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PRESS RELEASE

Failure to Address Menstrual Hygiene Tax Concerns in Mid-Year Budget Review

The Women's Wing of the Socialist Movement of Ghana as a member of the "Don't Tax My Period" campaign expresses our deep disappointment with the Government's failure, in its Mid-Year Budget Review, to address the taxation of menstrual hygiene products and our demands.

Period poverty is an issue that affects millions of female citizens who face personal embarrassment, social exclusion, and serious health risks - just for being women and for maintaining the capacity to reproduce the next generation of Ghanaians. In the last three months the media has highlighted Ghana's period poverty crisis. There have been other public debates and public education about the matter. Hundreds of Ghanaians have demonstrated and placarded to draw attention to this issue. The Speaker of Parliament and several Parliamentarians have expressed horror at the injustice involved. Despite this, our Minister of Finance did not find it fit to even mention the matter in his Budget Review.

We are disgusted but not perturbed. The NPP "response" has been old-school passive-aggressive politics. First, we are aware that Government has sought to undermine the "Don't Tax My Period" campaign by ignoring its constitutive organizations and leaders and "lobbying" other women to "concede" that our demands, as posed, are beyond government's means. Soon these women will be speaking out. Our response is simple. These women have no mandate from our Campaign. They have no capacity to "compromise" our positions. Their sympathy for Government chauvinism will not halt our campaign of education, publicity, and protest. Our numbers will grow.

Second, we have heard from some NPP member of Parliament repeating the disingenuous mantra that (as a result of its sterling management of the public purse) Ghana cannot afford to address our concerns. (The MP even seems to suggest that we should be grateful that the Minister of Finance has "acknowledged" that the economy has collapsed, and, in our gratitude, we should set women's healthcare demands aside!) This is an arrogant and uninformed position. We would expect a Party spokesperson in Parliament, who respected the women who no doubt are the majority of his constituents and took this matter seriously to come to the floor of the House prepared. We would expect him to show us how much revenue our demands will cost Ghana. We would expect him further to give us his cost comparison: reduced tax revenue from sanitary products on the one hand and increased productivity and lower public healthcare costs on the other.

Third, the same NPP Parliamentarian sought to play the Association of Ghana Industries (AGI) off against our Campaign by pointing to AGI's stated concern that Ghanaian producers should not be competitively disadvantaged by a reduction in taxes paid by foreign manufacturers. For the record, the "Don't Tax My Period" campaign supports Ghanaian entrepreneurs. We do not seek to give an advantage to foreign over local industrialists. **We want the taxes on sanitary products removed to bring down prices in the market. That is all!!** Government should not hide behind AGI. Determining the mix of tax exemptions on finished products and on raw material imports that leaves the position of local producers unharmed or even improved is a technical matter that GRA is capable of managing. Government also has the option of subsidizing local production of sanitary products. Government

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SOCIALIST MOVEMENT OF GHANA (SMG)
WOMEN'S WING

can even invest in local manufacturers' capacity (just as it invested 2 million dollars in Mauritius to acquire shares in a speculative sky-train project in Accra). Our government can even set up district-level factories to produce these products for our citizens. Please do not tell us, citizens, what we can or cannot afford.

We strongly urge the government to reconsider its stance on this issue and act immediately to safeguard our health, our full participation in society, and our dignity.

We remain open to dialogue with all stakeholders to develop comprehensive policies that address menstrual health and hygiene needs including free or subsidized menstrual products in schools, public facilities, and marginalized communities.

We call on all supporters, activists, and concerned individuals to join us in raising our voices against the taxation of menstrual hygiene products. Together, let us advocate for a society that recognizes and upholds the rights and dignity of all women and girls.

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