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## **BREAKFAST WITH UNCT | 08:00 – 09:00 A.M. | VENUE: COCO OCEAN**

The meeting's goal was the interaction between the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and the UNDP Assistant Administrator and UNDP Regional Director for Africa to discuss the socio economic situation in The Gambia and UN Reforms.

Main highlights:

1. The UNCT is currently working to reshape The Gambia's trajectory following 22 years of autocratic rule. To assist the government in this endeavour, the UNCT is providing support through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). Although the UNDAF was initially intended to run until the end of 2022, it has been extended to ensure continued assistance.
2. Different agencies are supporting different pillars of the UNDAF to support poverty eradication, human capital development (e.g health and education), sustainable natural resources and environment management as well as governance.
3. The governance pillar of UNDAF is spearheaded by UNDP, which, in collaboration with OHCHR, is presently providing aid for the execution of the White Paper and additional initiatives, including enhancing access to justice and reinforcing the rule of law, as well as reforming the security sector. Furthermore, UNDP is offering support for policy reforms.



5. Since 2020, flood events in The Gambia have led to loss of infrastructure, threats to food security and displacement of populations'. UN through UNDAF is the major actor in offering humanitarian assistance through the UN World Food Programme.

6. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has resulted in a rise in inflation rates, which has adversely affected access to healthcare and education. Additionally, the scarcity of food is another consequence of this situation, particularly for The Gambia, which depends heavily on imported food items.<sup>7</sup> The Gambia is also trying to solve its cross border issues with Senegal to export some of its products and improve The Gambia's economic situation.

8. The economic situation in The Gambia is also impacted by the Casamance conflict. Consequently, it is crucial for The Gambia to collaborate with Senegal in resolving these issues to ensure a better future for The Gambia.

9. Heavy reliance of the country on the UN for its different sectors is not sustainable. The UN and the government are currently working towards a National Development Plan (NDP) that will run from 2023 -2027.

11. Several other challenges facing the country were brought to attention. These include deeply ingrained gender and social norms, as well as detrimental cultural practices, such as FGM. Additionally, issues such as the high incidence of adolescent pregnancies, the welfare of children, the establishment of sustainable financial mechanisms, food security, economic development, migration concerns, and the decentralization of services to promote accountability were also highlighted. Furthermore, diseases that affect a large proportion of the population, such as malaria, were identified as pressing issues.

## RDA REMARKS/REACTIONS

Although The Gambia is considered a small country, this does not exempt it from experiencing various developmental challenges. Contrary to common assumptions, smaller countries are not necessarily easier to develop. To ensure its development, The Gambia will need to work on a few elements:

- Enhance its human capital capacity;
- Ensure the sustainability of the tourism industry and other industries to reduce dependency on other countries or foreign aid; resolve the cross border issues to better interact with neighboring countries;
- Shape the national development priorities and establish a regional collaborative platform.
- Work with experts to see how best the country can achieve the SDGs.

## ACTION POINT

The Regional Director suggested organising a workshop to discuss how to position The Gambia in light of challenges it is facing.





**MEETING WITH PRESIDENT ADAMA BARROW | 10:00 A.M. | VENUE: STATE HOUSE**

The meeting was held behind closed doors. Nevertheless, during the subsequent press conference, the RD made the following remarks:



**1**

**CLIMATE CHANGE**

During COP27, a resolution was made to establish a fund for loss and damages.

This fund would enable The Gambia to access climate financing to address the adverse impacts caused by climate change.

**2**

**NDC**

The Gambia has set forth an ambitious NDC that outlines its plan to reduce CO2 emissions to 1.5°C, while also pursuing a sustainable, environmentally friendly development path. The plan also includes strategies to adapt to the changing climate conditions.

**3**

**OTHERS**

The current state of the economy highlights the necessity of diversifying away from tourism. Furthermore, there is a pressing need to enhance agricultural productivity. Governance reform is also a crucial issue that UNDP is providing support for.



## LUNCH MEETING WITH ALL STAFF AT MAMA AFRICA ART CENTRE | 12:00 - 2:30 P.M. | VENUE: MAMA AFRICA

Following a meeting with President Adama Barrow at the State House, the RD had lunch with the staff. The lunch took place at Mama Africa, an Art Gallery and Lodge, where she also had the opportunity to tour the gallery and hear Isha Fofona's story.

The meeting commenced with a warm welcome from Elina Cole, the President of the Staff Association. During the meeting, the RD expressed her appreciation for visiting country offices and engaging with staff members, which she considers to be the most valuable aspect of her work.

### THE COUNTRY:

The RD emphasized the significance of The Gambia utilizing its size and resources to achieve its national development goals. By doing so, the number of young people embarking on dangerous migration journeys in search of better opportunities, often risking their lives, could be reduced.



Roles: The RD congratulated the staff for their important contribution and added value to the country through their work.

### SALARIES

The RD recognized the low UN salary scale for National Staff in The Gambia. She explained that the salary scale is determined by ICSC through salary surveys, and that she is unable to modify it at her level. However, she encouraged staff to take the survey seriously and actively participate in selecting the appropriate comparators to help improve the salary scale. The RD also addressed the impact of the NPSA contract modality on staff members who were previously on Service Contract (SC), tasking the Deputy Resident Representative, Ms. Nana Chinbuah, to assess whether NPSA offers improved salaries for those who have transitioned to the new contract modality.





## CAREER GROWTH

The RD urged staff members to apply for international positions, emphasizing the importance of taking career advancement seriously as a personal responsibility. She also reiterated the flexibility and opportunities available to staff who wish to pursue courses for professional development. The RD placed particular emphasis on encouraging female staff members to participate in leadership and mentorship programs for women. She further encouraged all staff members to focus on the fast-developing areas in The Gambia and enhance their knowledge in those areas by enrolling in relevant courses.

## THE GAMBIA & THE FUTURE

The aim of UNDP in The Gambia is to empower people and enable them to break free from poverty. As a result, the country office should not focus on having a poverty unit or specialist, but rather be recognized as the Inclusive Growth for Sustainable Development Unit. The emphasis should be on investing in growth and prosperity rather than just managing poverty.

## ACTIONS

1. The RD found Mama Africa's story inspiring and nominated her to be part of the 'UNDP Influencers for Development' program.
2. The suggestion was made to hold a discussion with the President of the Republic to explore opportunities for collaboration between the UN Country Team and the government in achieving national priorities.
3. The Deputy Resident Representative was tasked with informing the RD whether the NPSA contract modality led to an improvement in the salaries of national staff or not.







## SITE VISIT 3:00 – 4:00 P.M. | KARTONG FISH COOLING STORAGE

The female technicians who underwent training on solar installation in the Gambia impressed the RD, who sees them as empowered women who are shaping their own futures while contributing to development.

Almost 100 other women have been trained in solar installation through their initiative. This aligns with the Africa offer, which has a strong focus on providing access to clean energy and empowering women and youth.

The RD acknowledged that this intervention is not only promoting renewable energy access to an off-grid community but also improving fishing value chains and empowering young women. She discussed potential ways to scale up the project with the beneficiaries to increase its impact.

Furthermore, the facility provides access to a washing machine that saves the women in the community time spent on laundering, allowing them to engage in business activities for longer.





During the visit, the community requested an expansion of the water treatment facility to provide increased access to clean drinking water. The RD also had the chance to test the solar-powered tricycles used for transporting goods to the market at the facility, and was pleased to learn that one of the female technicians trained and sponsored by UNDP had attended COP27 in Egypt and returned with valuable insights on the importance of the Gambian Government investing in clean cooking stoves.







Bonsa PACD Water



## SITE VISIT 4:45 – 5:30 P.M. | BONSA PACD WATER

Upon arrival at the village of Bonsa, the RD was greeted with a colourful ceremony. The community, which heavily relies on farming as their main source of economy, presented her with a calabash of palm kernels to show their appreciation for her visit. The Alkalo of Bonsa and the former and current Village Development Committee (VDC) chairpersons delivered the welcoming remarks and highlighted how the village had been without access to safe drinking water for more than half a century.

A beneficiary shared that before the initiative, access to water was difficult and unsustainable. The community also faces other challenges in accessing basic amenities and services such as schools, healthcare, and roads, which require traveling 10 kilometres. The Resident Representative of UNDP Gambia expressed gratitude for the warm welcome and assured the community that UNDP will continue to strengthen their partnership in areas within its mandate.

The RD emphasised the importance of partnering with the Gambian government on critical initiatives such as the Programme for Accelerated Community Development (PACD). The community led a tour of the facility, including the borehole and 12 taps. The RD commended the community for successfully managing the borehole project and stated that similar successes could lead to additional resources for other projects in the area.





## DINNER WITH DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS AT COCO OCEAN

A dinner was hosted to explore potential partnerships and discuss the development agenda with various development agencies and embassies, including representatives from Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Senegal, Turkey, and Cuba.

The collaboration between these parties and the UN system in the country was deemed satisfactory, although it was noted that additional capacity will be required to effectively implement the new National Development Plan (2023-2027).

The embassies expressed their interest in the implementation of the White Paper and the transitional justice process, as well as their close monitoring of the National Development Plan.

### RDA REACTION:

The RD emphasized that while Europe remains a significant development partner for the UN, the Ukraine crisis and climate change have had a severe impact on Africa. She also highlighted the importance of the strategic offer known as the African Provision, which recognizes the need to invest in prosperity and youth entrepreneurship as part of the solution to the continent's challenges. The discussion also touched on the critical issues of violent extremism and maintaining peace in the country, while taking into account cultural beliefs, especially those related to women and women's leadership. The potential for creating a local industry based on products such as shea butter and local juices was also noted as an opportunity to promote economic development.





## VISIT TO EDWARD FRANCIS SMALL TEACHING HOSPITAL-BAKAU (NDEMBAN) | 09:00 - 10:00 A.M.

The RD also visited the Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital (EFSTH), where representatives from the Ministry of Health, UNFPA, WHO, UNICEF, and the World Bank Country Representative were present.

Dr. Abubacarr Jagne, a kidney specialist at the hospital, informed the group that the hospital had been renovated during the COVID-19 pandemic and had served as the primary center for COVID-19 patients. It was a significant Public-Private Partnership initiative in the country, with UNDP playing a vital role in its establishment and coordination of efforts.

The World Bank Country Representative added that they had invested over \$100 million in the health sector to strengthen health services in The Gambia, including the rehabilitation of the Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital (EFSTH), as well as investments towards civil registration and birth certificates among others.



The Government representative expressed gratitude towards UNDP for its support which went beyond its core mandate in aiding the country during the pandemic. Prior to UNDP's intervention, the supply of oxygen was limited, and private sector supplies were expensive and scarce. The new oxygen plant will now produce and distribute oxygen to primary health care facilities throughout the country, free of charge.

The Regional Director stressed the significance of the oxygen plant and emphasized that patients should not be burdened with the cost. She commended the Government's leadership and emphasized the need for human resources to ensure its effective implementation. The Regional Director also expressed delight in the upcoming availability of a dialysis machine, recognizing its importance in supporting individuals with kidney diseases. She urged for the plant to be operationalized swiftly to provide sufficient oxygen to those in need.

Finally, she highlighted the importance of peace in development and commended the positive developments she observed in the country, urging for their continuation, sustainability, and consolidation.



**COURTESY CALL ON RC AT UN HOUSE | 10:30 – 11:00 A.M. | VENUE: UN HOUSE**

This was closed door meeting and notes were not taken.





## **LUNCH AT COCO OCEAN WITH 2 FORMER VPS AND WOMEN MPS 09:00 – 10:00 A.M.**

The meeting addressed the issue of women's political participation, which remains low due to the patriarchal culture in the Gambia. The attendees also pointed out that women's lack of support for each other during elections, as well as the stigma and trauma associated with their participation, contribute to this problem. The UN was called upon to continue supporting women's political participation.

In addition, there was a discussion about the Interparty Committee, an organization that resolves disputes between members of different political parties and within the same political parties. However, it was noted that the IPC does not accommodate independent candidates since its personnel come from diverse political parties.

## **RD'S REMARKS**

The Regional Director asserted that gender inequality costs Africa billions of dollars annually in terms of the African Human Development Index. In order to attain economic prosperity, women's participation is crucial, and they need to have a collective voice and a unified platform to advocate for feminist ideologies. It will be necessary to raise awareness and mobilize individual thinkers, and also emphasize men's support for women through promoting positive masculinity.



## ACTION POINTS

During the meeting,

- Members of Parliament emphasized the significance of raising awareness among women about political participation through radio, television, and campaigns.
- UNDP stressed the need for data availability to develop strategies to support women's political involvement.
- The Regional Director proposed the creation of a platform for women to convene, exchange ideas and build relationships.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The process of democratization in The Gambia is facing a fundamental challenge in terms of gender equality in political leadership. In addition to the barriers that specifically affect women in politics, women and girls in general face significant socio-cultural barriers and stigmatization due to patriarchal norms and rules. It is reported by UNFPA that a majority of married women require permission from their husbands to attend hospital visits.
- The traditional attitudes towards gender equality are a major obstacle to the election of women in positions of political leadership, including party executives, parliament, executive office, etc. Private life and political culture are intertwined, and the patriarchal attitudes towards women as political leaders pose a significant barrier to their empowerment.
- Women in The Gambia participate in political processes, mainly as members and leaders of "compins" (local political mobilization committees), and as voters. Structural and institutional barriers to women in politics also contribute to the problem, and the Ministry of Gender, Children & Social Welfare has noted normative gaps, such as the lack of mandatory quotas for women's representation in the Constitutional Promulgation Bill and the absence of women in political parties' nomination processes.
- Online bullying and lack of access to finance for political campaigns are also significant barriers for women in politics. To address these challenges, a Network should be established for joint strategic engagement and to promote a culture of mentorship, partnership, and solidarity across political lines, targeting young women interested in political leadership.





## **SITE VISIT 3:00 – 3:40 P.M. | VISIT TO MEMORY HOUSE**

The ANEKED Country Representative, Ms Sirra Ndow, opened the session with introductions. ANEKED is an organization that advocates against enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings in Africa. Attendees included representatives from victims' associations, two victims, and a representative from the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). Ms Ndow explained the purpose of the Memory House, which is a memory and education center, and gave the RD and entourage a guided tour followed by the screening of the witch hunt documentary.

Ms Ndow shared that UNDP supported ANEKED by providing furniture and funding for the publication of its monthly Digest. She also highlighted the NHRC's efforts in assisting the transitional justice process and implementing the White Paper, as well as civil society organizations' work in ensuring that the Reparations Bill is comprehensive and reflects the needs of the people, especially with regards to gender equality.

UNDP expressed its satisfaction in being associated with this initiative, and the NHRC reiterated its commitment to continue working on the implementation of the White Paper. The RD emphasized the importance of never forgetting the victims and always remembering them.



## **DINNER WITH STAKEHOLDERS | 7:00 P.M. | VENUE: COCO OCEAN**

The event was attended by various stakeholders from civil society organizations and private sector institutions. During the dinner, several points were raised regarding the socio-economic development trajectory of the country. The growing unavailability of skilled workers due to heavy migration and insufficient investment in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for young people was a major concern.

Mustapha Njie, CEO of TAF Africa Global, emphasized the need to shift the national curriculum's focus from producing "certificates" to equipping young people with "skills for employment." Salieu Taal, President of The Gambia Bar Association, echoed this point and emphasized the lack of national programs aimed at fostering necessary attitudes for transformative change.

The stakeholders also highlighted the need for investment in agriculture and training, particularly engaging youth in agricultural practices. Environmental security and natural resource disputes were also discussed, as they are particularly relevant to the current landscape of The Gambia.

The stakeholders emphasized the importance of the river as a resource for food security and wealth generation, as it is home to a variety of fish species. However, overfishing and shrinking ecosystems have led to the depletion of fish in The Gambia. Therefore, research-based interventions to promote ecosystem regeneration and sustainable income-generating fishing practices were suggested to mitigate this problem. The stakeholders also emphasized the potential for sustainable cash flow through tourism and encouraged capitalizing on it.



## IMAGES OF DINNER WITH STAKEHOLDERS





## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AT PROJECT OFFICE | 08:30 – 10:30 A.M. | VENUE: UNDP PROJECT OFFICE

During the final engagement, the RD met with various youth organizations and groups. The following are some of the main highlights of the meeting:

The youth in The Gambia should be encouraged to replace carbon fossil products with environmentally friendly alternatives. Additionally, efforts should be made to promote digital literacy at the grassroots level to support the digitalization of the economy and other sectors. One Gambian youth who had lived in the United States for many years has introduced digital healthcare services to promote wellbeing through technology transfer.

Aminata O. Bah, a beneficiary of the UNDP-University of The Gambia Students Graduate Scheme, shared her success story during the event. She credited the initiative for providing her with technical and practical experience that helped her secure a senior position in the Treasury Unit of Guaranty Trust Bank.



The Youth Konnect, which was launched in The Gambia in 2018, organized a Youth Convergence that was attended by over 300 youth.

The youth also attended the Regional Youth Konnect in Kigali where they had the opportunity to meet with the Minister of Youth of Rwanda. During the meeting, they agreed to hold an Annual Youth Carnival that would be attended by the youth of both countries and to organize periodic Youth Talks to discuss the continent's issues.

The RD nominated "Bright Stars Entertainment Gambia" to create a brand song for the 'Timbuktu Initiative' after their vibrant performances. The 'Timbuktu Initiative' aims to mobilize and invest \$1 billion of public and private capital over 10 years to harness Africa's enormous youth talent and transform it into a knowledge hub, starting in 2023.





## RD'S REMARK

The youth of The Gambia have demonstrated their impressive participation in critical sectors, including entertainment, entrepreneurship, innovation, science, banking, journalism, health care, climate change, and the environment.

The UNDP, as a development agency, strives to facilitate homegrown solutions through the establishment of Accelerator Labs worldwide, which connect various stakeholders to devise local solutions. Based on what she has witnessed during her visit, the future of The Gambia lies in its youth.

It is therefore our collective responsibility to trust and invest in their potential. In her closing remarks, the speaker emphasized that The Gambia is a young country undergoing a transition to a new regime, and it is the right time for partnerships to contribute to its development.

The event concluded with performances by different artists and cultural groups, as well as an artistic drawing by Aminata Alice Yajoh.





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