

SPEECH DELIVERED BY MR. EMMANUEL ANTWI-DARKWA, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, VOLTA RIVER AUTHORITY, AT THE SAFETY AWARENESS DAY CELEBRATION HELD ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2022, AT THE EV CONFERENCE ROOM, ACCRA

MANAGEMENT AND STAFF OF VRA

OUR INVITED GUESTS

MEMBERS OF THE MEDIA

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

I deem it a privilege and an honour to be with you today to participate in this year's Safety Awareness Day being celebrated on a carefully selected theme:

"Improving Our Health and Safety Culture for Our Business Sustainability", and with the slogan: ***"A Safer YOU is a Safer ME"***.

The theme, in my view, is relevant as well as critical because it perfectly aligns with the Authority's strategy of ensuring development in a sustainable manner, especially as it focuses on our Business Sustainability, while the slogan also evokes the popular quote; ***'We are all not safe until everyone is safe.'***

As has been the practice, and in accordance with the Authority's safety policy, the Safety Awareness Day event is observed on the third Thursday of November each year to enhance safety performance and Staff awareness of emerging global safety trends and also specific safety elements as pertain to our

operations. The Authority's Safety Awareness Day is therefore a well-thought-out work culture, intended to promote the safety and well-being of VRA Staff. Indeed, over the years, our strict adherence to safety ethics has become one of the Authority's trademarks.

Having said that, I want to commend the WASACO Coordinators and all other supporting teams for successfully putting together this year's event. The appropriateness of the theme and slogan give further meaning to our commitment to championing excellence and also providing sustainable solutions to the Authority's business.

Ladies and Gentlemen, by providing education and awareness on health, safety and wellbeing issues, it is apparent that the Authority is poised to creating a culture that emphasizes on prevention of unsafe work environment and behaviours for all our stakeholders.

There is a crucial need to actively deepen our occupational health, safety and wellbeing practices to protect our workers and impacted communities. Accordingly, workplace accidents, injuries, and fatalities are antitheses of the impact we seek to deliver.

To sustain these practices, Ladies and Gentlemen, Management has, over the years, gone beyond mere rhetoric and regulatory compliances to pursue

industry best practices in Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) through ISO certifications and benchmarking of OHS performances. Not only is Management providing the needed visible safety leadership but has also signed-off an OHS policy that clearly outlines the OHS objectives of the Authority. Furthermore, Management continuously sets OHS performance targets, provides resources to meet the targets, and consistently monitors and evaluates the OHS performances of the various teams and functions.

Ladies and Gentlemen, beyond these interventions, Management recognises the need to improve the safety culture of the Authority till safety becomes a way of life. It is a known fact that poor safety culture hacks away the corporate reputation of organizations and heightens the potential for occupational accidents and legal suits. In recent years, the concept of building a positive safety culture has gained momentum, particularly in high-risk industries like ours, due to the correlation between workers' attitudes and workplace incidents. Several empirical studies have revealed that about ninety-five per cent of workplace accidents have an element of unsafe behaviour. Poor safety culture can undermine any organization's bottom line and sustainability.

Indeed, beyond its impressive asset portfolio, VRA rides on the collective skills and output of its Staff without whose efforts the Authority's operations would

have been in serious jeopardy. The health, safety, wellbeing, and security of the workforce are, therefore, imperatives for the Authority's short, medium, and long-term competitiveness, profitability and sustainability.

However, these will become mere illusions, if as staff, we do not make conscious efforts to progressively improve in our occupational health and safety behaviours. I am told that the selection of this year's theme was informed essentially by the desire of staff to support Management's efforts to ensure business sustainability in an environmentally-friendly and safe manner.

Promoting a positive safety culture cannot be exchanged for anything else but can only be accomplished by identifying, mitigating, and reviewing hazards associated with occupational health and safety through renewed methodologies and practices. In this vein, while commending the existing risk assessments, routine inspections, and compliance audits, I would like to encourage all levels of leadership in the Authority to deepen adherence to the existing safety work processes.

To conclude, I would like to recommend the various WASACO Coordinators that, commitment should be extended to VRA's third parties and stakeholders, such as our contractors who may not be familiar with our safety requirements.

As Management, we would continue to encourage Staff participation in safety meetings and compliance to the safety policy as important criteria to achieve the Annual Employee key performance objective and our Business Sustainability Plan.

Once again, I ask the WASACO Committees and all and sundry to accept my sincerest gratitude for a job well done.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Mr. Emmanuel Antwi-Darkwa

Chief Executive, VRA