

STATEMENT BY
HIS EXCELLENCY, THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA,
MR. ADAMA BARROW
ON THE
TEKKI FII PROGRAMME CLOSURE AND LAUNCHING OF THE NATIONAL
EMPLOYMENT POLICY AND ACTION PLAN 2022-2026

Date: 18th NOVEMBER 2022

KAIRABA HOTEL

THE GAMBIA

Your Excellency, the Vice President,
Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,
My Lord, the Chief Justice,
Honourable Cabinet Ministers,
Honourable National Assembly Members,
EU Ambassador and Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps,
The UN Agency Representatives present,
Senior Government Officials and Service Chiefs,
Deputy Executive Director of The International Trade Centre,
Development Partners,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This occasion is doubly significant, as it links two issues that have a direct impact on the lives and livelihoods of many people in the country; namely, closing of the **Tekki Fii Programme** and launching of the **National Employment Policy and Action Plan, 2022-2026**.

The two events have a bearing on each other, with the Policy providing long-term solutions to the challenges that the TEKKI FII intervention sought to address in the short term. In view of the positive results of the TEKKI FII Programme, it is with a deep sense of accomplishment and much optimism for the future that I join you here in person.

There is no doubt that we have made important gains since 2017, and the results of the Tekki Fii Programme clearly manifest this. The stories and results associated with it are indeed inspiring. Among other things, they give us renewed hope and strengthen our faith in the youth and the nation.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are difficult times for the global community. Our recovery from the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic is not only slow, but also further frustrated by the on-going Russia-Ukraine war. The additional suffering arising from the war is simply unbearable.

It has disrupted markets and supply chains, and it continues to raise the prices of basic commodities to unprecedented levels. With much discomfort, this has triggered a serious global food crisis, particularly in the developing countries of Africa. The current inflationary trends are mainly due to the erratic energy and food prices.

Concurrently, the impact of climate change is intensifying, hence the unprecedented floods experienced in the country this year affected more than fifty thousand (50,000) people.

The global crises, with their devastating impact, have hit The Gambia very hard, thus increasing food insecurity, eroding household incomes, and undermining employment and economic growth.

We must recognise and admit that the situation is not the fault of Government or any Gambian citizen. Like other countries, The Gambia is vulnerable to external shocks. Although our heavy dependence on imports makes us especially vulnerable to inflation and economic disruptions, no nation has been spared.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have weathered the pandemic crisis better than other countries, but the effects of the global shocks continue to dampen our recovery and growth outlook.

My government is determined to fight all out to reduce the impact of these shocks. Primarily, our focus is to offer support and soften the heavy economic burden on the most vulnerable citizens. For such reasons, we subsidise essential commodities and provide cash transfers to those in need through our social protection programmes.

In these difficult times, we must rely on one another. The biggest strength of Gambians lies in our peace, our solidarity, our respect, and compassion for each other. We support each other and lift each other in times of need and must maintain these values as our social safety net.

As we mitigate the impact of the global crises, the Government will continue to invest in a better tomorrow. We are committed to strengthening our resilience and making the economy less vulnerable to external shocks. These can be achieved through well-targeted people-centred and infrastructural investments. Such strategies have the potential to make The Gambia stronger, more productive, more competitive, and wealthier.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is remarkable that, through the Tekki Fii Programme, we created and sustained more than nine thousand (9000) jobs, enabled more than seven thousand (7000) young Gambians to undergo skills training, and worked with close to five thousand (5000) small businesses.

These results are offshoots of my government's youth-centred and private sector-led growth agenda. They reflect our drive to invest in the marketable skills of young Gambians, foster a culture of entrepreneurship, innovation and self-employment, boost the growth of small businesses, and add value to Gambian products and services.

I acknowledge, with gratitude, that the TEKKI FII achievements arose from the close collaboration between the public and private sectors and our confidence in the youth.

Most significantly, I applaud and appreciate our close and long-standing partnership with the European Union and the Tekki Fii Implementing Partners, the International Trade Centre implementing the Youth Empowerment Project, the German Agency for International Cooperation, the Instituto Marquês de Valle Flôr from Portugal, and the Belgian Development Agency, Enabel.

To build on the project achievements, upscale the results, and cement the foundations of our job-centred growth agenda, I am delighted to launch the **National Employment Policy and Action Plan, 2022-2026**.

The documents need no formal justification here. Employment creation has been a top priority for my government since 2017. It is at the core of our National Development Plan (NDP) and remains a top priority in our new Green Recovery focused NDP.

The Gambian population is growing rapidly at a rate of 3.3% per year, and the 2018 Labour Force Survey sets the unemployment rate at 35.2%, with youth unemployment at 42.1%.

The Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration, and Employment is currently conducting a comprehensive National Labour Force Survey to update the data on the labour market.

Meanwhile, the National Employment Policy and Action Plan are to form the cornerstone to tackle unemployment and underemployment and to improve living standards in the country. They seek to accelerate job creation, in accordance with the objective of stimulating the private sector as the engine of growth.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Overall, the Policy target is to create one hundred and fifty thousand (150,000) jobs over a period of five years. This is an ambitious objective but, with the concerted efforts of Government and our partners, it is attainable. We are committed to the target, and I call on our partners to support this worthy cause.

I also count on all Gambians to rally behind this agenda. Together, let us work with our institutions and businesses across all sectors to transform it into reality.

Working together with determination, we can overcome all challenges and create a nation where all Gambians can have a decent living and pursue their dreams.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

At this point, it is my honour to officially declare the TEKKI FII Programme closed and the National Employment Policy and Action Plan, 2022-2026 launched.

God bless us all.