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GAMBIA DIASPORA MONTH

As Gambia remembers and celebrates a year under a democratic rule of law free from oppression and political instability, many more Gambians around the world are visiting the country during the Christmas and New Year period to enjoy that new found freedom. On 23rd September 2017, His Excellency President Barrow declared 15 December to 14 January as Gambia Diaspora Month (GDM). Designating this period a month to focus attention on positive diaspora actions.

As part of the Migration and Sustainable Development in The Gambia Project (MSDG), implemented six months after the inauguration of the new coalition government in The Gambia, GDM gives the government an opportunity to highlight the importance of the diaspora in national development.

Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, as well as NGOs and development partners are encouraged to schedule consultations and events during GDM. This will create synergies and increase the opportunity for people to attend multiple diaspora-related events as a means of increasing diaspora engagement during the GDM and beyond.

This welcomed increase in the number of members of the Gambian diaspora visiting the country after being exiled for a number of years is not without recognition especially by the ministries of Justice and Education with events to provide platforms for interactions and engagement with professional and academics from the diaspora.

The MSDG project also celebrates **International Migrants Day** joining the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) at this year's Global Migration Film festival, showcasing films which capture the promise and challenges of migration. This is particularly important to the MSDG project and the Coalition government in their joint effort in the reduction of irregular migration and negotiating bi-lateral agreements for the protection of vulnerable Gambian migrants around the world.

The Diaspora Policy and Strategy (2018-27) and the Gambia Diaspora Directorate (GDD) will be launched at the first annual '**Stake in the Nation Forum**' which is set to be the penultimate event to happen in the Gambia bringing the Gambia Diaspora month to a close. But not before bringing together Gambians from diverse socio-economic and political backgrounds, and engaging the Gambian diaspora and migrants from different parts of the world, in substantive policy discourse to achieve different aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals and National Development Plan.