**OPENING REMARKS DELIVERED BY HONOURABLE VINCENT EKOW ASSAFUAH (MP), DEPUTY MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT, DECENTRALISATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE LAUNCH OF GHANA’S MAIDEN DISTRICT-LEVEL POVERTY MEASURES ON WEDNESDAY 19TH JUNE 2024 AT ALISA HOTEL, ACCRA**

**Colleague Ministers of State**

**Prof. Samuel Kobina Annim, The Government Statistician**

**Dr. Kodjo Mensah-Abrampa, Director-General for the National Development Planning Commission**

**Hon. Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives**

**The Country Director, World Bank**

**The Country Representative, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**

**Other Development Partners present**

**Representatives of Professional Institutions**

**The Academia**

**Distinguished Invited Guests**

**Our Friends from the Media**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

1. Good morning and thank you for the invitation to be the Chairman of this very important event to launch the maiden Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) for 261 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs).The Ministry of Local Government, Decentralisation and Rural Development (MLGDRD) recognizes the significance of this Platform to engage you and the citizenry of poverty from multidimensional perspective than relying on income levels which has been the yardstick for measuring incidence of poverty over the years.
2. I am also very excited to know that this discourse will stimulate increased interest and dialogue on exploring various ways to align microdata, statistics and policy.
3. You will all agree with me that poverty reduction and its eventual eradication remains the central focus of the government, as the menace is an outcome of diverse, connected and hierarchical social, psychological, economic, health, political and environmental challenges. Its drivers are not only multifaceted, it eradication requires coordinated and sustained multi-sectoral approaches and interventions.
4. In the first decade of the 21st century, many countries, including Ghana, made significant strides toward Goal 1 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), i.e. eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. Strategies like promoting economic growth, improving education and healthcare, and enhancing social protection led to substantial reductions in global poverty rates.
5. However, recent global crises, especially the COVID-19 pandemic, severely impacted these gains. The pandemic caused economic disruptions, GDP contractions, increased unemployment, and eroded the gains made in poverty reduction. Lockdowns and restrictions led to closure of businesses, supply chain disruptions, and a decline in economic activities, pushing millions back into poverty and worsening food insecurity.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. Despite these setbacks, the economy has shown strong signs of recovery in the past couple of years, with positive GDP growth rates and lower inflation rates in many regions, indicating a promising rebound. The manifestations of pro-poor GDP growth rates hinge on the distribution of growth at the sub-national level, in this case, across all the 261 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs).
2. Evidence made available to me suggests that based on our last Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS7) in 2017-18, every one percent growth in GDP translated into only a 0.07% reduction in poverty rate between 2013 and 2017. This, I must say, is revealing.
3. According to the Multi-Dimensional Poverty Report issued by the Ghana Statistical Service in June 2020, which was based on the GLSS 7, our multidimensional poverty was 45.6%. I am happy to note that, as result of pragmatic policies and interventions, the 2021 Population and Housing Census data indicates that our multidimensional poverty is hovering around 24.3%. This clearly demonstrates that the interventions rolled out are making an impact and the incidence of poverty is reducing.
4. However, I wish to wish state that there is more room for improvement and for that matter Reports of this kindly should be welcomed and used to inform policy and programming.
5. The current report reveals that households are experiencing food insecurity and highly likely to be trapped in poverty. Addressing poverty through income support and livelihoods development, therefore, becomes paramount in improving food access and reducing food insecurity.
6. As a result, the continuous collection, analysis and release of such statistics should be prioritised to enable the government to assess in real-time, the nature of its growth and especially whether it affects a significant proportion or all sub-groups of the economy.
7. Indeed, in the context of the on-going development discourses ahead of the 2024 elections, highlighting disaggregated statistical data provides avenue for objective assessment of interventions and serves the basis for accountability and transparency.
8. Indeed, the Government Performance Tracker launched recently demonstrates our commitment to ensure transparency and accountability, to apprise the citizenry on what Government is doing to ameliorate their challenges.
9. According to the Report, it is soothing to note that, Ghana has experienced a continuous reduction in its monetary poverty over 25 years from 51.7 percent in 1991/1992 to 23.4 percent in 2016/2017 as well as a decline in severe poverty from 36.5 percent to 8.2 percent over the same period.

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. We must take cognisance of the fact that, as a nation, to substantially minimise poverty or eliminate it, we must understand the extent and nature of deprivation among different population groups. It is only with this insight, that our efforts towards eradicating poverty and food insecurity will be effective.
2. I am reliably informed that the publication offers timely and relevant disaggregated data to support the implementation and monitoring of the Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework (MTNDPF) 2022-2025, “An Agenda for Jobs: Creating Prosperity and Equal Opportunity for All”, which aims to implement policies and programmes to reduce poverty in all forms and dimensions and minimise inequality among socio-economic groups and regions.
3. The disaggregated statistics will also support the monitoring of progress towards several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including:
4. SDG 1 (end poverty in all its forms everywhere);
5. SDG 3 (ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages);
6. SDG 4 (ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all);
7. SDG 10 (reduce inequality within and among countries); and
8. SDG 11 (make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable).

**Government Statistician, Hon MMDCEs**

1. We at the Ministry of Local Government, Decentralisaton and Rural Development wish to commend the Ghana Statistical Service for producing the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) Reports for all 261 Districts in Ghana. The release of these Reports demonstrates the GSS's dedication to providing comprehensive data for effective evidence-based planning and implementation.
2. For us, we find these Reports very useful as we are mandated to ensure good governance and balanced development of rural and urban areas. I must say that these Reports will serve as a tool for targeting beneficiaries for various programmes and projects. Additionally, these Reports serve as a strategic resource for us, as it provides baseline data to monitor progress of local level development and the trajectory to eliminating all forms of poverty across Ghana.
3. I wish to encourage the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives and Officers to take interest in studying the Reports to guide their developmental approaches at the local level. Indeed, this Report is crucial to achieving your mandate as highlighted in Section 12 of the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936).
4. It is with resources such as these District-level disaggregated Reports that will serve as a blueprint for targeting and development approaches at the local level. It is expected that, in the short, medium and long term, we will experience a reduction in poverty and food insecurity.
5. We also envisage that the data will serve as an impetus for inspiring and informing policymaking and implementation for targeted interventions aimed at minimising and eliminating poverty in all its forms especially at the sub-national level of Ghana.

**Our Friends from the Media, Ladies and gentlemen,**

1. I am delighted to inform you that the targeted users of the reports include the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Planning and Coordination Units (MMDPCUs), Development Partners, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), the Private Sector, Research Institutions, Academia, Religious Organisations, Traditional Authorities and citizenry.
2. I wish to reiterate that, we are convinced that this release will greatly support the work of the 261 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in preparing their Medium-Term Development Plans (MTDPs) as well as execution of these activities to positively impact the good people of Ghana.
3. In this regard, we pledge our full commitment in ensuring that all the MMDAs utilise the published report to the fullest to guide their development approaches.
4. By realising the nuanced relationship between poverty and food insecurity, which these Reports provide, policymakers can design more effective and targeted interventions, alleviating poverty and improving food security for vulnerable households.
5. In the same vein, we entreat all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and all institutions as stipulated in Section 12 (5) of the Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936) to join us in this noble mission and use the report to inform policy and design of programmes and projects.
6. On this auspicious note, I thank you all for your participation and wish you all fruitful deliberations.