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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GHANA MARITIME AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTARY BY HON SAMUEL AWUKU CONCERNING THE MV SANKOFA (IMO No 7395870)

ACCRA – The Ghana Maritime Authority (GMA) has noted with concern the continued public commentary and media interviews by the Member of Parliament for Akwapim North, Hon Samuel Awuku regarding the vessel **MV Sankofa** (IMO No 7395870).

The Authority took note of the MP's initial public assertions via a Facebook post on 9th April 2026, suggesting an intent to raise the issue in his capacity as the Vice Chair of the Parliament Committee on Public Administration and State Interest. In response, the GMA issued a statement dated 11th April 2026, indicating its readiness to appear before the Committee and engage transparently should the Authority be invited to do so.

However, we have observed a persistent trend of media engagements alongside the submission of the Right to Information (RTI) request on the subject matter, which has been widely circulated in both traditional and social media.

In the light of the ongoing developments and to ensure the public is accurately informed, the Authority hereby provides the following responses.

Identity Issues Surrounding MV Sankofa (IMO No 7395870)

The vessel that is the subject of public commentary by the MP identified as **MV Sankofa** with **IMO No 7395870** was first registered in 1983 under the Ghana Flag as a fishing trawler, MV KAAS 105. It was later registered as MV AFKO 312 in 1987 and, finally, as MV Marine 711 in 2011.

In 2024, the owners applied for deregistration, following the completion of the mandatory processes including the formal surrender of its Certificate of Ghanaian Registry, the vessel was officially deregistered and deleted from the Ghana Ship Registry on 23rd April 2024.

It would be recalled that an earlier vessel, **MV SANKOFA** with **IMO No 907855** was previously registered under the Ghanaian Flag in 2014. It was also subsequently deregistered

on 6th October 2021, after the completion of the mandatory processes including the formal surrender of its Certificate of Ghanaian Registry.

The GMA, therefore, wishes to state that neither the vessel in question with **IMO No 7395870** nor the vessel with **IMO No 907855** is on Ghana's register; therefore, they are not Ghanaian-flagged vessels. It should further be clarified that, by our protocols, no two vessels can bear the same name while on Ghana's register.

July 2025 Detention of MV Sankofa (IMO No. 7395870)

The vessel MV Sankofa (IMO No 7395870) was sighted on 18th July 2025, by the Ghana Navy in Ghana's territorial waters during its patrols. Upon an enquiry, the crew reported that the vessel was undergoing sea trials necessitated by repair works undertaken on its engine. However, there was the need to undertake further inspections, thus the vessel was escorted to the Sekondi Naval Base.

Further inspection by the Ghana Navy and the GMA revealed violations of Ghana's maritime labour regulations and the Marine Pollution Act, 2016 (Act 932). These included the failure to maintain relevant record books, as well as evidence of false flagging.

In light of these findings, the Authority imposed the following statutory fines on the vessel for various infractions: \$79,200 for marine pollution regulatory breaches, GHC154,800 for violations of the maritime labour regulations and GHC30,000 for the act of false flagging.

Although there was an initial suspicion that the vessel could have carried cargo or engaged in commercial business between Ghana's ports, further inspections confirmed this was not the case. Consequently, a fine which could have carried a maximum penalty of \$1 million could not be imposed.

Following technical remedial measures by the vessel, including the acquisition of a provisional certificate of registry from Cameroon, and the payment of a portion of the fines with a managed payment plan, the vessel was released in November 2025.

Interdiction of MV Sankofa (IMO No. 7395870) in Senegalese Waters on Suspicion of Drug trafficking

On 23rd March 2026, the Senegalese Authorities in whose waters the vessel was positioned contacted the GMA regarding the vessel MV Sankofa (IMO No 7395870). They sought to verify its registration and requested consent to board the vessel following suspicions of its involvement in illicit narcotics trafficking within their maritime space. The GMA responded promptly, clarifying that the vessel is not registered in Ghana and explicitly disassociating the Republic of Ghana from all activities involving the said vessel.

It should be stated that the Senegalese authorities subsequently communicated that upon boarding and searching the vessel, no illicit drugs were found. Furthermore, the vessel possessed electronic documents indicating registration under the Cameroonian flag.

As previously stated, the vessel was released by the GMA and the Ghana Navy in November 2025; therefore, its current presence in Senegalese waters has no relation to Ghana.

Concerns Regarding the MP's Conduct

The GMA finds the conduct of the MP inconsistent and manifesting a deliberate attempt to mar the reputation of the Authority and by extension the Republic of Ghana.

The initial Facebook post by the MP suggested that he was exercising his parliamentary role of oversight in respect of the GMA.

The GMA unequivocally indicated its readiness to appear before Parliament to engage on this matter; however, it came as a surprise that the MP subsequently abandoned that formal approach but instead resorted to media engagements that sought to misinform the public and cast unnecessary aspersions on the Authority's regulatory integrity.

The GMA further notes that the Honorable Member initially submitted a Right to Information request, which he later withdrew. Interestingly, a subsequent one was submitted to the GMA and the confirmatory receipt copy that was stamped and handed over to the MP's courier was found circulating on social media. The GMA regardless will respond to the RTI request.

It is deeply concerning that the MP chose to publicise important communication between the Senegalese Authorities and law enforcement agencies in Ghana. These correspondences were restricted to a few officials, and the MP has no lawful access to the correspondences. The broadcast of these official communications compromised the law enforcement relationship between two countries, thereby breaching standard protocols of state-to-state security cooperation. This conduct does not serve the public or the national interest of Ghana, rather, it jeopardizes trust between the two states.

Conclusion

The Authority assures the public that all of its activities, including ship inspections and surveys, monitoring and enforcement and vessel registration processes, are conducted in strict compliance with national laws and international maritime regulatory standards. Actions of the Authority are guided by the best interests of the Republic of Ghana.

The Authority remains steadfast in the execution of its mandate to regulate the maritime industry and will continue to uphold the highest standards of integrity in all matters and will not compromise its stewardship.

Management of GMA