of power from one government to the next one.

However, the Presidential Transitional Act does not empower the Administrator-General to deal with possible breaches, for example, how to deal with public officers who fail to surrender state assets after leaving office, or have damaged or lost state assets. Therefore, the need still remains to address this loophole in the law in order to strengthen the office of the Administrator-General to carry out the statutory duties conferred on that office.

In compliance with the law, the President, His Excellency John Dramani Mahama, appointed Mr. Joseph Donkor Issachar as the Administrator-General of the Presidential Estates Unit. Unfortunately, Issachar passed away in September, 2014, and his position has not yet been filled by anyone. This is unfortunate and a contravention of Act 845. It appears to be a routine attitude by this government and previous ones as well, whenever it comes to filling vacancies in accountability institutions. Key accountability positions are often left vacant for unnecessarily long periods and/or held by Acting Heads. There is always either Executive amnesia that the post needs to be filled or lack of political will to provide a replacement; such dithering damages accountability eventually. GII, therefore, calls for a proactive action from the Executive and the appointment of Mr. Issachar's replacement.

GII further calls on the government to provide adequate and convenient office accommodation, office furniture and equipment as well as the necessary support staff and a budget for the new Administrator General to carry out his/her mandate. This will enable the Administrator-General to effectively manage and maintain the large portfolio of executive assets in a way that will save the country from any losses. This will also promote transparency in the management of state assets and provide a periodic opportunity to evaluate and debate value for money in the management of the executive estate.

Finally, GII wishes to remind the President that the cost of government is a critical public policy issue that reverberates in the minds of many Ghanaians and our past experiences must guide us in how we handle future transitions, to ensure security of state assets and value for money. He, therefore, owes this country a duty to appoint a replacement for the late Joe Issachar.

It took less than a day to swear in a President after the death of President Attah-Mills and should not take a year to appoint an Administrator General as required by law.

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