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STATEMENT
BY
H.E. MR. ADAMA BARROW
PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

AT THE
HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON PEACEBUILDING AND
SUSTAINING PEACE

24TH APRIL 2018
NEW YORK

**Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Distinguished Heads of State and Government,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

With warm greetings from The Gambia, I thank you for the invitation you extended to me to participate in this High-Level Meeting on the pertinent topic of “Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace”. The United Nations was founded to end the scourge of war and build peace in the aftermath of the Second World War. In light of our current geopolitical realities, the fulfilment of that mission remains even more relevant today. We have come very far, but we are still witnessing too many conflicts in various parts of the world. In Africa, we have committed ourselves to silencing the guns on the continent by 2020. With the support of the UN and the international community, we can achieve that difficult and challenging goal.

Mr. President,

As we chart a way forward in our deliberations in the next two days on how to better equip our organization to build and sustain peace, I call on you all to take a moment and reflect on the dividends of sustained peace for our countries and the world at large.

In recognition of the urgent need for peacebuilding and sustaining peace in our restored democracy, my government, from its inception, has embarked on a number of initiatives with a view to consolidating our democratic gains and good governance.

With the adoption of our new National Development Plan 2018-2021, the priorities of my government are geared towards economic growth and transformation with emphasis on peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Mr. President,

In this regard, allow me to highlight some of the achievements attained by my government with the assistance of our partners, whose continued support and cooperation remain unwavering.

1) Following our successful transition, I am happy to inform that we have carried out phase one of our security sector reform programme. The state of security in The Gambia has improved steadily. The Government is fully committed to scaling up the programme with a view to consolidating our gains during the next phase.

2) To promote economic growth, we have adopted fiscal and macroeconomic policies to reduce our domestic borrowing, as well as address our unsustainable debt burden. Since December 2016, interest rates have been steadily coming down and this is encouraging local businesses to borrow and invest without fear of high-interest rates;

3) A critical review of the 2017 budget has led to a reduction of government expenditure of about 1 percent GDP, my office being the first to receive a budget cut by 75 percent;

4) The concluded budget support agreements with our development partners, like the European Union, the World Bank, the African Development Bank and many others, have provided my government renewed optimism for development and ultimately economic growth;

5) The growing youth population has become an added priority that cannot be ignored. Youth unemployment must be addressed in ways that give the youth opportunities to realize their full potential. It is for this reason that my government has launched a joint youth empowerment project with EU. This project aims at job creation for the youth, skills development, as well as provides opportunities for setting up start-ups in business;

6) In our endeavor to bring justice and closure to victims of human rights violations committed by the former regime, my government in 2017, successfully concluded a nationwide consultation for the establishment of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparation Commission (TRRC). Truth and reconciliation should help us heal as a nation. The Commission will soon commence its work;

7) The consolidation of rule of law, democracy, respect for human rights and the pursuit of economic growth are major priorities of my government. In this connection, I am happy to inform you, that with our dedication and commitment to good governance, my government has successfully assured the citizenry of a government rooted in democracy and the rule of law.

Suppression of freedom of expression and undermining of judicial processes and independence have been consigned to the dustbin of history. Our laws, including the Constitution, are being reviewed with a view to consolidating our democracy.

Mr. President,

With the measures that I have outlined, our overarching goal is to build and sustain the peace that we have won. Today, I am encouraged to stand before you with renewed optimism for the future of our country. Thanks to our neighbors and partners in ECOWAS, the African Union, the European Union

and the United Nations, in particular, the Peacebuilding Commission and UNOWAS, who we continue to count on for their relentless and tireless support to our peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts, we are now on a solid path to durable peace. Our experience underscored the importance of regional and international solidarity and cooperation, with sustained preventive diplomacy, as important elements in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

In the recently adopted National Development Plan (NDP) for the period 2018 to 2021, My government takes into account the promotion of key areas like democracy, transparency, rule of law and economic growth as priorities within priorities for sustainable peace and development.

In our quest for advancing sustainable peace within and beyond The Gambia, my government is of the strong conviction that these key areas of concern must be mainstreamed in our national efforts to build peace and sustain it over the long haul. Regional strategies to uproot the evils of organized crime, trafficking in persons, terrorism and violent extremism must be supported.

Mr. President,

It is our resolve to achieve sustainable peace in The Gambia, by investing in economic growth, guided by the rule of law, democracy, and transparency. Good governance, institutional reforms and people-centered approaches will continue to inform our peacebuilding efforts. My government is committed to creating an enabling environment that encourages constructive criticism, including a new and vigorous role for civil society. As partners, civil society plays a crucial role in peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

The Government of The Gambia strongly believes that it is the onus of every government to provide its citizenry with an atmosphere that is conducive to support the development of their full potential if they are to grow as a people in a sustained peaceful environment.

Mr. President,

Consolidating the dividends of peace remains one of the major priorities of my government and we will continue to exert all efforts towards achieving durable peace.

We recognize, however, that we have challenges just like in any restored democracy, including the revival of our economy, a comprehensive reform of our laws and various administrative institutions. Peacebuilding and sustaining peace will remain worthwhile investments for our New Gambia.

For these reasons, I once again reiterate my appreciation to our partners and call on them to be steadfast with their continued material and financial support, capacity building, technical cooperation and exchange of ideas. I want to reaffirm my confidence in our ability to achieve our collective goal of peacebuilding and sustaining peace. The UN, Regional Organizations and the International Community must learn from each other's best practices by forging or consolidating partnerships for peace. National efforts or programmes must be supported through the provision of material and technical assistance geared towards building peace. The UN Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Fund must be provided with generous financial resources so that timely and critical interventions could be launched to support governments. We must embark on a renewed push for partnerships at national, regional and global levels.

I wish to leave you with and an old African proverb that says, "If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

I thank you.