

State House

7TH EDITION, JANUARY 2021

NEWSLETTER



“

**Standing Against the Odds
Leadership in the Face of a
Pandemic** ”



Contents

GOVERNANCE	5
The Gambia Controlling Corruption and Maintaining Democratic Rights	5
Technocrats Take Stock of Government Activities	7
Officials of the Judiciary, Ombudsman, and Minister of Youth and Sports Sworn-in	10
President’s Unannounced Visit to Government Offices	14
New Solicitor General, others take Oath of Office	15
SOCIETY AND POLITICS	16
Condolences on the Demise of Prominent Personalities	16
President Barrow Presents D2 Million to the U20 Scorpions	20
President Barrow Launches his Party-NPP	21
In Solidarity with President Barrow	22
19th Executive Council of the UTG Student’s Union paid a courtesy call on the President	22
KEEPING THE PROMISE-NDP IN PERSPECTIVE	24
Japanese rice aid to support NDP priorities	24
Monitoring the Banjul Project	24
Inauguration of 84KM Hakalang Road and other Rural Road Networks	25
NBR Governor Gets New Office Complex	26
Update on Basse Modern Market	29
‘Light Up Kiang’ Electrification Project	30
Remembering 19th January 2017	32
DIPLOMACY	33
Senegalese COVID-19 Delegation Pays Courtesy Call on President Barrow	34
President Barrow Receives Special Envoy, Botche Cande	36
An Audience Commonwealth S.G, Rt. Honourable Patricia Scotland	37
President Barrow Receives China Anti-Epidemic Experts	38
Goodwill Messages	39
REGIONAL NETWORKING	39
The 57th Ordinary Session of ECOWAS in Niamey	39
ECOWAS Commission President Meets Gambian Leader	40
President Barrow calls for Unity in Guinea Bissau	41
President Barrow Visits Nigeria	43
58th ECOWAS Ordinary Session	44
COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT	46
MEET THE PEOPLE TOUR 2020	46
\$10 million Women Enterprise Fund launched	46
GMB 20 million Youth Revolving Fund scheme	47
MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION	48

Acknowledgement

The year 2020 for the most part, has been extremely challenging with the advent of the novel coronavirus-Covid 19 pandemic. The world continues to face challenges posed by the pandemic, which drastically changed our ways of living in all spheres of life. Nonetheless, the Media and Communication Unit, despite all odds, managed to publish this edition of the State House Newsletter to keep the public up to date with the activities at the presidency.

Given the heavy schedules of the unit staff, the publication of this edition could not have been possible without dedication and commitment. The unit recognizes the importance of bridging the communication gap between the presidency and the public, and thus endeavors to keep the public informed through this publication, in addition to other mode of communication.

To the entire staff and the administrative departments of the presidency; we say thank you for contributing to the success of this publication. It indeed shows the power of resilience when confronted with a crisis. Special thanks to the Deputy Secretary General and Head of the Civil Service Mrs. Salimatou Touray for her input.

Meet the Media and Communication Unit Team

Amie Bojang Sissoho	-	Director of Press and Public Relations
Zainab Faal	-	Social Media Assistant
Sulayman Touray	-	Senior Photographer
Junkung Jawneh	-	Audio visual Officer
Momodou Njie	-	Assistant Audio visual Officer
Amie Manneh	-	Assistant Photographer
Sulayman Jallow	-	Driver
Tedi Sowe	-	Cleaner

Overview

In this edition of the State House Newsletter, which is also the 7th publication, we bring you the strides registered by the government under the leadership of President Barrow, despite the challenges the world is grappling with due to the coronavirus pandemic. Even though the present reality has become the new normal, the leadership of the country swiftly adapted by focusing on consolidating the governance and democratization efforts of the President.

This edition equally highlights ratings by world renowned International observers of the government's performance in improving the living standards of ordinary Gambians. These range from access to education and other basic services, eradication of corruption, and alleviation of poverty.

With the Barrow government championing the cause for good governance, this edition captures the swearing in of key public officials, critical policy decisions at cabinet level as well as landmark unprecedented infrastructure developments that the country is witnessing in realization of the National Development Plan.

In the diplomatic front, several global leaders have expressed and provided support to the President and the government during the difficult times. It also reports the government's collaboration with international partners in the response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

This edition also looks at the President's engagements at both global and regional levels to provide solutions to the myriad of challenges the world is confronted with.

Finally, this edition encapsulates the defying of the odds of last year and this year by drawing new strength and hope from adjusting to and managing the coronavirus.

Social Media Platforms:



[@BarrowPresident](#)



[@Presidency_GMB](#)



[BarrowPORG](#)



[PresidencyGambia](#)



[State House of The Gambia](#)



[statehouse.gov.gm](#)

GOVERNANCE

The Gambia Controlling Corruption and Maintaining Democratic Rights

His Excellency, President Adama Barrow was briefed on the state of affairs of governance under his watch as indicated in the latest Millennium Challenge Corporation Agency's 2020 Financial Report. The Gambia is entering the Fiscal Year 2021 on a positive note, scoring high in controlling corruption and protecting democratic rights.



The Barrow administration is advancing in its governance policy by ruling justly. In the Fiscal Year 2021 Report, the WB/Brookings/WGI credited the Barrow Administration 82% score for Government Effectiveness, and 92% for Control of Corruption as well as Rule of Law.

Despite the impact of the COVID-19, the Government is on the right track on Child health and Girls Primary Education completion rate, scoring 67% and 68%, respectively.



H.E. at the St. Joseph's Girls School

Additionally, the Barrow Administration has controlled inflation to 7.1, which is less than half of the maximum inflation rate of 15.0. Trade Policy environment scoring 72%; and a regulatory quality environment scoring 73%, demonstrates the government's commitment to improving the lives of Gambians by creating an environment to reduce poverty. The policy programme has also created a positive environment for women's economic engagement, scoring 81% on Gender in the Economy.

Reacting to the report, President Barrow commended the Civil and Public Servants for their commitment to hard work, despite the challenges they faced and urged them to ensure that processes and procedures are continuously respected. He equally expressed appreciation to the policymakers for demonstrating the strong political will to have a system in place that gives priority to serving the general good.

The President urged all citizens and partners to continue to support his administration; and to work together to improve on other areas such as land rights and access, business start-ups and access to credit, fiscal policy, expenditures in health and primary education, and natural resource protection.



Cabinet set for session

He challenged all Civil Servants to cooperate and re-double their efforts to better serve The Gambia as one people.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation-MCC has scored The Gambia high on twelve areas of the socio-economic and political development, using the scorecards of reputable institutions such as WB/Brookings WGI, IMF WEO, Heritage Foundation, Freedom House, RSF/Access Now/CLD, UN bodies such as WHO, UNESCO, UNICEF, IFAD, CIESIN/YCELP.

Technocrats Take Stock of Government Activities

Secretary-General and Head of the Civil Service, Mr Noah Touray called on his colleagues in the Civil Service to be result-oriented and proactive in strengthening good governance. He made the remarks at the beginning of a two-day virtual retreat of Government technocrats, chaired by the Secretary to Cabinet, Mr Ebrima Ceesay.



Secretary General and Head of the Civil Service, Mr. Noah Touray

Secretary General Touray emphasized the importance of the mid-term evaluation exercise on the National Development Plan (2018-2021) by the Ministry of Finance, which resulted in the formulation of a new long term vision of government.

“The mid-term evaluation will establish the degree of fulfilment of strategic priorities and critical enablers of the NDP in the consideration of their relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability,” Mr Touray told the retreat.

Mr Touray added that they will also assess the initial impact of COVID-19 on the implementation and attainment of the NDP objectives, identifying opportunities to quickly respond to challenges. *“It is the outcomes of these assessments that will inform the reprioritized National Development Plan,”* he added.

The session also served as a validation meeting for the Pay and Grading Review exercise which forms an important part of the Civil Service Reform Programme 2018-2027. As part of this programme, the Personnel Management Office undertook a job evaluation exercise to review the current pay and grading structure of the Civil Service.

Permanent Secretary at the Personnel Management Office, Mr Lamin Jawara in his remarks reminded his colleagues that the sessions will avail them the opportunity to conduct an assessment of the challenges confronting them in the various sectors of government. *“As a team of technocrats, we will also be engaged in an information and experience sharing exercise, interrogate the status quo of the NDP and come up with sound solutions to obstacles impeding the deliverables of the goals for the good of the country,”* he said.

As a quarterly event, the first-virtual session will avail an opportunity to the Permanent Secretaries and Planners to collectively take stock of government activities vis-à-vis the successes and challenges, with the view to devising strategies to accelerate attainment of the 2021 NDP goals. It also looked at challenges affecting the effective implementation of the institutional arrangements, especially the sector working groups.

During the opening ceremony, Secretary General Touray welcomed the New Director General of the Department of Strategy Policy and Delivery, Professor Jainaba ML Kah to the meeting.



New Director General of the Department of Strategy Policy and Delivery-DSPD, Professor Jainaba Kah

Professor Kah now leads her team on leadership, strategic management, innovations, talent management, and functionality at the Department in liaison with the Office of the Secretary General, the Cabinet Office, other MDAs and stakeholders in government. She brings with her a wealth of work experience on strategy, management, and policy from both international and national institutions and organizations.

President Barrow Appoints Seedy Keita as Trade Minister

His Excellency, President Adama Barrow in the exercise of the powers conferred upon him under Sections 71(1) and 71(3) of the Constitution of the Republic of The Gambia, appointed Mr Seedy K. M. Keita as Minister for Trade, Industry, Regional Integration, and Employment with effect from 2nd November 2020.

Presiding over the swearing–ceremony of the new Trade Minister on 12th November 2020, the President said Keita’s appointment was prompted by his track record as a professional with a wealth of knowledge, experience, and exposure, both nationally and internationally.

It is expected that all these will contribute immensely to the on-going reform and transformation of the important sector he now leads. President Barrow said it is a critical sector for development, as it has to create and maintain the necessary platforms for public-private sector interface and productivity. He congratulated Honourable Keita on his appointment and wished him success.

Mr Keita holds a double Master's Degree in Business Administration and Financial Management from Edinburgh Business School, Herriot-Watt University. He was recently awarded a Post Graduate Diploma in Financial Strategy from - **Saïd Business School**, the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom.

Mr Keita, until he was appointed Minister, was Director Finance Department at the Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector in Jeddah from 2011 to date. He first joined the Corporation in 1999 as a Young Professional Core Team Member and rose through the ranks. In The Gambia, Mr Keita worked at the Accountant General's Department and The Gambia Civil Aviation Authority, where he held various positions to the level of Chief Accountant before he left for a World Bank funded Health Project in 1998.

Officials of the Judiciary, Ombudsman, and Minister of Youth and Sports Sworn-in

“

My Government will never lose sight of its pledge to undertake relevant institutional and legal reforms-

”

President Adama Barrow reiterated his government's commitment to institutional reforms in line with global standards and best practices, while presiding over the swearing-in of Supreme Court Judges, President of the Court of Appeal, Judicial Secretary, the Ombudsman, and Minister of Youth and Sports.

The appointees; Supreme Court Judges, Justice Awa Bah and Justice Edrissa Fafa M'bai, President of the Court of Appeal, Justice Omar Musa Njie, Judicial Secretary, Aisatou Jallow-Sey, the Ombudsman, Bakary Sanyang and Minister of Youth and Sports, Bakary Badjie, respectively, took the prescribed oaths of office, at the State House in Banjul on the 8th October 2020.



Hon. Bakary Badjie-Minister of Youth and Sports



Ombudsman Bakary Sanyang



Justice Awa Bah



Justice Edrissa Fafa Mbai



Justice Omar Musa Njie



Judicial Secretary Isatou Jallow-Sey

Describing the occasion as his government’s continuous search for Gambians to partake in institutional building, President Barrow said: *“The continuous review of our reform programmes makes it necessary to set new goals for our institutions, review our laws and procedures, and continually improve output by creating and maintaining, at all times, a positive attitude to work and nation.”* He added that such appointments clearly show the importance of collectively working together to achieve national objectives.

“Credible institutions are not mere structures with furniture and equipment. Through systems that operate to serve the public, they are made functional by the good character, intelligence, and expertise of the people who staff them.” President Barrow observed.

The Gambian leader urged the appointees to commit to improving on their performances and the output of their offices.



Justice Awa Bah delivering her statement

In her statement, the newly appointed Justice of the Supreme Court, Justice Awa Bah, hailed the President for accepting the recommendations of the Judicial Service Commission, while commending his commitment to the independence of the Judiciary.

“Today, we are proud to say the Judiciary of The Gambia under the new Gambia has for the first time in its history not only a Supreme Court with a panel of five Judges who are all Gambians but also a Court of Appeal with an unprecedented compliment of Gambian Judges. This indeed is very reassuring that justice delivery by capable sons and daughters of this land is at the heart of this administration.” She remarked.

The Minister of Youths and Sports, Honourable Bakary Badjie, whose appointment took effect from the 1st October 2020, thanked the President for the confidence bestowed on him to lead such a vital Ministry. To meet the requirements of today’s realities he said, young people should be at the fore of national development, through the identification of their skills and talents to actively participate in public administration.

“I desire to attain maximum participation and excellence in sports and sporting activities at national and international levels. This we cannot achieve without the right investment and support from Your Excellency, the Cabinet, and all other stakeholders.” He noted.

In his remark, the Chief Justice, His Lordship, Hassan B. Jallow said hard work and integrity are crucial in appointments in the functions of the state. He seized the opportunity to call on the government to continue to support the Judiciary with resources to enhance their operations.



Newly sworn-in officials posed with President Barrow and V.P Dr. Touray

The ceremony was witnessed by Her Excellency, the Vice President Dr Isatou Touray, Ministers of Justice, and Fisheries and Water Resources, Hon. Dawda Jallow and Hon. James Gomez, respectively; officials from the Judiciary, the Secretary-General and Head of Civil Service, Noah Touray, and was moderated by the Secretary to Cabinet, Mr Ebrima Ceesay.

President's Unannounced Visit to Government Offices

"The Unannounced visit is not a witch-hunt" - President Barrow

President Adama Barrow embarked on a surprise visit to various government Ministries at the Quadrangle which he said was not 'a witch-hunt' but a monitoring exercise.

Accompanied by the Secretary-General and Head of the Civil Service and the Secretary to Cabinet, the President visited the Personnel Management Office (PMO), the Ministry of Youths and Sports, Ministry of Local Government and Lands, Ministry of Tourism and Culture, and the Ministry of Finance.

"You are given a responsibility in a position of trust and discipline is something that you shouldn't compromise."
President Barrow.

At the PMO, the President tasked the Permanent Secretary to lead the efforts in instilling discipline in the Civil Service by encouraging punctuality and regularity at work. While inspecting the Records Office at the PMO, the President raised concerns about the safety of the documents and challenges in accessing them on time. Permanent Secretary, Lamin Jawara was quick to say that they have already initiated the process of transitioning to electronic record keeping.

In all the offices the President visited, his message was clear, ***"work for the interest of The Gambia and not for Adama Barrow."*** He interacted with the staff and encouraged them to be disciplined, productive, and honest in the execution of their duties.

At the Lands Ministry, President Barrow engaged both the Permanent Secretary and Minister on the issue of land disputes. Permanent Secretary Sanyang, however, assured him that they are in consultation with the Justice Ministry to ensure the enforcement of court rulings in land disputes.

Stressing that there is a need to resolve pending land disputes, President Barrow said, ***"we are in a democracy and the courts are independent. I believe the judgments delivered are right and must be respected."***

The Lands Minister, Honourable Musa Drammeh used the opportunity to highlight some of the key undertakings of the Ministry including an online data system of all allocated lands in the country. President Barrow encouraged them to communicate more and continue with the good work.

At the Ministry of Finance, the President was informed that they are working on the 2021 Budget with a focus on infrastructure development, Health, Agriculture, Education, and a huge cut on travel and related expenses.

Throughout the exercise, the recurrent issue highlighted by various Ministries is the need for office spaces. The President assured that the issue would be discussed in consultation with his Cabinet.

The Barrow Administration has undertaken a series of policy reforms to improve the Civil Service as part of the Civil Service Reform agenda, to ensure efficient and effective service delivery to Gambians. Therefore, the President urged civil servants to show a positive attitude to work to achieve the desired results in public service delivery.

New Solicitor General, others take Oath of Office



As the Gambia government continues its search for competent Gambians to serve in the Civil Service, President Adama Barrow on January 28th presided over the swearing-in of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Abdoulie Jallow, the Solicitor General and Legal, Hussein Thomasi, and a member of the Public Service Commission, Mr Ganyie A. Touray. The three officials took the prescribed oaths of due execution of office, allegiance, and secrecy.

In his statement, President Barrow stated the importance of having committed, honest, and dedicated Gambians in the civil service for high performance and effective delivery, while urging the appointees to serve in the best interest of The Gambia.

The President described the appointees as highly skilled and experienced people with a wealth of knowledge about their various institutions.

Abdoulie Jallow, on behalf of the appointees, thanked the President for the confidence bestowed on them in serving the country. He seized the opportunity to give an overview of the current economic situation and the forecast for 2021.

SOCIETY AND POLITICS

Condolences on the Demise of Prominent Personalities

Sereign Pape Malick Sey, Spokesperson of the Khalipha of the Tijania in Senegal

The year 2020 has been a difficult one from many fronts, including the loss of several great personalities both at the home front and beyond our borders.

The untimely demise of Serigne Pape Malick Sy, Spokesperson of Serigne Babacar Sy, the Khalipha of the Tijania Sect, sent shockwaves to the Tijania fraternity and beyond. On behalf of the government and people of The Gambia, H.E, President Adama Barrow, dispatched a letter to his brother and counterpart, President Macky Sall, conveying his sincere condolences.

Alhajie Banding Drammeh Passes Away

At the home front, religious leaders and others were lost amongst them, erudite scholar and religious leader, late Alhajie Muhammad Drammeh, commonly known as Alhajie Banding Drammeh, who passed away on 2nd July 2020, at his residence in Brikama.

The President described Alhajie Banding as a great scholar who would be remembered for his service in spreading the teachings of Islam, through his popular radio program, as well as the schools he established and the many students he taught. He also served as President of the Supreme Islamic Council, during which he guided government policy formulation on issues related to Islam.

National Tribute to Gambian Legend, Alhajie Momodou Njie alias Biri Biri. It was with deep regret and a great sense of loss that President Adama Barrow delivered his tribute in honour of a Gambian legend, patriot, philanthropist, and a football icon, Alhaji Momodou Njie, better known as Biri Biri outside The Gambia, who departed this worldly life on 19th July 2020.



H.E President Barrow paying his respects, family amongst a crowd

The President hailed Biri's contribution to raising the Gambian flag high in the world of football. ***"We are gathered here today on a solemn occasion to pay homage to a great son of our land, a legend, and icon in the football world. As death is inevitable, we cannot but celebrate the fulfilling life Alhajie Njie, Biri Biri lived."***

The nation mourned his demise amidst tributes from a cross-section of the Gambian Football fans, friends, and loved ones.

Biri's football career, which started at the tender age of fifteen, had developed to a high professional level. He played against the world's greatest players and made his mark on the world stage. He left behind a unique reputation in Africa and Europe, not to mention his motherland, The Gambia.

Because of Biri's passion for football and his temperament on the field, the official fan club for Seville in Spain named their group and a portion of the club's stadium **Biri's Notre**.

Alhajie Biri's character as a patriotic Gambian was demonstrated many times during his sporting career, footballing in particular. He sacrificed for his country and made every effort to fly the Gambian flag high in the football world.

President Barrow extends condolences to the family of late Imam Alhaji Barham Jobe

The demise of Imam Barham Jobe of Serekunda, which occurred on 21st July 2020 also brought sadness to the Muslim Ummah in Greater Banjul Area. The erudite scholar and religious leader spent his life spreading the teachings of Islam, reconciling families, and promoting peace and social cohesion.

President Barrow extends condolences to the Catholic Community

President Adama Barrow joined the Catholic Community in The Gambia and abroad to mourn the demise of Bishop Emeritus Michael Joseph Cleary, commonly known in the country as Bishop Cleary, who passed away on Thursday, 3rd September 2020, in Ireland at the age of 95.

Bishop Cleary spent most of his life in The Gambia as a teacher and a Bishop. He first arrived in the country in 1953 and served as a missionary in Fula Bantang and Basse. He then taught at St. Augustine's High School for a quarter of a century and served there for 17 years as Principal. In 1981, he was appointed the Bishop emeritus.

One of the historic events, Bishop will also be remembered for is the hosting of his holiness the late Pope John Paul II, now Saint John Paul II, when he visited The Gambia in February 1992.

The love Bishop Cleary had for The Gambia was further manifested after his retirement, he stayed in The Gambia for nine years before finally leaving for his country of origin, Ireland.

In the same vein, President Barrow dispatched a letter of condolence to the family of Mr George Gomez, a fervent and devout Catholic. Mr Gomez will be remembered for his initiative in promoting peace and harmony through the May Day Sports, as well as strengthening the ties between Banjul and Ziguinchor in particular, and The Gambia and Senegal in general through his BANZIG exchange programme and later the Senegambia Marathon.

On another sad occasion for football lovers, President Barrow also joined the football fraternity expressing his condolences to the family and friends of Papa Sarr Corr, and Real de Banjul on the demise of their former club mate and prayed that his soul rests in eternal peace.

Grand Marabou of Gambissara, Alhajie Mpakary Conteh Answers to the Call

On 16th September 2020, in his hometown of Gambissara village, in the Upper River Region, the Grand Marabout, Alhajie Mpakary Conteh, was laid to rest. Alhajie Mpakary, fondly called Haran Mpakary by his disciples, was well known amongst the Soninke Community for his knowledge, humility, and commitment to the spread of Islamic knowledge.

President Barrow shocked by untimely demise of Deputy Governor, Lamin R. Darboe

The untimely demise of Lamin R. Darboe, Deputy Governor, Central River Region, sent shockwaves among Gambians home and abroad. On behalf of the government and people of The Gambia, H.E, President Adama Barrow, expressed his sincere and heartfelt condolences to Aja Maimuna Ceesay-Darboe and the entire Darboe Family of Pirang. *"It is a sad day for me."* President Barrow remarked upon receiving the sad news on the 3rd of November 2020.

The demise of *"R. Darboe"* as he is fondly called by his close associates, is a great loss to his family as well as the entire Nation. He would be remembered for his political engagement to advance democracy in the country. He worked hard in serving humanity to leave a legacy in his community, and the nation at large. In recent years, he took up an administrative role as Deputy Governor to nurture democratic change and support the reform processes.

President Barrow Presents D2 Million to the U20 Scorpions

President Adama Barrow on 28th January 2021 received at the State House the U20- Scorpions to celebrate their victory in the WAFU football tournament 2020. The players along with their coaches, technical team, President and officials of the Gambia Football Federation – GFF were accompanied to the State House by the Minister of Youths and Sports and his staff as well as the National Youth Council.



President Barrow and the U20 team

President Barrow presented a cheque of two million Dalasi to the U20-Scorpions while expressing joy at receiving the team who emerged as winners of the WAFU Trophy against Senegal. He urged them to continue to work hard, as hard work pays and they will be rewarded. *"You made The Gambia proud. You won Senegal in Senegal. This was possible because you played as a team."*

As U20-Scorpions prepares for the AFCON game in Mauritania, President Barrow urged them to maintain the discipline and continue to play as a team to succeed, adding that he is encouraged by the Gambian Coaches training the players. The President assured them of his government's commitment to develop sports and to maintain the U20 team in raising the flag of The Gambia higher.

The Minister of Youth and Sports, Bakary Badjie encouraged the U20, while the President of the GFF, Lamin Bajo seized the opportunity to appreciate the government's support and cordial relation the Federation has with the Ministry. He called on the government to further support the Federation and Sports development in the country.

President Barrow Launches his Party-NPP

President Adama Barrow responded to the call to form a political party as the transition programme under a Coalition government comes to an end in 2021, and Gambians will take to the polls on 4th December 2021 Presidential elections. On the 30th January, 2021, Gambians filled the Independence Stadium in Bakau to show support and solidarity to President Barrow at the launching of his political party, the National People's Party – NPP.

In his launching statement, President Barrow explained the motivation in forming a political party. *"I have accepted to form this party, together with all of you to provide a platform for us to collectively fight the social divisions, political cracks and institutional failures that have persistently undermined the peace, stability, progress and development of our dear motherland."*

He reassured Gambians that the NPP is a party for the present and the future, calling on Gambians from diverse backgrounds to join him on the political voyage.



In Solidarity with President Barrow

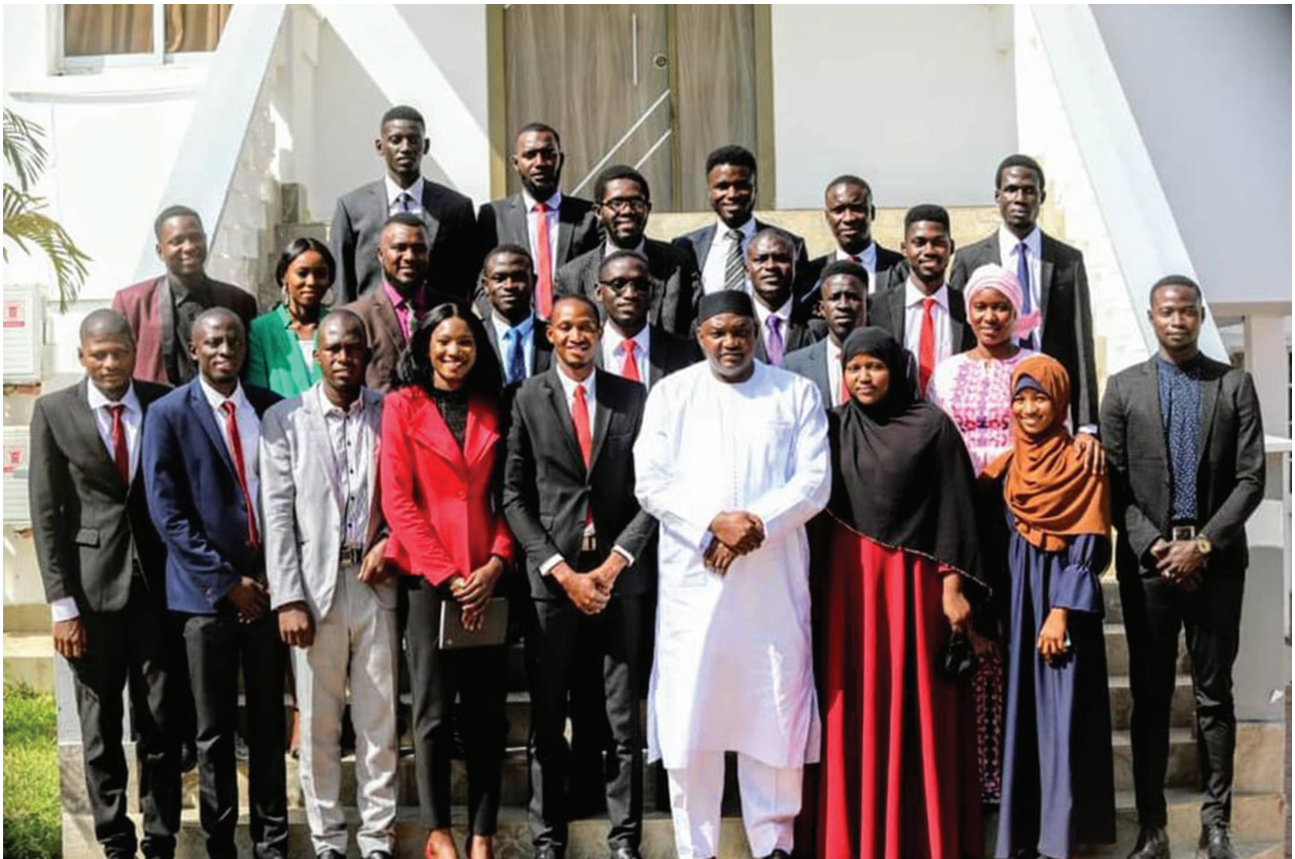
The period under reporting in this edition also saw an increased show of support to the President from different sectors of the society, ranging from religious to community leaders, including men and women as well as young people.



19th Executive Council of the UTG Student's Union paid a courtesy call on the President



19th Executive Council of the University of The Gambia Student's Union



19th Executive Council of the University of The Gambia Student's Union

President Adama Barrow has announced that the University of The Gambia Faraba Campus will be officially completed in six months, during his audience with the Council of The University of The Gambia Students' Union.

The student body paid a courtesy call on the President to bring to his attention some of the challenges the students are facing at the citadel of higher education. The issues range from the transportation system, classroom sizes, access to scholarships, among others. Additionally, the Council used the opportunity to inform the President about the forthcoming Students' Week to solicit his support.

In response, President Barrow assured the delegation that capacity building remains a top priority of his government and that he will engage the Secretary-General and the Ministers concerned to address the issues raised.

While expressing confidence in the quality of graduates the University is producing, the President reminded the students to be committed to the values of democracy and patriotism. Describing them as future leaders, he implored the students to remain hardworking as the success of the University is his success and legacy.

KEEPING THE PROMISE-NDP IN PERSPECTIVE

Japanese rice aid to support NDP priorities

The Government of Japan donated 115,956 bags of rice to The Gambia.

The Office of the President in consultation with the Ministries of Agriculture and Finance and Economic Affairs has decided to conduct the sale of the rice at the Ports. No single buyer was allowed to purchase more than five thousand (5,000) bags. The price for a 30 kilograms bag of rice was pegged at four hundred and fifty Dalasis (D450) only.

Interested buyers were invited to contact the Accountant Generals office, where they would be given an invoice and an account number to make all payments before collecting the rice. It was agreed with the Japanese Government that the proceeds will be deposited in a special account at the Central Bank of The Gambia to support the government in its NDP priority areas.

The public was strictly forbidden to sell the rice outside The Gambia. The price to the consumers should not be more than five hundred and fifty Dalasis (D550) per bag.

Monitoring the Banjul Project

President Adama Barrow was received by the Mayoress of Banjul, Her Lordship, Rohey Malick Lowe as he embarked on a tour of the City of Banjul, on 25th November 2020. The tour around the city availed him the opportunity to monitor the progress of work under the Banjul Sewage, Drainage, and Roads Project, which started in 2019.



H.E President Barrow and Mayor Lowe tour of Banjul Project



President Barrow with school children on the street

During the tour, Banjulians came out in their numbers to cheer the Gambian leader for the great initiative to give the Capital City a facelift that befits a capital. The tour began in Banjul South, through Banjul Central, and ended at Banjul North, where he passed school children cheering him as he stopped by St Joseph's High School, where he learned about some of the constraints of the school.

The elders of Banjul could not equally hide their joy with the rehabilitation work in Banjul. They gathered at the Grand mosque to recite the Holy Quran and pray for the president and the nation. Passing along Dobson Street, the Pastor at Wesley Church also joined Banjulians to pray for the President.

Inauguration of 84KM Hakalang Road and other Rural Road Networks

The construction of road infrastructure is a significant milestone in the development endeavours of the Barrow Government. As stated in the National Development Plan, the goal is *"to deliver good governance and accountability, social cohesion and national reconciliation, and a revitalized and transformed economy for the wellbeing of all Gambians."*

It is within this framework that His Excellency, President Adama Barrow on 26th September 2020, laid the foundation stone to launch the construction works on the Hakalang Road Network held in Nuimi Buniadu. The 84 KM road network will upon completion benefit communities. The project will provide for the people in these areas, interlinked bituminous roads covering the length and breadth of the Nuimis, and connecting these districts to Jokadu.



Laying the foundation stone for the construction of the Hakalang road network is evidence of our strong will to ensure that *“no section of Gambian society is deprived of their rights to live dignified lives and have their equal share of the national cake. The Government desires to minimize rural-urban migration, increase self-reliance and boost entrepreneurship, innovation, and productivity, with agro-business production given due attention.”*

NBR Governor Gets New Office Complex

At Kerewan in the Lower Badibou District, the President laid the foundation stone for a new office complex and a residence for the Governor of the North Bank Region.



In the same vein, from 1st to 5th October 2020, President Barrow laid the foundation stones for the construction of a 24km road between Kerr Ayib in the North Bank to Senoba in the Lower River Region.

To confirm the need for and magnitude of the works required to strengthen the Trans-Gambia Highway, the African Development Bank (AfDB) provided an additional grant of GMD 68.5 Million to carry out a Road Safety Audit and a Feasibility and Detailed Design Study for Phase Two of the initial project.

It will be recalled that the AfDB had earlier provided a grant of GMD 4.35 Million for the first phase.

On completion of the studies conducted, the European Union (EU), through an arrangement with the AfDB, also granted The Gambia Euro 16 Million, which is equivalent to GMD 880 million, to finance the actual strengthening of the Highway. This is what constitutes the second phase of the project. In 2012, the EU funded the rehabilitation of this Highway.

The work to be undertaken in Phase Two of this landmark project includes pavement strengthening of the twenty-four (24) kilometres of the Trans-Gambia Highway. It consists of both pavement overlay and rehabilitation works from the border in the South, at Misera, in the Lower River Region to Kerr Ali, in the North Bank Region.

The objective of the project is to facilitate overland traffic flow between the Northern and Southern parts of The Gambia and Senegal and, by extension, to enhance free movement within the West African region as a whole.

This corridor is a component of the Dakar-Gambia-Bissau-Conakry-Trans-West African Highway, which features on the ECOWAS program of events. It is also part of the Trans-African Highway, Cairo-Dakar-Lagos.

The Barrow administration took a critical decision to rebuild the country's economy and bring infrastructure development closer to the people. President Barrow embarked on monitoring the projects his government undertook and laid the foundation stones of various projects.

To update himself on the state of affairs, the President also conducted several site visits to the Farafenni Market, the Senegambia Bridge Toll Booths, Soma Market, Yorobawol Road's work in Wuli, Fatoto and Basse Bridge works as well as Kaleng – Bush town road in the Central River Region.

Infrastructure Development – (bridges, modern road networks, market outlets) key in economic growth.





Included in President Barrow's itinerary was the laying of the foundation stone for the rebuilding of a modern market in Basse on 3rd October 2020 to replace the old one that was the loss in an inferno in February 2020

Update on Basse Modern Market



Photo captions:

- 1: Fatoto bridge work in progress
- 2: H.E. with Ambassador Ma Jianchun and Minister Bai Lamin Jobe at Basse bridge
- 3: Kerr Ali road work begins
- 4: New Farafenni Market
- 5: Monitoring Senegambia toll
- 6: Foundation stone for modern Basse market
- 7: Foundation stone for new Basse car park
- 8: Progress on Basse market

'Light Up Kiang' Electrification Project

President Adama Barrow, on 28th November 2020 attended the inauguration ceremony of the Electricity Expansion Project in Kwinella, Kiang, Lower River Region of the Country. President Barrow switched on the first-ever electricity generated light for mass consumption in the history of Kiang. The historic lighting was part of Phase One of the Electricity Expansion Project, anchored on the 2017 National Electricity Roadmap designed to fulfill the promise made to make electricity accessible and affordable in the country.



Rural Road Network Project

In November 2020, the Gambian President embarked on a series of launch events to kick-start the construction of various road networks, funded from the domestic coffers.



LOT One (1), which is the Sabach Sanjal Loop, covers a total length of about forty kilometres. It has two sections. The first stretch from Sabach Sukoto to Bambali for about thirty kilometres, while the second section is eight kilometres long, running from Sara kunda to Ngeyen Sanjal. This Lot is part of the 1.6 Billion Dalasi Project that will link the communities of Sabach Sanjal, Upper Saloum, and Lower Saloum. In all, the construction works will cover eighty-six (86) kilometres.

On 16 November 2020, another foundation stone for the construction of the Kaur Jimbala-Kerr Auldeh road commenced. It is part of the development of the much needed North Bank road networks.



The inauguration of the project marks the commencement of Lot Two (2) of the North Bank Rural Roads Network Construction Project. Lot Two (2) covers a total length of about fifty kilometres and will link communities in Saloum, Niani, and Nianija districts.



Upon completion of the North Bank Roads Project, the Barrow government would have added two hundred and fifty (250) kilometres of laterite roads, and three hundred and sixty (360) kilometres of paved roads to the National Road Network. This will increase the roads constructed from 2017 onwards to over six hundred (600) kilometres.

With this project, the government will have also completed the construction of over two thousand, five hundred (2500) meters of bridges, compared to the seven hundred and fifty (750) meters built by the two previous administrations combined.

Remembering 19th January 2017: *President Barrow expresses gratitude*



In January 19th 2017, His Excellency, President Adama Barrow was sworn in at The Gambian Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, after his undisputable victory in the presidential elections of December 1st 2016.

The inauguration of President Barrow marked the beginning of an era of prosperity in all spheres of Gambian society. Four years down the line, The Gambia remains committed to the values and principles of democracy, which the country was deprived of for more than two decades.

Under the leadership of President Barrow, the country has witnessed exceptional developments, particularly in the area of road infrastructure; bearing in mind that infrastructure development is key to the advancement of the country's socio-economic status.

Remembering the day, President Barrow expressed gratitude to all Gambian electorates, the Gambians in the Diaspora, the Coalition 2016 Campaign Team, and the political parties for putting aside their political differences for the national interest.

He expressed deep appreciation to ECOWAS, African Union, the Security Council of the United Nations, and all friendly nations who stood by the country over the years.

Recalling the importance of good neighbourliness, President Barrow thanked His Excellency Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, and his government for the hospitality accorded to him, and the over fifty thousand Gambians who sought refuge in Senegal.

Reiterating his call for peace, progress and unity, President Barrow emphasised that elections are contested based on political diversity, but the nation can only progress through national reconciliation and unity. Thus re-echoing the call for all to uphold the value of ***One Gambia, One Nation, One People!***

DIPLMACY

New British High Commissioner Congratulates President Barrow on Democratic Reforms as He Presents Credentials

The New British High Commissioner to The Gambia H.E David Belgrove-OBE applauded H.E President Adama Barrow on the progress being made on the democratic reforms, while presenting his Letters of Credence on 30th September 2020, at the State House in Banjul. High Commissioner Belgrove replaces Her Excellency, Sharon Wardle who ended her tour of duty in July 2020 after serving for three years.

In welcoming the new High Commissioner, President Barrow said both The Gambia and the UK benefitted from the historic ties between the two countries. Responding on the way forward on the transitional program, the President told the new High Commissioner that he values and respects the independence of the institutions such as the judiciary and the National Assembly, thus allows the work of all the Commissions to go through the required processes adding, *"in a democracy, you are never sure, but not all is lost, we can disagree to agree."* President Barrow said he believes in democracy and wants the Constitutional Review to be part of his legacy, and would continue to engage his Cabinet and other stakeholders on the way forward.

President Barrow also appreciated the support provided by the British in various fields of development and the transition program in particular, while welcoming the UK's interest in more investment in The Gambia.

Speaking to the waiting press after his audience with the President, H.E Belgrove said he would like to build upon the long history of friendship between The Gambia and the UK and had discussed the UK's future relations with The Gambia.

"I congratulated the President on the democratic reforms The Gambia had made to date; and how we wish to be at work with The Gambia as friends and build on those reforms. In addition, we want to continue and build on the work on a number of areas including democracy, Human Rights, security sector reform, health, education, all of those things we want to continue to build on."



Receiving the Credentials of the British High Commissioner Belgrove

High Commissioner Belgrove also revealed that he informed the President he wants to support the economic recovery, particularly after COVID, do more on training, mentoring, and building the capacity of The Gambia Armed Forces as well as attract more investment from the UK into The Gambia.

Senegalese COVID-19 Delegation Pays Courtesy Call on President Barrow

President Adama Barrow said as leaders they are responsible and accountable to the people and thus urged the health professionals to take the lead to provide expert advice that will guide them as politicians to make informed policy decisions on the COVID-19 response mechanisms. The Gambian leader made the remarks when he received a high powered Senegalese delegation dispatched to Banjul by President Macky Sall, 22nd August 2020, at State House.

The visit came as a result of the decision by the two Heads of State to arrange for the Health Experts of the two countries to share experiences as well as for the Senegalese to consult on possible partnership and support to the COVID-19 response in The Gambia.

President Barrow said there are valuable lessons to be learned about the Coronavirus situation from each country.

“COVID-19 has overwhelmed us as a population; infection numbers are surging beyond our expectations and within a short period. Hence I turned to my brother, President Macky Sall, to tap from Senegal’s experience in managing the pandemic,” the Gambian leader asserted.

The Senegalese Director of Health Emergency Operations, Dr Abdoulaye Busso, who spoke to the press corps after the audience described Gambian laboratories as *“very good capacity laboratories”* at MRC and National Health Laboratory under the Department of Public Health.

They visited these labs and other treatment centres to exchange ideas and hold discussions with their Banjul counterparts on how to effectively collaborate and coordinate their efforts between Banjul and Dakar.

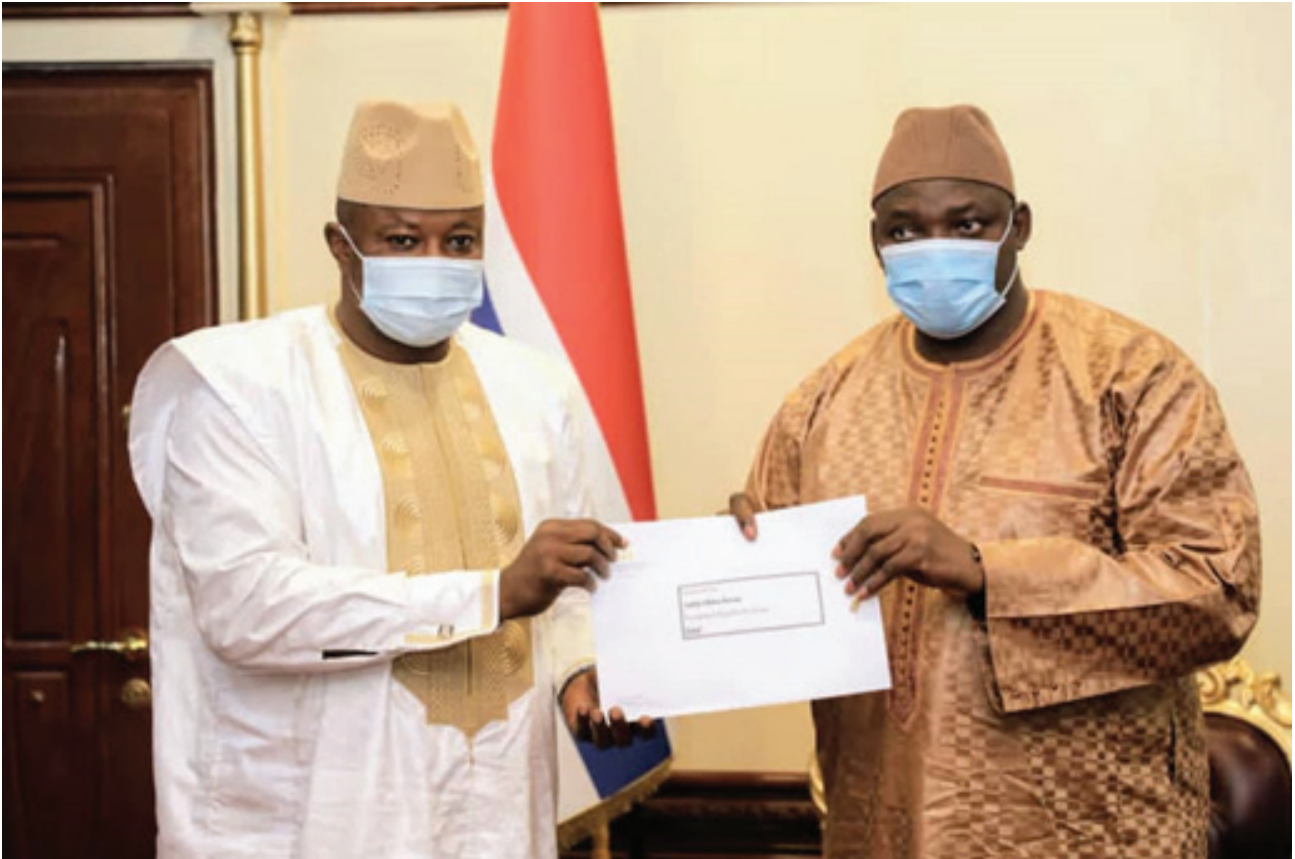
President Barrow expressed delight at the quick response from his Senegalese counterpart, President Macky Sall in dispatching such a team without much formalities, which he said, raised his confidence in their brotherhood as two nations but one people. The President described the gesture as representing a *“true bond of brotherhood and friendship”* never before enjoyed by Banjul and Dakar.

The friendly relationship also presents an opportunity for the two governments to work together for the mutual benefit of their two peoples. *“Such a dream cannot be achieved by any two leaders without the full participation of the two populations,”* President Barrow added.



Senegal's COVID-19 Response Coordinator, Prof. Moussa Seydi, the Director of Health Emergency Operations, Dr Abdoulaye Busso; the General Administrator of Institut Pasteur of Dakar, Dr Amadou Alpha Sall, are among other high profile experts on the Coronavirus Pandemic led to the State House by the Senegalese Ambassador to The Gambia, Mr Bachirou Sene.

President Barrow Receives Special Envoy, Botche Cande



His Excellency Adama Barrow received the Bissau Guinean Minister of Interior, Mr Botche Cande, a special envoy of President Umaru Sissoco Embalo of Guinea Bissau, who conveyed a message of gratitude to the Gambian President for accepting to visit Bissau, adding that President Barrow's visit *"brought tranquillity in Guinea Bissau."*

Minister Cande remarked that peace and stability can build confidence and trust for investment to grow in our region. *"No investor will go to a country where there is war and conflict."* he asserted.

On the welfare of his fellow citizens, Minister Cande said his colleague, Minister Yankuba Sonko assured him that the Bissau Guinean people do not pose problems in The Gambia, which he said was reaffirmed by the Bissau Guinean Ambassador, H.E. Bailo Cassama.

The Bissau Guinean envoy was optimistic that citizens of both countries could contribute to strengthening peace and security and building on trade relations and through people to people diplomacy.

An Audience Commonwealth S.G, Rt. Honourable Patricia Scotland

While on tour, the President also received officials and diplomats to discuss important issues. On 9th December 2020, he granted audience to the Commonwealth Secretary General, Rt. Honourable Patricia Scotland at the Governor's Residence in Kerewan, North Bank Region. She was led by the Foreign Minister, Dr Mamadou Tangara.



President presented a copy of the Commonwealth Charter

The President was briefed on the Commonwealth Innovators Award for young people, which aims at providing training for 200 young people across Commonwealth, through Fintech and a Bootcamp. After the training, they will be provided with seed money to start a business.



Commonwealth Secretary General meets with President Barrow during the annual Meet the People Tour in Kerewan

President Barrow Receives China Anti-Epidemic Experts

The essence of building strong bilateral ties with countries is to ensure that there is mutual support and benefit in the relationship. A clear example of such diplomatic ties is with the People's Republic of China.

A Chinese medical team with expertise in COVID-19 prevention, diagnosis, and prevention of infections in medical institutions, as well as acquired skills and knowledge on treatment of patients in critical conditions, in a rare situation spent three months in The Gambia. During their stay, they shared knowledge and skills with Gambians Frontline Workers in the management and control of the Coronavirus. The goal was to consolidate The Gambia's gains in the fight against COVID-19, and to ensure public safety in the pandemic as well present medicine and medical equipment for Epidemic Control.

Having completed their mission, the Chinese Ambassador to The Gambia accompanied by the Minister of Health Dr Ahmadou Samateh led them on a courtesy call on His Excellency, President Adama Barrow in January 2021.

President Barrow commented on the excellent relationship with the People's Republic of China while appreciating the timely support rendered to his government since he assumed leadership in 2017. He expressed gratitude to his Chinese counterpart, His Excellency, Xi Jinping, for fulfilling the pledges he made to his government. The Gambian President expressed his support in providing the country with medical supplies and personnel to ensure public safety during the pandemic, while pledging The Gambia's commitment to further cement the diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China.

The Chinese Ambassador, H.E Ma Jianchun played a critical role in ensuring that support was available in the fight against the pandemic. He described relationship between the two countries as '*strong*' since its inception and that it has witnessed robust collaborations in different areas, including public health.



The Gambian Minister of Health, Dr Ahmadou Samateh gave significance to the visit to the Presidency because of the importance attached to the relation with The People’s Republic of China. He applauded Ambassador Jainchun for leading efforts in curbing the pandemic since it was first declared.

Goodwill Messages

It is part of the culture in diplomacy for Heads of State and Government to exchanges Goodwill messages through diplomatic means. Despite the critical role of social media platforms to share such messages, the traditional channels are still relevant. During the Muslim feasts of Eid, Christmas and the New Year, President Barrow extended messages of best wishes and prayers with Leaders and Heads of State and Government around the world.

On behalf of the government, people, and his behalf, His Excellency, President Adama Barrow renewed congratulations and best wishes of health and wellbeing, as well as peace and progress to leaders around the globe.

He seized the occasions to register his gratitude and appreciation for the friendly relations between The Gambia and their respective countries, as well as for the solidarity and support in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic. President Barrow concluded with assurances of his highest and fraternal consideration.

REGIONAL NETWORKING

The 57th Ordinary Session of ECOWAS in Niamey

Gambian President attended the 57th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, held in Niamey, Niger on 7th September 2020.



At the ECOWAS Summit in Niamey

The 57th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority chaired by the President of Niger, His Excellency Mahamadou Issoufou, reviewed amongst other issues; security, economics, and the impact of COVID on the sub-region.

President Barrow upon arrival at from the Summit told the waiting Press that the leaders of the sub-regional bloc made an ambitious call for African scientists to develop a medication that would cure the global pandemic- Covid19.

“Covid19 is a big problem and has changed the way we live. COVID has enslaved everyone.” He lamented, adding that there is need for collaboration and that the leaders cannot fight alone without the support of the people they serve.

“We don’t have medication for COVID, so we have to respect the guidelines.” President Barrow stated.

Touching on the challenging security situation in the sub-region, the President noted with great concern that what is happening in Mali, Niger and other parts of the sub-region affects the entire bloc.

“It’s a concern and important to The Gambia. We have to make sure The Gambia is stable and secured and our sub-region is also secured and stable; is a priority on our agenda. We cannot develop if we are not secured and stable.” He concluded.

ECOWAS Commission President Meets Gambian Leader

The President of the ECOWAS Commission H.E Jean-Claude Kassi Brou applauded The Gambia government’s commitment and efforts in combating the Coronavirus, particularly the steps taken in reviving the economy. He was speaking to the Press after his audience with President Barrow at the Statehouse in Banjul.

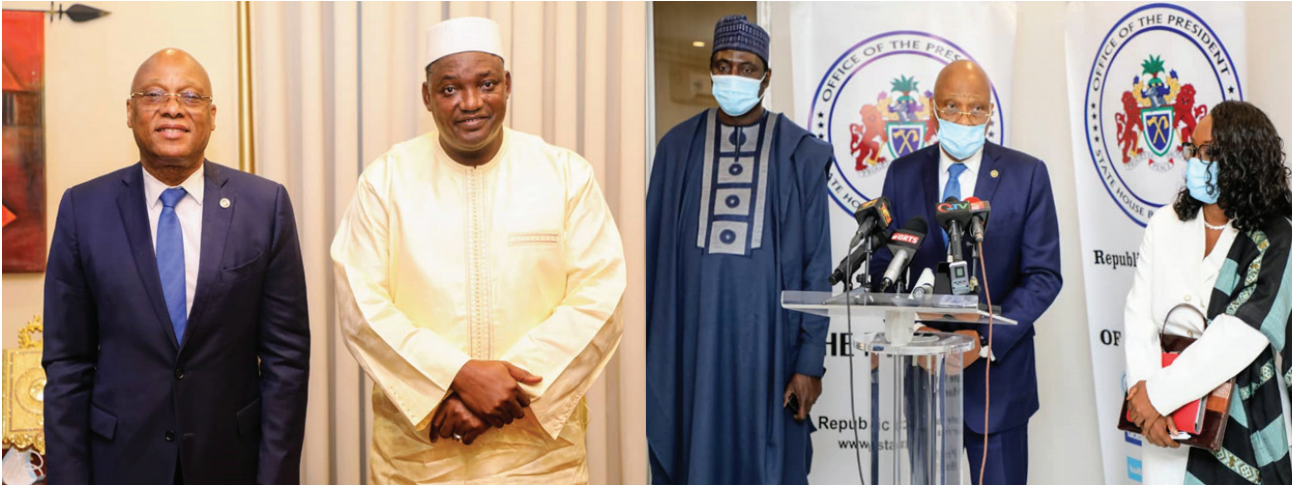
The closed-door meeting focussed on social, political, and security issues affecting the sub-region in the bid to promote peace and stability.

Responding to questions on his discussion with the President, H.E Brou said it centred on the impact of Covid-19 on the economy, and how the government revived the sectors affected by the pandemic among other things.

Acknowledging that COVID-19 affected everyone, President Brou stated that they have discussed ways of assisting the country to recover from the impact of the pandemic. Additionally, he stated that they discussed the numerous ongoing reforms, particularly the new draft Constitution which is a very important document. Despite the deadlock impasse at the National Assembly, he said, the step being taken by the government to revive it, is commendable and ECOWAS is willing to give full support.

Touching on the issue of ECOMIG presence in The Gambia, President Brou said the Authorities are pleased with the work of the regional forces in The Gambia.

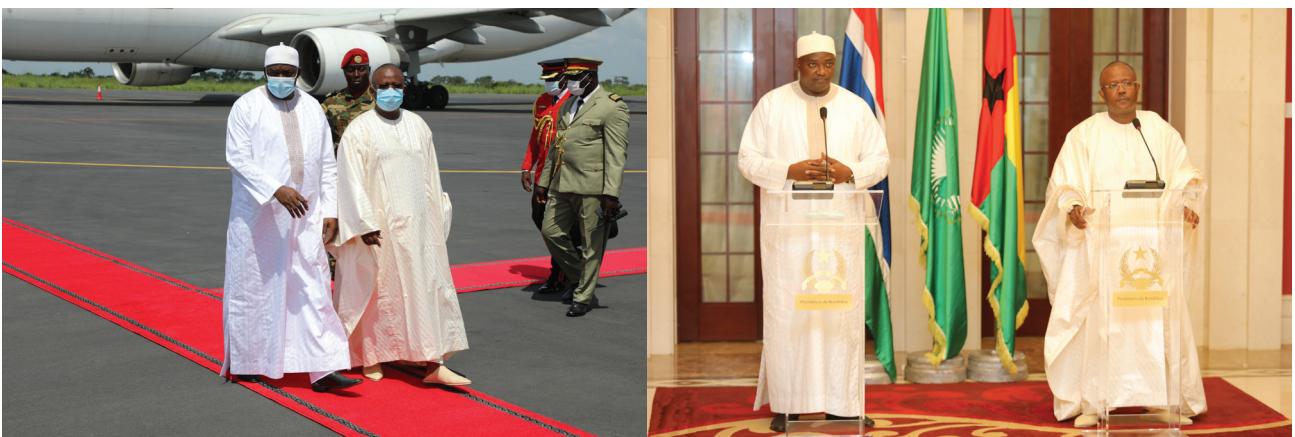
“The ECOMIG mandate has been extended because the peace and stability of the Gambia are important for The Gambia and the entire region,” he said, adding that the security situation in the region is already volatile citing the recent attacks in Nigeria.



President Barrow calls for Unity in Guinea Bissau

Networking is key in diplomacy between states; and it is in this light that His Excellency, Adama Barrow visited Guinea Bissau at the invitation of President Umaru Siccoco Embaló. Conscious that Bissau came out of years of war, conflict, and political instability, President Barrow has called on the people of Guinea Bissau to reconcile and rally behind President Embaló to develop their country. He made the remarks at a welcoming ceremony held in his honour at the Bissau Airport on his first official visit to the country on 21st October 2020.

He reminded Bissau-Guineans that their founding fathers, such as Amilcar Cabral, fought for independence, and is about time they had moved forward and worked together.



“My special advice is for you to reconcile and develop your country. Only one person can lead at a time and others should rally behind and support.” President Barrow said, adding that President Embalo is a diplomat and can make a difference if given the chance.

“There cannot be democracy without Peace. Work together and educate your people.” The Gambian leader concluded.

The historic visit is expected to consolidate the brotherly and friendly relations already existing between the two countries as well as between the two Presidents.



In a separate engagement, The Gambian leader paid his respect to the founding fathers of Guinea Bissau and other fallen heroes, by laying wreaths at their tombs in a military camp in Bissau.

The programme for the visit also included a closed door consultation followed by lunch, and later by a press conference held at the State House.

President Barrow echoed his call for ECOWAS member states to improve on communication to ensure smooth integration within the region. *“We cannot integrate without communication,”* he emphasised.

The Gambian President urged Bissau-Guineans to embrace peace and stability by putting aside their tribal and political differences, and work together for a prosperous country. He appealed to President Embalo as the leader to be tolerant and accept all his people as one, stating that after the presidency, it is his legacy that will be remembered as people still remember leaders like Amilca Cabral.

President Embalo expressed gratitude for the prompt response to the invitation, which will strengthen the strong ties, considering they share cultural values and languages. *“We don’t need an interpreter, so he is not only my colleague as President but also a brother.”* He also declared that Gambians will not need *laissez pass e* to Guinea Bissau.

Guinea Bissau is host to many Gambians and they made their presence felt with nostalgic cultural songs in welcoming President Barrow at the airport.

At a meeting with the Gambian community, President Barrow expressed delight at the reception accorded to him by The Gambian community headed by Ambassador Alieu Jammeh, while assuring them that back home is calm and that they should continue to represent the good image of The Gambia.

Speaking on behalf of the Gambian and Bissau Community, the coordinator of Chiefs in Guinea Bissau, Augustus Fernandos, said the visit is symbolic and signifies that Bissau is opening up to the world.

Mr Muhammed Sinayoko on behalf of the Gambian community commended President Barrow for the development projects in The Gambia, while assuring him of their unflinching support to complete his mandate. He took the opportunity to share some of their concerns including registering their children as Gambian citizens, lack of school and scholarships for their children.

President Barrow Visits Nigeria



The Gambian leader, President Adama Barrow visited the Federal Republic of Nigeria on an official mission on 3rd December 2020. He held a closed-door meeting with his host, President Muhammadu Buhari, and later spoke to the press. President Barrow emphasized the importance of constant communications between the leaders in the sub-region, thus the visit to brief and consult with his colleague and brother.

58th ECOWAS Ordinary Session

The Gambia Commits to Security Sector Reforms

Addressing the 58th Ordinary Session of the Authority of the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government on January 23rd, H.E. President Adama Barrow said his government is committed to the ongoing security sector reforms in The Gambia while commending ECOWAS on its achievements to curtail conflicts associated with terrorism, transnational crimes, including drugs, human trafficking, and election violence.

The urgent need for national reconciliation and vigorous action to tackle the country's myriad of political, social, and economic problems, through the implementation of the National Development Plan 2018-2021, was underscored.

The government commits to a sustainable security sector reform that *"re-engineers the missions, structures, mindset and culture of security institutions, to make them more responsive, affordable, and accountable based on democratic norms and principles."*

The commitments of the partners to vigorously pursue a comprehensive security sector reform following procedures with professionalism were fully appreciated.

It is acknowledged that the Security Sector Reform in The Gambia remains sensitive as evidenced by the revelations in the hearings of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC). The Authority of the Heads of State of ECOWAS was urged to consider approval for the extension of the mandate of ECOMIG to end 2021; by which time Government would have concluded the current transition process undertaken in 2017.

The President of ECOWAS Commission, H.E. Jean-Claude Kassi Brou, re-echoed the call on members to put in place the agreement made in 2020.

In declaring the 58th Ordinary session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government open, the President of Ghana and current Chair of ECOWAS, His Excellency, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, acknowledged the impact of COVID on nations; but challenged the ECOWAS community to take it as an opportunity to strengthen unity and solidarity to curb the spread of the virus. While appreciating the support of partners, he emphasised the need for vaccination to protect the population.

The ECOWAS Chair also underscored the importance of democracy and condemned attacks in the region. Mr Addo said implementing the decisions made in 2019 should be a priority to the community to ensure security, dignity and sovereignty.

The Community's financial state, in particular, contributions of member states and pledges made to raise funds, were highlighted, emphasising the positive impact it will have on the regional body's ability to work independently to fight terrorism and other security threats.

The Virtual Message from the Chairperson of the AU Commission, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, reminded ECOWAS the importance AU attaches to the Africa Continental Free Trade Area launched on 1st January 2021.

The AU Chairperson equally expressed delight at the progress made in Mali in favour of peace, saying that reconciliation is key to succeed there.

AU is in solidarity for inclusive dialogue and consensus-building while taking a lead in coordinating international support in Mali. The Continental body prioritises organising elections in Mali as has been done in other neighbouring countries.

The representative of the UN Secretary General in West Africa and the Sahel, H.E. Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas acknowledged the five presidential elections conducted in the sub-region but cautioned that elections continue to be a source of contention. He called for the participation of women and youth as a peaceful solution to prevent election violence.

The UNOWAS Chief denounced attacks of military targets in the sub-region and expressed concern over the impact of COVID 19 on the political and social-economic situation of the countries. While describing the COVID response "*as remarkable*," Dr Chambas reminded the Summit that the virus is still around and called for a coordinated response to the COVID protocols.



COVID-19 and its Impact

President Barrow tested Negative for COVID-19

The impact of the global pandemic, coronavirus–COVID-19, is felt in The Gambia, like elsewhere in the World. The second half of 2020, witnessed a surge in the number of cases as well as the number of deaths. Unfortunately, the Vice President and some ministers tested Positive. This prompted the need for the President to be tested and fortunately, he tested negative for the Coronavirus.

The Office of the President seized the opportunity to wish all those infected a speedy recovery, and prayed for the departed souls to rest in eternal peace while calling on the public to remain steadfast in the fight against the virus.

Meet the People Tour 2020

It is a Constitutional requirement for the President of the Republic of The Gambia to conduct a nationwide tour of the country to engage with the people. In December, the Head of State started a month-long tour from 7th December to 8th January 2021, to meet and dialogue with the people on the impact of the Government's policies and programs on their lives and livelihoods.

Gambians from different parts of the country have put across their concerns to the President during the tour, and President Barrow pledged his administration's commitment to providing good roads, access to electricity, and clean water.

On Agriculture, he promised that his government will provide more tractors to support farmers. Additionally, he announced the price of groundnuts for the trade season and the strategy proposed to ensure that farmers receive their cash as soon as they sell their groundnuts using mobile banking.

\$10 million Women Enterprise Fund launched



During the tour, the President launched the \$10 million Women Enterprise Fund that seeks to boost the socio-economic activities of Gambian Women. Some women groups in the West Coast Region and Banjul benefited from the initial funds. Additionally, four women groups in Banjul also benefited from the Women Enterprise Fund worth of more than half a million Dalasis- an initiative that seeks to boost the socio-economic status of Gambian women.

GMB20 million Youth Revolving Fund scheme

On Youth Empowerment, President Barrow launched The Ministry of Youth's Revolving Fund scheme with an amount of 20 million Dalasis a start-up reserve funds.

After a month-long constitutionally mandated Meet The People Tour, President Barrow concluded with a mega rally in Banjul where he launched the much anticipated Youth Revolving Fund worth D20million.

A total of D2.9M was distributed among different youth entrepreneurs in the West Coast Region, KM, and North Bank to kick start the initiative. According to the Minister of Youth, the scheme targets youth entrepreneurs in agriculture, fisheries, mechanics, catering, tailoring and petty trading.



Cabinet Ministers took turns to inform the people about the ongoing and earmarked activities regarding their various ministries with the view to addressing their concerns. The tour was a success in many ways; people demanded their needs, and the President and delegation responded accordingly. It also was an opportunity for the show of massive support to the President and his development agenda along with pledges of political support to ensure that their aspirations are met.

Media and Communication

The Media and Communication Unit of the presidency strives to bring the presidency closer to the people by bridging the communication gap between the office and the public through diverse channels of communication.

During the reporting period, popularity on social media pages of the presidency skyrocketed, manifesting the level of interest the public build on the activities of the president. For instance, on Facebook, the page likes swell to more than 62k and followers more than 69k. This represents a 244, 839 in post reach and 82, 811 in post engagements. On Twitter, the number of followers increased from 12k to 15.8k. This indicates a massive improvement in post reach. Thirty-seven (37) Media releases were published between August and December 2020. The website www.statehouse.gm also continues to be a source of official information on the presidency.



With the Presidency's open-door policy regarding the media, the local media is also used to amplify the voice of the President and increase visibility by offering one-to-one exclusive interviews with television stations. The cooperation of the various media outlets to share with their colleagues the exclusive interviews must be commended. It is a reflection of the desire to keep the citizens informed about their President.

Media Coverage of the Meet the People Tour

Both the state and private media have demonstrated interest in the Presidency. Sixty media personnel – reporters, producers, camerapersons, sound technicians, and editors had been accredited to the Meet the People Tour in 2020.

Media coverage

A media advisory was sent out as a public announcement regarding the President's annual Meet the People Tour schedule before the tour started.

The media responded positively to the invitation to cover the tour from both the state and private media, - TV, radio, newspapers, online and social media.

The media coverage followed the various editorial lines without interference.

OP Media coverage

The OP media team was able to produce about 60 videos for social media and the mobile LED videos on the OB VAN throughout the tour. While it was difficult to indicate the overall reach of the media coverage, the social media posts reach has indicated as follows:

Facebook example, the video views amount to an average of **58k** views, from the beginning of the tour to the end.

Post engagement means the number of times people like share and comment on the stories amounts to **193k** during the period.

Post Reach, which means the number of people that saw the stories and the number of followers of the page during the period amount to **138k**.

On Twitter, **11,242** impressions of our stories during the period. It's a significant increase in the number. It means more people liked, watched videos, and retweeted and commented on our postings.

Messaging

The focus of the OP media messaging was primarily on the tour. Concerns of the people and the presidential team's responses to them. It was also focused on the President's message which was consistent throughout the tour; sharing his government's policies, development projects, and plans. The messages also highlighted the projects inaugurated as well as the ones being constructed. The pledges made by the President were also captured in the messages.

Coverage

A philanthropist provided two mobile video vans during the tour to amplify and bring more visibility to the engagements of the Presidency and his government. Two private media houses – Eye Africa Online TV and Paradise TV also covered the tour life using their mobile OB Vans to ensure quality production. In addition to other online media outlets like Kerr Fatou, Gambian Talents, Indepth TV as well as the local Newspapers. The State Media - GRTS, in addition to other private TVs also QTV, Star TV, provide special slots to broadcast highlights from the tour. Other media outlets developed their analysis from the tour as they deemed important to them. All the efforts are appreciated because, for one reason or the other, they all reached out to Gambians of different interests.

The mobile vans were used to broadcast them to the local audience at every meeting ground, throughout the tour. This was well appreciated by many. Banners and Bill Boards were printed with various messages reflecting the development agenda of the government and used in different parts of the country and displayed during the meetings. Additionally, the OP media also provided branded umbrellas to provide shade but also to increase the visibility of the Unit.

Media and Politics

As the tour provided an opportunity for supporters of President Barrow to come out in their numbers to show their support and appreciate the development initiatives. The media also captured this dimension of the tour where it was relevant.

All these achievements were possible because of the dedicated team at the Presidency that is always ready to serve beyond their official time.

Contact:

Press & Public Relations
Office of the President, State House, Banjul
Email: absissoho@op.gov.gm
dpprop2017@gmail.com
Tel: +220 9957592

Social Media Platforms:

Twitter: @BarrowPresident
Facebook: BarrowPORG
Twitter: (@Presidency_GMB)
Facebook: PresidencyGambia)
State House of The Gambia- Youtube
Website: statehouse.gov.gm