

Review new taxes

• GPCC urges govt

By Emmanuel Bonney

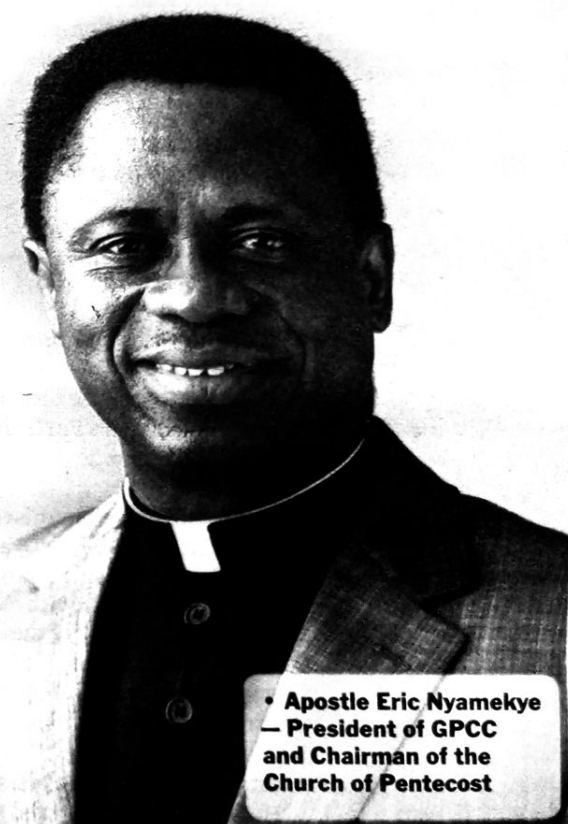
THE Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC) has called on the government to take a second look at the introduction of new taxes and explore alternative revenue mobilisation avenues.

The ecumenical body suggested efforts to widen the direct tax net and reduce government expenditure to create fiscal space and ultimately ease the economic burden on Ghanaians.

In a communique issued at the end of its Conference of Heads of Churches and Organisations (CHoCO) last Friday, the GPCC said policy measures should be directed at improving the productive sector of the economy as a means of promoting economic growth, especially in the private sector, to create more employment avenues for the teeming unemployed youth.

The communique, signed by the President of the GPCC and Chairman of the Church of Pentecost (COP), Apostle Eric

• Continued
on page 03



• Apostle Eric Nyamekye
— President of GPCC
and Chairman of the
Church of Pentecost

News

Review new taxes

• Continued from page 01

Nyamekye, was issued at the end of the two-day conference held at the Pentecost Convention Centre (PCC) at Gomoa Fetteh in the Central Region.

This year's CHOCO deliberated on pertinent issues of concern to Ghanaians while prayers were said for the country.

The deliberations included the economy, fighting corruption and the 2024 general election.

Corruption

On corruption, the communique called on the Executive, the Legislature, the Judiciary, the fourth estate of the realm, the Media, as well as the general public to actively cooperate in the fight against corrupt practices and to make acts of corruption a very costly venture in the country.

"Solo efforts by any of the identifiable entities in the fight against corruption may not yield the expected outcomes of dealing with the menace," the pentecostal and charismatic churches said.

"Reports of alleged corruptions must be transparently handled by the requisite anti-corruption agency, irrespective of the religious, political or ethnic background of the alleged perpetrators," the communique urged.

The GPCC also called on persons with high-level influence to desist from meddling in reported cases of corruption in ways that prevent the anti-corruption agencies from discharging their constitutional mandate.

Election year deficits

The pentecostal and charismatic church leaders, however, commended the government for the efforts aimed at delivering economic stability and growth in challenging times.

The GPCC reminded all that the year posed a major risk to economic gains, given that it was an election year, citing past experiences of fiscal slippage in election years.

Election years in Ghana have witnessed huge budget deficits, as the government in a bid to win over the electorate overspends its budget.

In 2004, the economy recorded a

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budget deficit of 3.2 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as against a target of 1.7 per cent. In 2008, the budget deficit went into double digits of 11.5 per cent of GDP against a projection of four per cent.

In 2012, the budget deficit was 12 per cent as against a target of 6.7 per cent, with 2016 recording a 10.3 per cent GDP deficit against a target of 5.3 per cent, and 11.7 per cent of GDP in 2020 as against a revised target of 11.4 per cent of GDP.

In 2024, the government has set a budget deficit target of 5.9 of GDP.

"The GPCC members, like other Ghanaians, are concerned that fiscal and other economic decisions by the government this election year may derail the modest economic gains achieved and undermine efforts towards easing the pains Ghanaians

have had to bear to support the ongoing economic reform programme under the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The council, therefore, called on the government and Ghanaians to ensure that the 2024 general election does not derail efforts to rebuild the economy.

Also, the general election should not lead to people being injured, maimed or killed from electoral violence,

the council stressed.

"As our nation approaches the 2024 general election, it is obvious that the campaign temperature will also be rising with its associated challenges. We call on the government and all organs and institutions of the State to work in tandem to ensure the peace and cohesion of our country before, during and after the 2024 general election," the GPCC said.

"We implore the security agencies to maintain high levels of professionalism and neutrality in the discharge of their mandate during the 2024 general election," the GPCC

entreated.

The communique also urged media houses to maintain professionalism and avoid remarks and commentaries that might incite people towards violence or anything that would undermine the country's democracy, while imploring the National Media Commission (NMC) to be prompt in addressing any unprofessional attitudes and activities of any media house.

Youth unemployment

The Pentecostal and Charismatic Council also wants the youth to explore opportunities offered by the government for vocational training leading to the acquisition of entrepreneurial and vocational skills through the technical, vocational education and training (TVET) programmes.

"This avenue offers a decent start to life in different spheres," the communique noted.

The council cautioned the youth of Ghana not to allow themselves to become targets of electoral monetisation, urging them to value the sanctity of life and refrain from engaging in acts that would lead to people being maimed and/or to election-related deaths.

Religious bodies

The GPCC called on all religious bodies to play their respective roles in ensuring that peace and unity continue to prevail in the country, especially as the nation draws closer to the 2024 general election.

"Our homes, churches, mosques, palaces, shrines and the wider community should be seen as platforms and avenues for preaching and engendering peace and unity in Ghana. Together, we must be part of the solution and not part of the problem," the communique urged.

It again called for fervent and ceaseless prayer for the country, saying "in Ghana's peace and prosperity also lies same for us as citizens."

The council stressed the importance of perpetuating the credential that the Fourth Republican Constitution had seen the longest period of governance stability with visible socio-economic benefits in spite of the challenges.

"The GPCC Heads of Churches and Organisations conference congratulates Ghanaians on the continued adherence to democratic governance virtues. However, we also recognise that democratic governance and its associated development benefits are unending processes that must be continually nurtured into maturity," the church leaders stated.