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PRESS RELEASE

The current fracas in the teaching profession is continuing and it seems the Ministry of Education is failing dismally to address teachers' demands. Instead, the Ministry of Education is issuing threats to teachers. The Ministry of Education officials have already raised the following threats.

- a) The Director of Secondary went on news on Wednesday 12 October 2002 that if teachers continue with their strike action, soldiers will be called to invigilate the examinations.
- b) The same Director in an interview mentioned that contingency measures are in place and this was followed by a letter which coerced people in senior management not to join strike action.
- c) The Minister of Education on 17 October 2002 was quoted on news bulletin as having said that examinations will go on as normal even if teachers continue with their strike and that retired teachers and education officers will be called to invigilate. He was further quoted as having said that those teachers who were due for promotions will be denied promotions indefinitely.
- d) The Minister also indicated that those teachers on strike will be denied their annual increases. It is surprising and it will be unfortunate that the Minister wants to take even the little that the teachers stood to enjoy.
- e) The Minister in the same news bulletin has mentioned that in the past the Ministry of Education has implemented policies without consulting teacher organizations. This of course explains why the Ministry of Education is facing so many problems. Teacher organizations are stakeholders in the Ministry of Education and they have sent clear message (though the hard way) that the Ministry of Education should not ignore them in future.

The teacher organizations regard these as serious threats on all those teachers who are on strike. This also clearly indicate that the Ministry

of Education does not have the interest of students at heart. This is because;

- i. It is beyond the Director of Secondary's jurisdiction to talk about the supervision of examinations when there is Division of Examination Research and Testing under which examinations fall.
- ii. There are examination rules and regulations, which are adhered to, but it seems the Director has very little concerns to ensure that they are followed to the latter.
- iii. The Director seems to care for only those students who are currently sitting for their final year examinations. What about those who are not in completing classes? Even them their syllabi are greatly affected which may result in those syllabi not completed at the end of the year.
- iv. The Minister seems to have adopted a confrontational approach in addressing the fracas in the teaching profession. The Minister is already pre-empting possible stern measures which are likely to be taken for teachers yet pre-liminary investigations have not been instituted. Also the Minister should desist from communicating with the teachers and school heads through the media. They are kept in the dark and would appreciate that formal correspondence is done. Due to this confrontational approach, the Minister is losing focus in finding solutions to the teachers' demands. Issuing threats and sounding intimidations would not debar teachers from continuing on pursuing what they deem as a legitimate course.

The teacher organizations, therefore, call for the President's intervention in this matter before it is too late. This is because BGCSE is still under the watchful eye of the Cambridge Examinations body. If they can realize that examination rules were seriously compromised Cambridge may not take it lightly. Already students are going into these examinations psychologically ill-prepared and what if soldiers, police and retired teachers are allowed to invigilate them. We hope that the President will treat this matter urgently.