

Speech by Mr Martin Quansah, Consular Affairs, Ghana High
Commission - London, delivered at the Annual General Meeting of
Motec Life-UK at Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire.
1" December 2007.

Greetings!

President and members of Motec Life-UK, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, let me first begin by expressing the appreciation of the High Commissioner for the invitation to participate in this afternoon's activity.

Having witnessed this event and listened to various speakers on their experiences in the field in various hospitals in Ghana where your charity has made significant contributions, I feel overawed at the enormity of the task you have set yourselves to. With the huge gap between expectations and resources available in local communities, the dearth of facilities including medical equipment and of training aids, I am amazed at the magnitude of the responsibility you have taken on yourselves.

Through interaction with the President of MOTEC, the Mission was given an insight into the goals and objectives of your charity but never in my wildest dream, did I envisage the level of responsibility you have set yourselves to.

I need to commend you for the well structured organisation you have put in place, which I think stand you in good stead and will help bring in the required levels of assistance with time.

I must say that we, at the Mission have not been able to make appropriate representation of your organisation before (the authorities of state), mainly because we have never participated at your Annual General Meetings until now, to appreciate your level of commitment towards ensuring the establishment of an effective health delivery system in Ghana.

I shall bring this to the attention of the High Commissioner and I can assure you, he will certainly move your agenda forward for you in a very positive way.

The High Commissioner would have wished to be here in view of his unwavering support for your organisation's good work in Ghana. He has asked me to represent him here only because of an urgent official engagement which has taken him outside the UK. He gave me a message; to assure you of his unflinching support for the good causes that your organisation stands for.

The High Commission has held some discussions with the Motec Life-UK via its President, Dr Paul Ofori-Atta. We are by this token, quite conversant with the valuable contribution undertaken by your good selves in complementing the efforts of the Ghana Health Service as Ghana strives to enhance health delivery system across the country, and ensure the fulfilment of one of the major goals of the millennium development goals, set by the United Nations at the turn of the century.

Your charitable working visits to various hospitals in the country and the positive reports emanating there from speak volumes. It is therefore, for me, a welcome opportunity to express on behalf of the Government and people of Ghana a sincere and heartfelt appreciation for your work and contribution to the country's health services delivery system.

Ghana has a developing economy which may still be experiencing hiccups in some areas of national endeavour. There are, in the long list of problem areas the lack or rather shortage of health practitioners, inadequate medical resources to cater for the growing needs of the population and the attendant ills such as inaccessibility to healthcare for a large number of people especially those living in the rural areas.

Studies have shown that while in the West the doctor/patient ratio or number of habitants per doctor could range between 400 to 1,000 patients to a doctor, in Africa it is about tens of thousands per doctor. In parts of Ghana it is 33,000 per doctor. Part of the problem has been put down to the relatively poor conditions of service, lack of resources/equipment and drugs which have contributed to the massive brain drain.

Indeed, Ghanaian doctors left the country in droves to seek greener pastures and better conditions of service at the end of the last decade. By coming together to organise charitable working visits to Ghana, you may indeed be making an effort toward reversing the trend while making invaluable contribution to the country's health delivery system. Your efforts could be saving lives in remote areas where the population would otherwise have no access to good healthcare facility.

While healthcare facilities could be relatively easily accessible in most of our major cities you will find these facilities woefully lacking in villages. This situation could pose major challenge to most of you making your debut into the Ghanaian environment under your (MOTEC's) programme of assistance to Ghanaians.

Even in major cities, facilities may not be of the standards known in the West. For volunteers within MOTEC Life-UK, who may be planning on offering voluntary medical services in Ghana, it may be useful for you to know exactly what is to be expected and what not. This way you may be under no illusions as to what you may have to contend with. I should add that Ghanaians are hospitable and the welcome reserved for you may in the end compensate for the minor frustrations you could possibly encounter.

While Ghanaians may-be happy to receive assistance, they would be even more receptive to your assistance if Motec Life-UK approached the local communities with some tact and diplomacy and I am convinced that you certainly do not lack these virtues.

At the High Commission, we would continue to work with you to facilitate your entry into the country. Our visa procedures have been streamlined and we don't expect you to encounter any problems there. Indeed, everything will be done to assist you with acquiring visas in good time.

As a Consular Officer at the High Commission, my job involves providing assistance to Ghanaians with all sorts of problems including those having health problems.

I have often had to contact UK medical consultants for specialist treatment to Ghanaian patients from Ghana, sponsored by institutions of State. The huge amounts involved in treating patients with cardiac problems, etc. are so overwhelming, that often third parties have to be brought in to arrange appointments, at a fee sometimes.

I have often wondered how the growing co-operation between Motec Life-UK and the High Commission, could be exploited further not only in enhancing your organisation's charitable work in Ghana, but also in putting your services at the disposal of our privately sponsored patients at perhaps minimal cost.

In anticipation of a reinforced level of co-operation between Motec Life-UK and the High Commission, may I at this juncture reiterate the appreciation of the High Commission and indeed of the government and people of Ghana for your invaluable support to the country.

Thank you and God bless.