

## **Press Statement : Anto-Aboso Electoral Area Explosion**

I have seen with great sadness the impact of the fatal explosion at Anto-Aboso electoral area in the Shama Constituency during the night of September 9, 2023. The people of Anto-Aboso electoral area are peaceful and law-abiding farmers and small-scale entrepreneurs, struggling like most Ghanaians to make a living in these difficult times. The quarry where the incident occurred is apparently a foreign business allegedly operating without the requisite documentation and authorisation. The large explosion which was felt miles away from the community was allegedly caused by an explosion of ammonium nitrate stored on the premises.

We know that five (5) people have lost their lives including three (3) Ghanaians and two (2) expatriates. We also know that other people are injured and unaccounted for. We are also aware that there has been significant damage to personal and community property in the area.

My heart goes out to all the victims and their families. Our first response should be a show of solidarity by Shama. I call on all our institutions – Traditional Authorities, District Assembly, NADMO, religious bodies, and ordinary citizens to step up and be our brothers' and sisters' keepers.

This tragedy however raises issues that require a national response. I know as a former DCE how desperately under-resourced agencies like the Minerals Commission and the Inspectorate of Mines are on the ground. We however need an immediate review of the Anto-Aboso incident and the handling of explosives and other dangerous materials in all quarry sites in Shama. Immediate answers are required.

- a. We must determine how many more casualties this explosion has caused.
- b. We must determine the full damage, for example, to buildings in Anto Aboso and surrounding villages.
- c. We must assume that this tragedy was the result of negligence (personal or corporate) and investigate it. We must hold those responsible accountable. If the company was indeed operating illegally then its directors and management should face criminal liability.
- d. We must above all act to eliminate the risk of similar accidents to the many other communities that host quarries in Shama and nearby districts. Are quarries operating legally? If not, why are they allowed to continue? Are explosives managed safely and in accordance with national regulations? Are these operations regularly inspected and certified? Are our national regulations adequate, fit-for-purpose? Are our agencies properly set up? If we do not have the capacity to resource these agencies, should we be licensing operations?

The Shama Constituency welcomes business – local and foreign. Our youth need jobs and opportunities. But investors must contribute to our planned development. What happened to the implementation of the detailed spatial plan developed when I was the DCE? Local and foreign investors must know and play by the rules. They should not recklessly endanger our citizens as it has happened. We must put in place systems that ensure that investment is not harmful to our people. We need a broader engagement between the Shama Constituency and the increasing number of businesses we host. I will play my part in initiating this engagement.

Signed:

Emelia Arthur

NDC Parliamentary Candidate for 2024 Elections

10<sup>th</sup> September, 2023