

**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY,
MR ADAMA BARROW,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE
GAMBIA,
AT THE LAUNCHING CEREMONY OF THE
MULTI-SECTORAL STRATEGY FOR THE
PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF NON-
COMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCDS) IN THE
GAMBIA 2022- 2027,
HELD ON 6TH JULY 2022**

Your Excellency, the Vice President,
Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,
Honourable Cabinet Ministers,
Members of the National Assembly,
Senior Government Officials and Service Chiefs,
WHO Country Representative and the UN Country Team,
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps,
Chief Executive, Defeat-NCD Partnership,
Country Director, World Bank,
Executive Director, World Diabetes Foundation,
Director, Africa CDC,
Representatives of Civil Society Organisations,
Venerable Religious Leaders,
Members of the Press,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The data and evidence available on non-communicable diseases make it exceedingly necessary and timely to launch the new National Multi-sectoral Strategy, 2022-2027, for the prevention and control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in The Gambia. As such, I am proud to be associated with this activity.

Evidence shows that non-communicable diseases, especially heart diseases and stroke, cancers, chronic lung diseases and diabetes are among the greatest killers in the world, and they account for over 70% of deaths globally every year.

It is also known that these diseases are increased by five risk factors, among which are tobacco use, physical inactivity, unhealthy diets, harmful use of alcohol and indoor air pollution.

In The Gambia, we are told that NCDs account for about 34% of all deaths registered in the country.

We must remember, however, that concern about non-communicable diseases is not about the number of deaths only; it is also about the drivers of these diseases.

Like other developing countries, The Gambia faces numerous challenges linked to non-communicable diseases. To cite a few examples, it is a concern that almost all households in the country are either directly or indirectly affected by NCDs, and more than five thousand, five hundred (5,500) people die prematurely every year, due to non-communicable diseases. This has serious implications for the socio-economic development of the country.

To make matters worse, health sector reports indicate that nearly one third of the adult population have raised blood pressure and nearly 15% of Gambian adults are overweight.

These figures are frightening, particularly when we remember that about 17% of the adult population smoke cigarettes and one in every five adults is physically inactive.

In addition to these, about 85% of households use solid fuel for cooking, and this exposes them to indoor air pollution

These statistics are not encouraging, and the situation is compounded by the disclosure that over 90% of Gambians, aged between 25 and 64 years, have one or more NCD risk factors.

This implies that the burden of NCDs is expected to increase, which is quite worrisome.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is obvious that we have a big task at hand. If the data and reports are anything to go by, NCDs and their underlying risk factors cannot be handled by any single entity.

It requires a multi-sectorial approach, and this makes the NCD Strategy a highly appreciated document.

The consultative process, involving different stakeholders, spearheaded by the Ministry of Health was the best method to adopt. I commend the Ministry and all the stakeholders involved in the process.

It is certain that developing a document of this nature calls for huge resources, time, and energy. As a result,

I convey profound gratitude to Defeat-NCD Partnership and the World Bank for providing the much-needed technical and financial support to develop this resourceful document.

I also recognise the technical support of the World Health Organisation and other partners, as well as the

invaluable contributions of the various sectors and institutions to the Strategy.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our health experts admit that the causes, consequences and underlying social factors of non-communicable diseases and risks are complex,

making them different from other diseases and conditions.

Consequently, a broad range of sectors, institutions, and stakeholders must act jointly to tackle this growing public health problem.

A comprehensive health promotion strategy, with varying approaches, including the participation of society at large is the only way out.

In this regard, my government will ensure that the necessary governance and administrative mechanisms are created, where required, or strengthened to enhance the desired partnerships and multi-stakeholder engagements to prevent and control the undue spread of disease in The Gambia.

I call on the Ministry of Health to coordinate and establish the necessary institutional arrangements and set the operational process in motion.

I urge the Ministry of Finance also to help in mobilising resources for the implementation of both the multi-sectoral NCD strategy and Action Plan.

In the same vein, we appeal to our development partners to support us to mobilise adequate resources to fulfil our commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

I am confident that with the required resources, will effectively implement this Plan together and create a healthier nation for rapid, inclusive socio-economic development.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, while I invite every citizen and resident of The Gambia to play their part in this venture, it is now my honour to officially launch the **2022-2027 Multi-Sectoral Strategy for**

The Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in The Gambia.

Thank you for your attention.
