We thank the Almighty God for the gift of today and the great honour and privilege to meet in such a stately gathering. It is a great pleasure to be together at such a noble assembly of the noble health profession, Nursing, though not the first of its kind but the first in terms of its purpose; the celebration of the professional character of an astute legend of Nursing’s history in motherland Ghana. And who is this personality but Dr. Docia Kisseih of blessed memory.

We therefore have another opportunity of a stocktaking moment to reflect on our productive stewardship as frontline health care professionals and what we can do more to advance the delivery of our core mandate. I will not hesitate to say I am highly impressed by your colorful attendance observed not only in your numbers but in this sparkling enthusiasm. I am proud to say, meeting such dignified personalities underscores the beauty of the collective mandate and stakeholder partnership we hold, wherein lies our strength and opportunities to maximize our potential to broaden our horizons for growth. Permit me therefore to say, I am highly honored, and on behalf of my hardworking and dedicated executive council and staff I render a befitting appreciation.

May I remind you that the theme for the occasion is, ‘Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery contribution to Quality Health Care: Making a Difference’. But, what has indeed brought us here? Is there not a cause? Is there not an objective? Should there not be a move?
It is an undeniable fact that Nurses and Midwives do a lot of the health care business on daily basis, considering our placement in the care continuum, as frontline service providers forming at least 65% of core professionals delivering care to health seekers. It is from this phenomenon that we reckon that so much responsibility has been given to Nurses and Midwives and therefore the world will expect so much from us. In the eye of the observer, we subject ourselves for more criticisms and blame when things go wrong with quality health care. This we accept. Much in the same way, when things go well, we must receive acclamation the most. But we bargain not for praise in our service delivery because we know that our profession exists because there is the client. This places us under a strong obligation to care and just a little appreciation from the public just enough.

We have gathered here to honour Dr. Docia Kisseih to let this generation of Nurses and Midwives know that she stood for principles that underpin the very essence of our calling as Nurses and Midwives. As the first president of the Ghana Registered Nurses’ Association, she curved a niche for dignity and inspirational service worthy of emulation which has come under sharp criticisms by the people we care for in recent times. Nursing and Midwifery care is heading crises for lack of commitment on the part of practitioners and has to be salvaged.

Leaders in nursing in the 21st century need to be equipped with the knowledge, strategies and strength to lead and manage in health services and in nursing through change and into a healthier future for all populations.

Issues that have become critical for discussion and need to engage our attention are our customer service, legal implications of our actions, communication with our clients and professional colleagues, building of our relationships and the influence of our conduct on quality care. I must emphasise that meeting our clients’ needs are basic to our care. We are often accused of neglect of our duties as nurses and midwives and the manner in which we communicate to our clients and their immediate relatives.
Be informed that regarding our communication with clients, that importance of communication in our chosen profession cannot be downplayed if we have to make a good impression on society that now sees the nurse and midwife as having misspent their talents opportunities and rich expertise. And I must emphasise that communication becomes apparent as we try to share or implement our ideas or vision.

Docia was the first Ghanaian Chief Nursing Officer to take over from the British Colonial Government in 1961. The 60’s were interesting times of the profession where professionalism was held high. Docia and her colleagues gave meaning to nursing as a profession which encompasses autonomous and collaborative care of individuals of all ages, families, groups and communities, sick or well and in all settings. The respect for human rights, including cultural rights, the right to life and choice, to dignity and to be treated with respect regardless of age, colour, creed, culture, disability or illness, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, politics, race or social status was core to their practice.

The question is can we say same for our nursing practice today? Was the Ghanaian population in better heath then than they are today? Could we say her efforts ensured better promotion of health, prevention of illness, and the care of ill, disabled and dying people? Many Ghanaians especially nurses and midwives in their 80’s and 70’s are quick to criticize nursing practice today in relation to the care they receive when they visit the hospital these days. So what is wrong with the profession today? Are nurses and midwives contributing quality health care or in the position to advance whatever contribution there is for quality health care in the future?

Nurses and Midwives have four fundamental responsibilities which are to promote health, to prevent illness, to restore health and to alleviate suffering. Nurses render health
services to the individual, the family and the community and coordinate their services with those of related groups.
as they contemplate best options for patient care in the face of staff shortages, lack of equipment and supplies and sometimes threats to their own safety.
Nursing and Midwifery practice worldwide impacts quality health care in setting where there are clear national nursing and midwifery policies, efficient leadership, well-structured nursing education, effective staffing levels and unity of the profession.

A number of nursing interventions have been shown to be effective and affordable to prevent and control NCDs. The nursing and midwifery workforce need the necessary support and encouragement in delivering effective, quality and equitable health services to the populations in need as part of the global effort to fight against NCDs.

It is recognized that tomorrow’s nurses and midwives will need a broad and integrated knowledge base combined with an expanded repertoire of clinical, communication and interpersonal skills as well as the ability to navigate social and ethical issues arising daily and in exceptional situations. More frequently in recent years we have seen the increased use of simulation in nursing education to enhance the development of clinical skills and also to address the short-age of clinical placements.

Sufficient and adequately trained and motivated nurses and midwives are essential for the health of the world’s populations. Yet, there continues to be underinvestment in nursing on a global basis and the perpetuation of boom and bust cycles of production. Many nurses migrate to other countries in search of better working conditions, or leave the profession altogether. Over the past few years, students have found it difficult to find jobs and their hopes of entering a life-long career has been dashed. However, there still exist gaps in staffing in many settings.
What do Nurses and Midwives do?

We support the health team with a unique and conspicuous presence and skillful care

We make up at least 65% of the health care team

We take frontline position in all health care services

We provide visible reassurance

We restore and health

We take care of kids and their demand for healthy growth

We take care of women’s health related to childlessness, pregnancy and childbirth

We advocate your rights

We provide information about your health condition

We research into phenomena that affect your health and proffer solutions

We help you grow your knowledge in health matters

We deliver your wishes for radiant health

We invest in your future by strengthening your capacity to influence society

We stand in the gap between your life threatening ill health and safe recovery

BUT with a cut on health budget, a moratorium on nurse/midwife graduate recruitment, training of lower cadres of nurses far outnumbering training of professionals (65% against 35%), nurse/patient ratio and nurse/population ratio standing at 1:22 and 1:750 respectively and student nurses and midwives providing 40% of nursing and midwifery contribution to general health care services, something has to take.

- Nurses and Midwives will experience stressors and burn-out the more
- Health hazard effects on Nurses and Midwives will be more pronounced
- Nurses and Midwives will have to work long hours though with no compensation
- Roles of Nurses and Midwives will multiply with dwindling outcome
- Quality Nursing and Midwifery care will be compromised with cataclysmic effect.
Noble friends, let me dare hold out the stark reality, that something has gone wrong, Nursing and Midwifery care services has run out of tune with the philosophy of Florence Nightingale, Mary Secoule and Docia Kisseih and there is a cause; the cause and effect of situations and events, some as afore-mentioned and Nurses and Midwives are not happy about these developments. Much as we resolve to confront the situation as walk the tight rope, we cannot perform any magic in giving our clientele the much expected quality as our contribution to total health care delivery unless stakeholders and all team players act.

We request unequivocally, the Government and the employer to provide the resources for our work that will ensure a safe Nursing and Midwifery profession, a safe environment of care, a safe Nurse and Midwife and a safe patient. My promise to Ghanaians is that the GRNA will use the occasion of the Dr. Docia Kisseih Memorial Lectures series as a clarion call to sound the wake-up alarm to establish the leverage that will confront the myriad of problems within the scope of Nursing and Midwifery care.

Permit me to reiterate the noble achievement of Nurses and Midwives and to say ayekoo to the millions of practitioners worldwide who are sparing no efforts in making sure that the centre holds for quality care delivery. May we be united stronger and eschew mediocrity in our great world work so as to broaden its horizons. May we dare to make the difference to enhance and establish nobility and dignity from the Nightingale and Kisseih philosophy that has characterized our profession. See this as an opportunity to mazimise your influence to become the salt of your great world.

Noble friends, acknowledging this opportunity myself as a singular honour, I heartily welcome you to this maiden Dr. Docia Kisseih Memorial Lecture of the Ghana Registered Nurses’ Association and pray for its impact that will strengthen not only the contribution of Nursing and Midwifery contribution to the falling standards of Nursing care but our stakeholder relationship which I am convinced will last a last time. It is great to have you here. May God bless us all