

PRESS RELEASE – 28 SEPTEMBER 2017

Diaspora Engagement through programme of Migration and Sustainable Development in The Gambia

On Saturday, 23 September 2017, at a town hall meeting at the Harriet Tubman Learning Centre in New York City, President Adama Barrow addressed the largest gathering of the Gambian diaspora since his election. The meeting was scheduled as part of the government's official trip to the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly. In addition to American politicians such as Revd Jesse Jackson and Manhattan Borough President Ms. Gale Arnot Brewer, hundreds of Gambians from across USA and friends of Gambia attended the meeting.

President Barrow presented a 7-point policy plan, about how the coalition government will engage and work with the Gambian diaspora, for inclusive national development. To rapturous applause, he declared that 15 December to 15 January shall become 'Gambian Diaspora Month'. Many members of the Gambian diaspora visit the country during the Christmas period. Designating a Diaspora Month is an opportunity to focus attention on positive diaspora action. Groups and organisations may coordinate amongst themselves, and schedule their diaspora-related events during this period. This will create synergies and increase the opportunity for people to attend multiple diaspora-related events.

"We have listened to your hopes and aspirations. We have heard your concerns and frustrations. Now, we are working with experts and partners, who have helped us develop meaningful 'Diaspora Engagement Action Points' as part of our programme for Migration and Sustainable Development in The Gambia", declared the president. The MSDG programme is a Technical Cooperation Programme designed by Gambian-born London School of Economics (LSE) Professor, Gibril Faal. It is implemented by GK Partners in partnership with the Government of The Gambia, financed by the Swiss Government.

President Barrow also announced that the Central Bank of The Gambia and partners will launch an initiative *"to reduce the transaction cost of remittances to the minimal level possible"*. He expressed hope that Gambia will develop Diaspora Bonds and other forms of Diaspora Direct Investment (DDI), in order to optimise the impact of diaspora finances. It is estimated that a staggering US\$200 Million is remitted annually by Gambians in the diaspora to families and communities back home. These funds have significant positive effects to the country's micro and macro economy.

One of the organisers of the town hall meeting Sigga Jagne, presented the President with a report based on a questionnaire research that attracted over 1,000 responses from the diaspora. This is in line with the government's own research and consultation exercise announced by the President. The MSDG research and consultation activities will gauge the needs, wants and expectations of the diverse Gambia diaspora across the world, regarding facilitating and optimising their role in Gambian development. The information gathered will inform the drafting of a 10-year Gambian National Diaspora Strategy, and the creation of a service-delivery Diaspora Directorate.

On behalf of the people of The Gambia, President Barrow thanked the diaspora, stating: *"During the last two decades of dictatorship, you may have hated the brutal government, but you continued to love your country. The diaspora contributed ideas and finances, demonstrated fortitude and tenacity, and used its networks and privileges to help deliver our country from oppression. As a result, you have covered yourselves in glory, and history will attest to your courage and commitment."*

ENDS (about 535 words)

NOTES TO EDITORS:

MSDG Project: The activities of the Migration and Sustainable Development in The Gambia (MSDG) project are as follows:

Optimising the Benefits of Migration for Gambian Development

- Research, consultation and production of a 10-Year Gambian Diaspora Strategy
- Structuring and creation of a Gambia Diaspora Directorate and website
- Inauguration of an annual 'Stake in the Nation Forum'
- Scheme to reduce the transaction costs of remittances

Improving Implementation and Operational Capacity and Effectiveness

- Mapping of the structures, services and activities of selected Ministries
- Professional training in diaspora-development and operational effectiveness
- Support government engagement in global migration and development processes
- Review and analysis of government and programme effectiveness

GK Partners & Swiss Government: In 2014/15, the Swiss Government entered into a contract with GK Partners (a pioneering UK-registered consultancy) for a Technical Cooperation Project (TCP) on Migration and Development in the Republic of Moldova. The project was led by Gibril Faal, the Co-Founder and Director of GK Partners. As the international consultant, Gibril undertook the assessment of diaspora-development needs in the Republic of Moldova, and drafted the 'Moldova Diaspora Strategy 2025'. The 10-year strategy was presented by the Prime Minister of Moldova to the cabinet, and it was adopted as government policy in February 2016. The Swiss Government, through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) was pleased to sign another contract with GK Partners, facilitating technical cooperation work in The Gambia. SDC also co-funded the multi-million Euro Africa-Europe Diaspora Development Platform (ADEPT) project led by Gibril Faal (2014/17).

Implementation & Operations: The Migration and Sustainable Development in the Gambia (MSDG) project is run by a team of Gambian professionals with extensive experience and expertise in every aspect of migration, diaspora and development. The team is supported by a diverse range of Gambians, based in different parts of the world, acting as 'project champions'. The Government of The Gambia also provides counterparts as departmental and institutional focal points.

Further Information: For further information about the project, you can contact the following:

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