



**Statement by His Excellency, Mr. Adama Barrow
President of the Republic of The Gambia
at the
First Stake in the Nation Forum (SNF1)**

**Theme:
Attaining Progress in the New Gambia**

Date: 13th January 2018

Kairaba Beach Hotel, The Gambia

Your Excellency the Vice President,
Speaker of the National Assembly,
Secretary General & Head of the Civil Service
Cabinet Ministers,
Diplomatic and Consular Corps,
Members of the National Assembly,
Professor Gibril Faal
Members of the Media Fraternity,
Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Fellow Gambians, distinguished delegates, it is a blessing indeed that I stand before you today to deliver the first Stake in the Nation address. I speak with you about the challenges, opportunities and the actions that we must all take, whether we are at home or abroad. We all have a stake in ensuring that we attain progress in our beloved country, the New Gambia.

For nearly a generation, our time, our resources and our efforts were spent to oppose, counter and defeat the dictatorship and the brutality it represented. One year after our victory, I proclaim to the nation that never again shall we suffer the brutality, humiliation and the injustice of dictatorship, or accept the victimisation of our people.

We should now fight for the best course of actions. We have a National Development Plan (NDP) and we must focus on having operational excellence to succeed in its implementation.

We must be **vigilant against** the fundamental development challenges we face; and be **vigilant for** the new opportunities we have created for ourselves. We all fought to give us the freedom and human rights stolen from us for too long.

Therefore, let us be humble, honest and open in our reflections; and accept our shortcomings and learn the appropriate lessons. As I said in my statement to the Gambian diaspora in New York last September, *“a government that listens and learns is a government that improves and succeeds”*.

Fellow Gambians, distinguished delegates, **we must be vigilant against the problem of a dysfunctional public sector**. As President of the Republic, I urge all ministries and all citizens to embrace nation building, with dignity for the Gambian people. Those of us elected or appointed to public office are obliged to safeguard the human, civil and development rights of citizens, and to provide quality services to the citizens. This is an obligation in our political, social and legal contracts. My administration believes that fundamental and enlightened change is needed in the public sector.

The anniversary of the formation of the coalition government is an occasion for reflection. We will continue to pursue the public sector reform programme for comprehensive change to entrench public interest in the services.

The Gambia needs a modern, professional, credible and well-motivated civil and public service who would live up to their oath to serve without fear, favour or ill will. Our reforms will attract and retain the best skilled and most experienced. Competence and performance will be rewarded, whilst support and incentives will be provided to stimulate professional development. Incompetence, unfairness and indifference have no place in the public sector of the New Gambia.

Fellow Gambians, distinguished delegates, **we must be vigilant against the problem of corrupt practices**. My administration declares intolerance to all forms of corrupt and fraudulent practices. Misappropriation of funds, bribery

and corruption in public office are illegal, disgraceful and breeds mistrust, and negative acts.

In the New Gambia, public office is a means for noble service for the good of the people. My administration is working to create a vibrant social economy, facilitating legitimate wealth creation through provision of socially beneficial goods and services.

Fellow Gambians, distinguished delegates, **we must be vigilant for the opportunity of infrastructure-led development.** We need good roads and other social amenities, such as water, energy and sewerage systems to complement the development of private citizens and communities. If we have appropriate and world class infrastructure in place, that can trigger the medium and long term transformation of The Gambia from a country with high levels of unemployment and poverty, to medium income status.

We have the opportunity to create a growing and inclusive economy that provides well-paid and sustainable jobs for all levels of skills. Infrastructure and energy investments will fuel our economy, sustained by merit-based career, enterprise and wealth creation opportunities maximally utilising Gambia's human resources.

Fellow Gambians, distinguished delegates, **we must be vigilant for the opportunity of diaspora-development.** The enormous capacity, capabilities and potentials of the diaspora are not fully utilised by The Gambia. This is a loss to our country. My administration recognises the Gambian Diaspora as the Eighth Region of The Gambia.

In September 2017, I declared that 15 December to 14 January as Gambia Diaspora Month, for Gambians across the world to come home, meet family, network amongst themselves, meet government officials, explore projects and ventures, and generally find ways to enhance their practical engagement in Gambian development. I am glad that hundreds of Gambians have responded positively. They have spent millions of dollars in the real economy, engaging with existent and new partners, and generally exploring and enjoying their productive engagement in their motherland.

My administration, through the new Gambia Diaspora Directorate and other mechanisms, will seek to remove unnecessary bureaucratic barriers; assist diaspora individuals and organisations to implement their projects; in order to enhance diaspora investments to create jobs and improve development outcomes. We need to protect irregular, young and vulnerable migrants, and when necessary, facilitate their safe and voluntary return home, in line with human rights provisions. Most importantly, we strive to realise the United Nations vision that, **‘migration should be a choice, not a desperate necessity’**. To that end, my administration, through inter-ministerial cooperation is taking meaningful steps to create opportunities and options for education, employment and training for young Gambians and returnees.

Through the Migration and Sustainable Development in The Gambia Project (MSDG), we have already demonstrated the benefits of a well-coordinated approach to working with the diaspora. One of the leading experts in the world on international development and global migration is the Director of GK Partners, a Gambian diaspora, Professor Gibril Faal. We recognise his efforts in having a fully funded programme, providing induction, training, technical briefings and guidance to the government to make the best out of migration. My administration was pleased to sign a Technical Cooperation Project agreement

with GK Partners to ensure that the best experts in the field, who happen to be Gambians, are working for Gambia. We also expect to work with all experts on the public sector reform and other urgent and important priorities.

On behalf of the MSDG Project, I express my thanks specifically to the government of Switzerland and the European Union for their support and cooperation.

Fellow Gambians, distinguished delegates, on the occasion of the First Stake in the Nation Forum, you will have the chance to discuss specific and technical matters. I am sure that you will have productive and focused deliberations. I would like to congratulate Professor Faal of GK Partners and the entire MSDG team. I also take this opportunity to thank all government ministries, departments and agencies that have been supporting the MSDG initiative.

It is now my honour and delight to launch the following:

- The Gambia Diaspora Strategy
- The Gambia Diaspora Directorate
- The government report on ‘Curbing Irregular Migration through Sustainable Livelihoods’.

I wish you all a good day as we look forward to the Second Stake in the Nation Forum in 2019.

Thank you for your kind attention.