

Gender

Affirmative Action: Passage of bill won't create tokenism — Minister

By Dickson Worlanyo Dotse

THE Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Darko Newman, has underscored the competence and ingenuity of Ghanaian women to serve in higher places of authority.

She stated that since the Affirmation Action Gender Equity Bill 2024 was passed by parliament last month, some individuals had raised concerns that it would create a system of tokenism where the number of women in decision-making would increase as a symbolic effort to merely give the appearance of sexual or racial equality within a workforce.

Ms Newman intimated that recent data had revealed a significant increase

of women in male-dominated fields and courses at higher education levels making them more than qualified to hold positions at higher decision-making levels across the board.

"A lot of people have raised issues about tokenism and the fact that we are just putting women, I mean, round pegs in square holes or square pegs in round holes. I want to assure the people of Ghana that the women in this country are qualified. And so, it is not going to be a matter of tokenism," she said.

"We are all aware of the input women make into the Ghanaian society. And I would like to assure them, this is not just a matter of taking people who are qualified and putting them in positions," she added.

Ms Newman, who is the Member of Parliament for Okaikoi South, was speaking at the Minister's Press Briefing organised by the Minister of Information to provide updates on the Ghana School Feeding Programme and the Affirmative Action (Gender Equity)

Act, 2024.

The Minister iterated that when assented into legislation, it would promote a progressive increase and active participation of women in public and active life from a minimum of 30 to 50 per cent by 2030 in accordance with the requirements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

She noted that "even though we still had a long way to go to achieve gender parity due to some underlying sociocultural tendencies the bill was a step in the right direction to address the problem of marginalisation of women in public and economic life in Ghana and also seeing to an increase in the number of women in leadership."

Will he sign?

Ms Newman also disclosed that the bill was yet to be placed before President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo for his assent but maintained that he was very interested in it.

"I've heard a

lot of people asking, has the President signed it? And I would like to inform everybody here that it hasn't gotten to the President yet. I met with the Head of Legislation," she said.

"He's still tidying up a few things on the bill, on the Act, actually. And once he's done tidying it up, then it can be sent to the President for his assent. And so, at this point in time, it is not to say the President hasn't signed it, it is not with him yet. It will soon," she added.

Ms Newman also emphasised the need for continuous sensitisation, advocacy and education.

"It shouldn't be a law that is punitive. There's a portion for offences and it spells out that there will be a jail term or penalty units. However, we don't want to look at it in a punitive manner. We want to incentivise people. There's a section that talks about incentivising private organisations that adhere to the law. This is just to get people on board to see that if they follow the law, there's a benefit to it," she explained.

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