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STATEMENT
BY
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PRESIDENT
OF THE
REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA
AT THE

GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE
73RD SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. Secretary-General,
Madam President,
Your Majesties,
Distinguished Heads of State and Government,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

All praise is due to the Almighty Allah for granting us the favor of gathering in this August Assembly, once again, to discuss and advance our common global agenda. Please allow me to begin by sincerely thanking H.E. Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for the excellent manner he presided over the 72nd Session as President. By the same token, I congratulate you, Madam Maria Garcés on your assumption of the Presidency of the 73rd Session. I assure you that, as one of your Vice Presidents, The Gambia pledges its full support and cooperation during your tenure of office.

Madam President,

The theme for the 73rd Session, “**Making the UN relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies,**” is indeed very relevant in today’s global affairs. By implication, the pursuit of the UN’s mission for peace, development and human rights also remains as relevant today as it was in 1945 when it was adopted in response to the horrific experiences and destruction during that gloomy era.

Amid the complex multilateral challenges that continue to confront us globally, no country can thrive or solve all its challenges in isolation. Our salvation, as human beings, lies in strengthening our multilateral institutions and fostering greater international cooperation to collectively address global challenges. The UN uniquely provides the opportunity to achieve this goal.

Madam President,

It is apparent that in order to make real progress, effective global leadership is imperative. Thus, as leaders, we must all shoulder our responsibilities by all means. This should compel us to support and invest more in the United Nations, instead of withdrawing our participation or cutting back our financial support.

It is an irony that at a time when multiple global challenges are emerging and mounting, support for the work of the United Nations is being undermined through inadequate funding.

Those of us who value the UN, as well as those who have benefitted immensely from its work, should be at the forefront to call upon all Member States to step up support for the Organization. Indeed, the UN has to play a lead role in solving global challenges, and our task is to ensure that it has the required capacity, influence and effectiveness.

Madam President,

Decisions and actions rooted in a rules-based international system that is underpinned by multilateral agreements and processes form the basis for the successful conduct of relations between and among nations.

Let us, therefore, restore faith in our rules-based international order so as to remain relevant and, collectively, make progress on our global agenda - ranging from tackling the menace of climate change and terrorism to addressing disarmament, trade, development and other concerns to humanity.

Madam President,

I am confident that it is only through effective Global Leadership and effective International cooperation that the well-being of all of the world's citizens can be achieved.

As leaders, we have the shared responsibility to promote a world order that prioritizes peace over insecurity; a world order that eliminates the growing inequalities around the world; and a world order that brings us sustainable development.

Madam President,

With reference to The Gambia, and following a difficult political impasse in December 2016, Gambians have managed, with the support of our partners, to restore democracy and the rule of law in our country. We have completed our national electoral process in full, after successfully conducting both legislative and local government elections.

We are also resolutely pursuing institutional and constitutional reforms. Such reforms have commenced, with the hope of putting The Gambia on a solid path to becoming a shining champion of democracy and human rights in the world.

Madam President,

When Gambians voted for change in 2016, they actually yearned to be in charge of their destiny. They wanted significant, not cosmetic, improvements in their lives. It is for this reason that my government is now implementing a comprehensive National Development Plan (2018-2021). The Plan seeks to transform The Gambia through key priorities, such as infrastructural development, agricultural transformation, macroeconomic stability, job creation and employment. The Plan also seeks to consolidate our democratic gains through good governance, rule of law and respect for human and people's rights.

In all, our goal is to deliver a fully transformed Gambia that has a future; a country that is energy secure, food-self-sufficient and an investment friendly destination.

We have also begun to exploit and harness the benefits of Information Communication Technology as a catalyst for modernization and youth empowerment.

Madam President,

Our National Development Plan was presented to a successful Donors' Conference in Brussels, where significant pledges were made to meet our funding targets. I must express yet again, profound thanks to our bilateral and multilateral partners, including the United Nations, European Union, World Bank and many others for their interest and support. We are indeed truly grateful, as we look forward to their continued collaboration and support to attain our development objectives.

The NDP will continue to be implemented through the partnerships and solidarity built at the Brussels meeting. Quite thoughtfully, the Plan is consistent with the Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development, as well as the African Union Agenda 2063.

Madam President,

In our pursuit of a fully transformed Gambia, we recognize the importance of a meaningful engagement with The Gambian Diaspora - fondly referred to as “The Eighth Region of The Gambia”.

Our Diaspora strategy seeks to explore and utilize the skills, talent and resources of Gambians everywhere for the successful implementation of the National Development Plan.

The Gambia’s experience demonstrates that democracy yields amazing dividends. Remarkably, we have noticed a decrease in the number of youths attempting to undertake dangerous journeys across the Mediterranean to Europe. The average Gambian is willing to stay in the country and contribute to national development. Despite these positive developments, I strongly urge that interventions to curb youth migration be supported through incentives. On account of this, we look forward to the High-Level Conference in Marrakesh, Morocco in December, 2018 to adopt the new Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Better educational and job opportunities must be harnessed for the youth in order to inspire them and give them hope in life.

In this regard, my government stands ready to work collaboratively with the United Nations, the African Union, ECOWAS and other regional blocs to devise and implement suitable strategies and interventions.

Madam President,

As a member of the Sahel region, The Gambia fully supports the implementation of the new United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel anchored in the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel - UNISS.

We are optimistic that it will contribute significantly to addressing the challenges of development in the Sahel, as well as fostering peace, security and cross-border relations.

We are particularly excited that the new strategy views the Sahel as a land of opportunities, and not one of hopelessness. In light of this, we envisage that this strategy will yield important dividends for Africa, especially towards the maintenance of peace and security and the elimination of terrorism in the region.

Strategically, we must disrupt all criminal networks and the financing of trans-human crimes through better information sharing and cross-border security initiatives.

Madam President,

As we battle these negative forces and try to fulfill our aspiration of silencing the gun on the African continent by 2020, we are worried about the state of United Nations Peacekeeping missions in some of our trouble spots, especially in view of the drastic cuts to the peacekeeping budget.

The unavailability of the critical resources required to support peacekeepers is quite worrisome. The Gambia supports the introduction of appropriate reforms to strengthen the UN's capacity for both peacebuilding and peacekeeping, and these should be reconsidered and maintained as important priorities on the organization's agenda.

My government proposes that we do better to protect the lives of not only innocent civilians but also the men and women who constitute the peacekeepers.

At this juncture, let me seize the opportunity to pay tribute to all the gallant peacekeepers who have fallen. We call on our partners to rise up to the challenge, and stop the protraction of all conflicts. Consequently, we support the Secretary-General's agenda for reform.

Madam President,

As Africans, we must assume leadership for maintaining peace and security on our continent. In this respect, I commend the leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea for the extraordinary efforts made to bring lasting peace to the Horn of Africa. They have set an example for the rest of the continent to emulate.

In a similar vein, I applaud the leaders of South Sudan for agreeing to restore peace, and work towards developing their country.

We call on the leaders of Libya and Central African Republic to intensify their efforts through political dialogue for national reconciliation and peace.

Madam President,

My government reaffirms its strong support for the two-state solution to establish peace between the Palestinians and their neighbors. Related to this, we pronounce our unconditional recognition of the One-China Policy. Similarly, we recognize the support provided by the Government and People of Bangladesh to address the plight of the Rohingya Muslims.

As the upcoming Chair of the next OIC Summit, The Gambia has undertaken, through a Resolution, to champion an accountability mechanism that would ensure that perpetrators of the terrible crimes against the Rohingya Muslims are brought to book.

Madam President,

While it is our strong desire to see a reform that allows the Secretary-General to operate efficiently, it is equally expected that the reform also facilitates the successful implementation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development goals.

Madam President,

Reform of the United Nations Security Council is long overdue. I wish to call that the process truly reflects all interests and positions represented in the inter-governmental negotiations.

We are convinced that Africa's voice needs to be fully represented on the UN Security Council.

Madam President,

My delegation looks forward to a successful 73rd Session, and we hope that your election will solidify the platform to highlight the plight of rural women and girls during the Session.

Madam President,

Before I conclude, let me express sincere condolences to the family of former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan. Mr. Annan was a formidable voice on everything, including reform of the United Nations. He stood for a 'just' world, and was a passionate advocate of good governance and fundamental freedoms. Kofi Annan will surely be greatly missed.

I thank you all.