



Statement by His Excellency, Mr. Adama Barrow
President of the Republic of The Gambia
at the
Third Stake in the Nation Forum (SNF3)
(Delivered by the Vice President, H.E. Dr. Isatou Touray)

Theme:
‘Development Practice and Institution Building’

Date: 18th January 2020

Kairaba Beach Hotel, Kololi, The Gambia

Honourable Cabinet Ministers,
Secretary General and Head of the Civil Service,
Governors, Honourable Members of the National Assembly,
Professor Gibril Faal,
Ambassador Marion Weichelt Krupski,
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps,
Regional Director, ARTICLE 19,
Religious Leaders here present,
Chairman of the Independence Electoral Commission,
Chairpersons of Commissions,
Superintendent Fatou Senghore leading the Police Band,
Members of the Media Fraternity,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Members of the Diaspora present here today,
All other protocols duly and respectfully observed.

I am here to present the speech of His Excellency, President Adama Barrow, and he asked me to send his greetings and Happy New Year wishes to all of you, for meeting together again on a very important activity of the Eighth Region. He sends his blessings; I read forth:

It was in this very hall two years ago, at the First Stake in the Nation Forum, that I had the honour and joy to declare that the Gambian diaspora is the Eighth Region of our beloved country. That formal recognition was well overdue, and I treasure the historical fact that I was the President who made that solemn proclamation. Diaspora as the Eighth Region is not just symbolism, it is the principle and mechanism through which we can embed diaspora contributions, interests, needs and expectations within the very workings of the Ministries, Departments and Agencies of government. The draft constitution as presented by the Constitution Review Commission already reflects some of these aspirations of how we mainstream diaspora-development. As we conclude the consultative process for the constitution, we expect that provisions will strengthen the important links between Gambians in the diaspora and every aspect of development in our beloved motherland.

As leader of the government and a servant of the people, it is my duty to give to every Gambian at home and abroad, what belong to them as citizens and agents of national development. On the foundations of the strongest structures for human and democratic rights, we need the opportunities and options for responsible and sustainable development, at personal, community and national levels. We need the structures to enable the fulfilment of the full potential of every child and adult irrespective of socio-economic background. We need effective frameworks to optimise the contributions of the diaspora and all citizens, so that in our advancement towards sustainable development, no one is left behind.

As it is said, *‘the road to hell is paved with good intentions’*. Having the Gambia National Development Plan (2018-21) is essential but it is not enough. Having the Migration and Sustainable Development in The Gambia (MSDG) programme is important but it is not enough. A major challenge of development practice is the operational failures that lead to non-implementation. Policies are not enough. Operational vigilance is needed for us to deliver practical results that improve and transform the lives of citizens. This is why I am pleased that the theme for the Third Stake in the Nation Forum is ‘Development Practice and Institution Building’.

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I repeat my mantra, that: *“a government that listens and learns is a government that improves and succeed”*. We are in the unfortunate situation that nearly 55 years after independence, The Gambia is still dependent on financial assistance from donor countries. As such, we have no option but to embrace a positive, inclusive and creative approach to development practice. We need to be efficient and reduce the wasteful and unnecessary costs of government; we need to prevent, detect and deter corruption; we need to create and improve enabling policies and programmes for the diaspora, private sector and civil society, so as to maximise their contributions to development. Through our public sector reform, we need to institutionalise this result-oriented approach, so that the positive actions and activities continue, and even expand and improve, irrespective of changes in ministerial and political office.

Two years since the launch of the Gambia National Development Plan, we have put in place mechanisms to monitor NDP implementation. The former Policy Unit within the Office of the President has been transformed into the Department for Strategic Policy Delivery (DSPD). I take personal interest in monitoring performance and improvements. Where challenges arise, we admit it openly and seek effective solutions. When we achieve good results and practical impacts, we identify best practices and try to embed them within programme activities. If we continue to be open about weaknesses, whilst maintaining our focus on positive results and impacts, we shall move purposefully and surely towards high levels of operational effectiveness and efficiency.

Two years since the launch of the Gambia Diaspora Strategy, we are getting ready to enter into a promising new era of Diaspora Public Private Partnerships (DPPP). As Professor Gibril Faal stated in one of his speeches to the United Nations General Assembly in 2013: ***“I see migrants, with constrained resources and pressured circumstances, extract their families from poverty within a generation. I see governments, multilateral agencies and NGOs with massive resources and state privileges admit the self evident failures of combating chronic poverty.....For migrants, development is a way of life, the very stuff of life.....they are a veritable partner for development”***.

Accommodating and enhancing diaspora input to Gambia’s development is not only the responsibility of government, it is also to the benefit of the private sector and civil society. Since the first forum in January 2018, the diaspora have expanded their engagement in the different sectors of Gambian socio-economic and political life. In 2018, their remittances were about 277 million dollars,

crossing the quarter of a billion mark for the first time ever. As reported by the Governor of the Central Bank of The Gambia, in 2019, remittances have gone past the 300 million dollar mark. This is evidence of the diaspora's continued development commitment to their country of origin and heritage.

As part of the activities during the Gambia Diaspora Month (15 December to 14 January), the Third Diaspora Finance Technical Roundtable (DFTR3) was held on 9 January, convened by the Governor of the Central Bank of The Gambia, the Minister of Finance and the Director of GK Partners, attended by the banks and Money Transfer Operators based in The Gambia, Amongst other things, their deliberations included analysis of the practicalities of issuing Diaspora Bonds, as set out in the NDP and Gambia Diaspora Strategy.

I am pleased to announce that the Ministry of Finance have already started technical consultations with GK Partners and the MSDG programme, and we urge all partners to exercise diligence, so that good progress is made in a timely manner. We want to see regulated and well managed local Infrastructure Bonds and Diaspora Bonds to be standard and regular elements in Gambia's financing portfolio. This will mean more self-help, more capital development, and more innovative finance. This will mean Gambian finance for Gambian development. The funds raised from Diaspora Bonds will be used for specific and pre-identified small-scale infrastructure and development projects. These will be projects which stimulate and facilitate productive and regenerative activities, especially in geographically deprived communities, and in sectors of the social economy that require urgent investment and uplift.

As I conclude, allow me to express our gratitude to the Government of Switzerland and to Professor Faal and his team at GK Partners, for co-financing and implementing the Migration and Sustainable Development in The Gambia (MSDG) programme. We encourage other development partners to join this diaspora-led Technical Cooperation Programme, especially to support MSDG's transformative activities in diaspora investment, diaspora voting and engagement in local, regional and national policy processes.

It is now my privilege to open the Third Stake in the Nation Forum, and to announce that the Fourth Stake in the Nation Forum (SNF4) will be on Saturday, 9 January 2021.

I wish you well in your deliberations in the workshops and panels, and look forward to receiving updates and recommended actions.

I thank you all.