

## **THE FDA IN CONJUNCTION WITH AGA-AFRICA HOSTS A CONFERENCE ON TACKLING THE REALITY OF TRANSNATIONAL CRIMES.**



The Food and Drug Authority (FDA) in conjunction with Attorney General Alliance Africa (AGA-Africa) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, hosted a conference on "tackling the reality of transnational crimes" at the Kempinski Gold Coast Hotel, Accra.

The conference was channelled at contributing to the prevention of the production/importation of counterfeit food and drugs, human trafficking, the protection of its victims, and the effective prosecution of those who commit and profit from crimes. Also, it was aimed at creating the opportunity for delegates to learn from past atrocities to ensure that the injustices are not carried forth into the future.

AGA-Africa is an organisation that offers joint responses to transnational crime with African nations through training workshops and seminars not only providing invaluable substantive capacity building but also fostering vibrant relationship with justice and law enforcement agencies and officials throughout Africa.

The conference, which brought together officials from the FDA, Representative of the President's Office, American Chamber of Commerce in Ghana, Ghana Bar Association, AGA-Africa Country Representatives and Members, Ghana Tourism Authority, Ghana Law Students, NAFDAC, Attorney General Office, Ministry for Justice, Ghana Police Service among others was aimed at sharing strategies in fighting transnational crimes.

Mr. Vigil Prah Ashun, Head of Drug Market Surveillance Department representing the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mrs. Delese Darko gave a presentation on the "Menace of Counterfeit Food and Drugs". He said according to Section 123 of the Public Health

Act, 2012, Act 851 “counterfeit” (substandard/ falsified) drugs, “a person shall not manufacture, import, export, supply, possess or offer for sale a counterfeit drug, herbal medicinal product, cosmetic, medical device or house hold substance”. He further mentioned that, according to Section 100 Subsection 3D of the Public Health Act, 2012 Act 851 " a person commits an offence if that person sells or offers for sale a food that is adulterated.

He spoke on the mandate of the Authority, which is to provide and enforce standards for the sale of drugs (allopathic and herbal), food, food supplement, cosmetic, household chemicals and medical devices substances; and the fight of the FDA against the production/ importation of counterfeit drugs (substandard/ falsified) and food (mislabelled or adulterated food products), which are mostly smuggled through unapproved entry points.

Also, he mentioned some implications, saying the use of fake medicines can result in treatment failure, complications, adverse reaction or even death. He added that fake or adulterated food product can likewise pose serious health risks. He said the Authority has put in place routine regulatory procedures to halt the trade of SF products which are, pre and post approval activities, collaborations with some organizations like USAID and USP and quality monitoring programme.

Furthermore, Mr. Prah Ashun said, the FDA in ensuring public protection has cautioned drug retail outlets to be wary of purchasing medical products from unregistered sources through media engagement.

The public has been advised to patronize genuine products by taking time to analyze the packaging and appearance when making purchases of these items to enable them use only safe products. Also, they have been educated on dangers of consuming and dealing in substandard/ falsified (SF) products.

In addition the Authority through social media creates awareness on its functions, educates on SF products identification and other public health issues as well as promote food and drugs safety systems.

At the end of the presentation he indicated that, it is the mandate of the FDA to ensure that all drugs, food and other products regulated by the Authority meet the standard requirements. However, in combating SF products, a transnational crime, the FDA with international support from the World Health Organization (WHO), World Customs Organization (WCO), Department for International Development (DFID), Interpol etc. requires joint effort with the Ministries, police, prosecutors, manufactures, importers, wholesalers, health care and medicines providers, patients, consumers and the public of Ghana.