



Check against delivery

STATEMENT

BY THE

HONOURABLE NENEH MACDOUALL-GAYE
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

ON BEHALF OF

HIS EXCELLENCY SHEIKH PROFESSOR ALHAJI
DR. YAHYA A.J.J. JAMMEH BABILI MANSA
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

ON THE OCCASION

OF THE

UNITED NATIONS SUMMIT
FOR THE ADOPTION OF THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

NEW YORK
FRIDAY 25TH SEPTEMBER 2015

**Your Excellency Mr. Chairperson,
Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-Moon,
Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives,
Delegations, Heads of International Organizations, Institutions and NGOs,
Government officials,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of His Excellency Sheikh Professor Alhaji Dr. Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh Babili Mansa, President of the Republic of The Gambia, I feel deeply privileged and singularly honoured to be present here on the occasion of this historic meeting. Indeed, the Government and people of The Gambia would like to commend the United Nations and the global community for their vision in drafting the Sustainable Development Goals as the successor plan to the Millennium Development Goals.

The articulation of the new development goals is no doubt the supreme manifestation of our collective will and desire to enhance the lives and livelihood of humanity. It is therefore imperative that we should muster greater courage, mobilize added resources and marshal our human capital to ensure that the new Sustainable Development Goals effectively and expeditiously complete the unfinished agenda of the MDGs.

**Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

As the comity of nations we have cause to celebrate, for significant progress was made during the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. The global scenario indicates that the number of people living in extreme poverty has declined. Remarkable achievements have been registered in school enrolment and gender parity with an astonishing reduction in the level of under-nourished people. Also in the area of health, robust and sustained immunization has reduced to more than half the under-five mortality rate.

In The Gambia, I am happy to report that the targets for both infant and under-five mortality rates have been met. It is also a source of pride and satisfaction to note that under the Millennium Development Goals, The Gambia made significant strides and achieved major results particularly on the under-one immunization against measles programme. The Food and Agriculture Organization in November 2014 awarded The Gambia an insignia for achieving the MDG 1 target and reducing by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. It is also to be noted that The Gambia has reduced the prevalence of undernourishment from 13.3 percent in 1992 to 6 percent in 2012.

In the education sector, the Government of The Gambia had extended free education for girls which enabled government to attain gender parity at the lower basic level since 2005, the upper basic level in 2009 and at the secondary level in 2014. In further extending free education for all up to secondary level, statistics show that in the 2015/2016 academic year, 221,550 girls have been enrolled in comparison to 212,354 boys. This gives the population access to 12 years of free education from primary to secondary level.

Another important milestone achievement for us is access to Safe drinking water. The Gambia reached 91% in 2013.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government of The Gambia intends to further redouble efforts to sustain and improve upon the gains we have registered as well as address the challenges to improve the livelihood of all Gambians. In this regard, we are stepping up our investments in the productive sectors, infrastructure and social services.

Despite the achievements made at national and continental levels, though we need to acknowledge that daunting challenges still remain. There are inequalities between regions and countries, and between urban and rural areas. Climate change and environmental degradation will require greater attention if we are to sustain and enhance the gains already registered. In this connection, I would like to call on all countries to come up with an ambitious climate change treaty in Paris later this year. Of equal significance, I call for a massive investment in our youths who are not only the pillars of our societies, but the future of our countries. Vocational training and skills enhancement to enable our youths secure gainful employment and contribute to national development shall be the watchword. It is therefore important that we strive to make the SDGs as effective as possible. One way of realizing this is to mainstream the SDGs in our national development planning processes, giving them the weight they deserve as part and parcel of our development aspirations.

**Mr. Chairman,
Honorable Delegates,**

Conflicts remain the biggest challenge to development. Millions, if not billions of dollars which could have accelerated development, are spent on arms and lethal weapons. Several Millions of people who could have constituted our human capital for development lose their lives, are maimed or displaced with many others living as refugees in camps that are devoid of basic facilities. The UN and the entire global community must give urgent attention to addressing conflicts and make the world a safer and more secure place for all. This is central if we are going to achieve the objective of “leaving no one behind” under the Sustainable Development Goals.

The SDGs, no doubt, hold a lot of promise for the world and we must learn from our experiences during the MDGs implementation. Doubtlessly, the SDGs are very ambitious and as such must be met with the same level of ambition as far as their implementation is concerned. Capacity building, finance and technology are the prerequisites for the SDGs’ success. Developing countries must therefore accelerate domestic resource mobilization through innovative practices and by involving the private sector in order to finance development.

To this end, we strongly call on the developed world to meet their ODA pledges of 0.7 percent of Gross National Income. It should be noted that an assessment of goal 8 of the MDGs indicate that only a few countries have met this target.

**Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Transfer and diffusion of appropriate technology and capacity building will be fundamental in the achievement of the SDGs. Multi-stakeholder partnership must be built and enhanced to mobilize and share knowledge. Expertise must be marshalled to complement the efforts of governments, particularly those of developing countries. The implementation of the SDGs cannot be left to goodwill alone, robust mechanisms must be set up and means of verification established.

To conclude, let it be said that the SDGs as far as the Government of The Gambia is concerned, is a contract with humanity and although the United Nations may not be perfect, it is the only global institution we have and which is capable of ensuring our security and development. On behalf of the President of the Republic of The Gambia therefore, I call on the global community to once again rally round and give their undivided support to the United Nations in this noble task of uplifting the livelihoods of especially the underprivileged, for, it is only in this way that future generations will judge us in a favourable light.

Eid Mubarak to you all and I thank you for your kind attention.