



THE GAMBIA

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STATEMENT

BY

H.E. AJA DR. ISATOU NJIE-SAYD

VICE PRESIDENT

AND

MINISTER FOR WOMEN'S AFFAIRS

REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

AT THE

**56TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE
STATUS OF WOMEN**

NEW YORK

27TH FEBRUARY 2012

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BY

H.E. ALA DR. ISATOU NJIE-SAIDY

VICE PRESIDENT

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REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

AT THE

26TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE

STATUS OF WOMEN

NEW YORK

27TH FEBRUARY 2012

Madam Chairperson, Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with utmost pleasure and delight that I deliver a statement on the status of women on the 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. First and foremost, I extend heartfelt congratulations and best wishes from my District U.S. Executive Director, Mrs. Aina Dr. Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh, a great supporter of Women and Girls Empowerment, the Government and people of The Gambia to you all on your auspicious occasion. By the same token, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and congratulations to you Madam Chairperson and the Bureau for the excellent work in the conduct of this meeting. Please allow me to also congratulate you on the priority theme and for the recommendations contained therein as well as the Executive Director of UN Women and her team for their invaluable support. This year's theme "empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and other challenges" is apt and relevant to the MDG target date of 2015.

Madam Chairperson, Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The attainment of gender equality, equity and the empowerment of women has been recognized, by the Government of The Gambia as an important pre-condition for sustainable development and progress. We therefore support the outcomes and conclusions of the Fourth world conference and the 12 critical areas of concern. In this respect, significant advancements have been made, anchoring heavily on closing the gender gaps, and empowering our women, with particular focus, on rural women.

Madam Chairperson, Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the Gambia, about 65% of the agricultural labour force are women and more than 89.94% of these women live in rural areas. Agriculture remains the main source of employment and livelihood for most women. Women play a paramount role, in food and agricultural production, hunger and poverty eradication

The back to the land initiative, spearheaded by His Excellency, Hon. Professor U. Alhagie Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh, President of the Republic of The Gambia, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, plays a significant role in increasing access to agricultural inputs, such as seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, and machinery and tools, such as Milling Machines, de-hulling and decorticating equipment, tractors and power tillage.

Madam Chairperson, Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Government continues to support resource-poor rural producers, with special attention to women horticultural, poultry and livestock farmers. This is through the Livestock Horticultural Development Project, through various channels, most of whom are women, are directly benefitting from this support. This initiative is a component of the Gambia Government's Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment (PARGEM) at attaining the overall development goal of reducing rural poverty by raising rural

Madam Chairperson, Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Supporting gender equality, and the empowerment of women, with support from donors and the private sector, have over the years, implemented activities, culminating in increases, in women's access, to education, productive resources and credit. Significant increases have also been registered in the number of women in decision making positions in politics (43% of the current cabinet are women, 13% of the National Assembly Members are women; and the majority of women continue to occupy top management positions in the civil, and public services and the private sector). Capacity building for potential women leaders, to increase their participation, in productive ventures, continues to occupy centre stage, in all our endeavours for women's empowerment. A Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Sexual Harassment Bill are being finalized, for enactment. Capacity building, in Gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting, project planning and management Monitoring and Evaluation have been carried out for Ministers, Members of the National Assembly, Heads of Institutions, staff of the Gender Machinery, and the Gender Focal Points in Government Ministries, the Private Sector and NGO's.

Madam Chairperson, Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, however, are not without challenges. Gender inequality, has persistently existed, especially with access and control over productive and financial resources. A good number of rural women still lack ownership and control over productive and financial resources, and therefore cannot boost their production or even manage their large-scale commercial farming. Consequently, this has impacted negatively on food self-sufficiency and security.

Efforts to continue to be made, in advancing gender equity, equality and empowerment of women. The Gambia has made significant achievements, in MDG 3 having achieved gender parity at basic levels of Education, thanks to the President's Empowerment of Girls Education in Decent (DECEP), Girls Empowerment Trust Fund and continued education for peace among others. Younger, less social girls, are being funded by Government to pursue higher levels of education. The challenge remains to be able to raise girls from Basic to Senior Secondary and Tertiary levels for girls. Affirmative action and inclusion guidelines for girls has been put in place, to encourage the retention, of girls to higher levels.

Madam Chairperson, Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

From the foregoing, it is quite obvious that rural women are part of the solution in addressing developmental challenges, including poverty, food insecurity and environmental sustainability. In this regard, my delegation calls for efforts to be made by all concerned, including the United Nations entities, Member States, Civil Society and

the Private Sector, to continue to support and finance the crucial needs of rural women and girls. We must not relent in our concerted efforts to address and eliminate the discrimination faced by rural women and girls.

In conclusion, my delegation calls for the integration of the perspectives of rural women as per our discussions during this meeting, into the preparatory process and, subsequently the outcomes of and follow-up to the Rio + 20 Conference, scheduled for 2012.

We would also confirm to the Commission the Government's unwavering commitment to, and recognition of, the role of rural women, in poverty reduction, eradication, as well as empowerment.

With our best regards, I thank you for your kind attention.

the private sector, to continue to support the growth and employment of rural women and girls. We must not relent in our concerted efforts to address and eliminate the discrimination faced by rural women and girls.

In conclusion, my delegation calls for the intensification of the perspectives of rural women as per our discussions during this 2012 Rio + 20 Conference. We will subsequently follow-up on the outcomes of and follow-up to the Rio + 20 Conference in 2012.

We would also confirm to the Commission, the Gambia's reaffirmed commitment to and recognition of the role of rural women in poverty and hunger eradication, as well as empowerment.

With these few words, I thank you for your kind attention.