

**Statement by the President of the Republic of the  
Gambia, His Excellency Adama Barrow on the  
75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of MRC The  
Gambia Unit at the London School of Hygiene  
and Tropical Medicine**

**Venue: SDKJICC**

**Date: 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

Honourable Ministers of Health, and Higher Education, Science, Research and Technology

Cabinet Members and Parliamentarians in attendance

Chief Executive Director, Executive Director, Director of the MRC Gambia Unit at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

International and National Scientists

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure to join you today to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of MRC Unit The Gambia in our great country.

The development of this institution to become an internationally recognised **Centre of Excellence** for Research and Training in West Africa, and its contribution to improving health across the World over these many years deserve celebration.

The research carried out has without doubt saved the lives of many Gambians through the years and extended the lives of many more.

The relationship between The Gambia and the MRC is unique; MRC is a popular and ‘affectionate household’ name throughout the country.

You built this special relationship with the Gambian Government and our people over the many years that allowed a body of high-quality research work to be established.

The impact of your research in collaboration with the Gambia Ministry of Health can be appreciated when our National Malaria Control Program reported a 40% reduction in Malaria incidence 10 years ago, and the successful clinical trials and incorporation of vaccines against liver cancer and invasive bacterial diseases such as Pneumonia and Meningitis amongst other preventive vaccines.

I was particularly proud when in 2021, our Ministry of Health and WHO declared Gambia free from Trachoma blinding disease, being the second African country after Ghana to have eliminated the disease. This is thanks to your ground-breaking research and interventions over many years.

You offered sterling support to the Ministry of Health during the Covid-19 pandemic in the advice on control measures and strengthening the capacity of the Public Health Laboratory to enable state-of-the-art testing. The clinical and logistical assistance you provide to our public health institutions as you collaboratively carry out research at these centres have benefitted Gambian health care services.

The contribution of MRC to the Gambia extends well beyond health. I am reliably informed that MRC is the fourth largest employer in the country, with 1600 staff from over 20 countries, Gambians representing more than 60% of the staff.

Your Institution, not only create employment opportunities for our young University leavers, but many have professionally grown through the excellent postgraduate training support you offer to your staff, thus contributing immensely to our country's skills and education-based economy.

It was, therefore, pleasing to have learnt that my Ministry of Health renewed its Memorandum of Understanding with MRC the Gambia Unit to support the integration of the Unit in 2018 with the world-renowned London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; this being a further widened opportunity to train a critical mass of African scientists.

I am hoping these opportunities will only increase in the coming decades and because of the presence of your international expertise, I would like to encourage you to continue strengthening the collaboration between the relevant stakeholders in the Gambia such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, for us to achieve greater feats in our health care delivery and health education and research sector.

Your presence and hugely important work are a pride to our nation, and we are happy to join you in this celebration of 75 years of impactful health research done in the Gambia. I welcome the international visiting Scientists to this beautiful smiling Coast of West Africa and wish you all an enjoyable stay and productive scientific deliberations during the symposium.