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MEDIA RELEASE

GJA urges media to report responsibly on COVID-19

ACCRA, March 15, 2020 – The Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) makes a passionate appeal to the media to report responsibly on the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and avoid creating any unjustified fear and panic among the populace.

With two cases of the virus recorded in Ghana, the GJA believes the media have a duty to provide citizens with verified, accurate and factual reporting, while avoiding sensationalism that could lead to general panic and fear.

The media must bear in mind that the public rely on us for information to decide on precautionary measures to take in times like these. We cannot, and dare not, fail them.

We advise journalists to use reliable scientific sources in their reportage and avoid speculations, while calling on public authorities and medical institutions to provide timely and accurate information to journalists when they call on them.

Fear-induced vocabulary that could create a state of alarm and which does not correspond to reality should be avoided. Above all, journalists must uphold the privacy of affected people to avoid stigmatization of close relatives.

As World Health Organisation describes COVID-19 as a pandemic, the GJA urges journalists to adhere strictly to the Code of Ethics of the Association, which provides the best antidote for misinformation, fake news and conspiracy theories that are awash on social media.

The GJA reiterates that journalists' responsibility towards the public must take precedence over any other consideration. The media must increase public awareness of the situation through reporting that educates, warns and informs properly on the virus. By so doing, they can be part of the solution.

The GJA further urges journalists to take precautionary measures to stay safe as they work to provide the general public with news and information as required of them.

To the general public, let us continue to follow the basic wellness practices, which include washing of hands with soap under running water for, at least, 20 seconds, avoiding touching of eyes, nose and mouth, avoiding close contact with sick people, and covering of nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing.

In order to ensure success in these precautionary measures, the appropriate authorities must ensure that there is availability of water for hand-washing and litter bins placed at vantage points for easy disposal of tissues used to cover the nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing since the lack of these things may seriously impair the fight against COVID-19.

The GJA commends the government for the stringent health screening measures put in place at the various ports of entry, while applauding it for committing \$100 million to contain the pandemic.

With the co-operation of all, we shall overcome the pandemic.

Linda Asante Agyei
(Vice President)

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