

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY, MR. ADAMA BARROW, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE
THIRD SENEGALO-GAMBIAN PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL SESSION**

**VENUE: SIR DAWDA KAIRABA JAWARA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
CENTRE**

DATE: 1ST AUGUST 2023

Your Excellency, President Macky Sall,
Excellencies,
Honourable Members of the Senegalese Delegation,
Honourable Members of the Gambian Delegation,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

With due thanks and praise to the Almighty Allah for convening yet another Presidential Council on Gambian soil, I most heartily welcome you to the Republic of The Gambia, my dear brother and friend, Your Excellency, President Macky Sall. We are deeply honoured to host you in your second home.

Similarly, we are delighted and privileged, once again, to welcome your high-powered delegation from Senegal for the Third Edition of the Presidential Council.

Your attendance demonstrates the Republic of Senegal's commitment toward strengthening our historic family and friendly bonds as one people living in two sovereign states but bound by a common destiny. Holding regular Presidential Council Meetings is a major strategic milestone in the annals of Gambia-Senegal relations.

Excellency, Mr. President,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Meeting provides us with a valuable opportunity to review the agreements and commitments concluded during the Second Presidential Council Meeting held in Dakar in 2020 and foster a more robust and mutually beneficial relationship.

Our vision is to collaborate fully in fulfilment of the aspirations and expectations of the people. No wonder our strategy is results-based and reflects a collective desire to successfully implement projects with higher dividend yields. The Senegambia Bridge Project provides a typical example. This results-oriented approach can only be reinforced and sustained through regular Presidential Council sessions.

Since its establishment, the Presidential Council has consolidated and accelerated implementation of important bilateral commitments. It is my belief that the Experts and Ministerial Meetings that preceded this Council Session provide a solid platform and the opportunity to review our obligations, identify relevant challenges, and mutually forge ahead with foresight.

At this point, I must highlight the need to intensify transformative development efforts in transport, communications, energy, and trade infrastructure to upscale commerce and free movement across our borders.

Likewise, the urgency to strengthen efforts to address the issue of interstate road transport networks between our two countries is equally apparent. It is comforting, however, that we have already taken appropriate steps and measures to ensure that the two countries engage in profitable trade and commercial models.

Regarding security, peace, and stability, practical steps have been taken to cooperate better and address regional and cross-border security issues. A closer look at the impact of our joint initiatives indicates that, once there is commitment, we can both derive substantial outcomes from our joint ventures.

Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates,

The Presidential Council represents our collective commitment to consolidate the peace, security, stability, and prosperity of the Senegambia subregion. In view of the opportunities available through the Banjul-Dakar transport corridor, we should now redouble efforts for more significant results.

There is strong evidence that the free movement of people and transport resulting from the Senegambia Bridge supports more fluid trade between the two countries. The lesson is that intensifying trade could be a major game-changer for the prosperity of the two nations. Essentially, therefore, we must continue to address trade-related barriers and the occasional issues that disrupt the smooth conduct of business across our borders.

Excellency,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our countries share a rich history and cultural heritage, which sets a viable foundation for collaboration and understanding. The collaborative areas on our roadmaps, if implemented with a keener sense of purpose, have the potential to uplift the lives and livelihoods of our citizens and further strengthen our bilateral and regional ties.

We are aware of the challenges before us, but it is in the face of such challenges that our determination to stand together, united as neighbours and partners, can grow stronger. Working together, we can overcome all obstacles and turn them into opportunities for the greater good.

Accordingly, I am confident that the Presidential Council's conclusions, agreements, and commitments will mitigate the negative impact of the current economic, financial, and food crises that affect our economies.

Excellency,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In reviewing the resolutions of the last Meeting, we have recognised the importance of accountability and follow-ups. Our governments are duty-bound to ensure that the promises made translate into tangible actions that positively impact the lives of our citizens. By working closely, we will surely make a real difference in honour of the trust our people place in us.

Your Excellency, I acknowledge with gratitude the enormous work done by the experts and honourable Ministers. It has resulted in the production of the outcome documents and conclusions that would form the basis and set the direction of our bilateral cooperation and partnership until the fourth Presidential Council in Dakar.

Moving forward, I propose that we renew the commitments concluded during the second Presidential Council Meeting in Dakar and explore new opportunities to deepen cooperation in our priority areas. They include defence, security, energy, fisheries, trade and investment, transport, environmental protection, education, youth and sports, consular matters, and border management, as well as our common arts, traditions, and cultural heritage.

Equally important is the need to work collectively to enhance economic ties, boost cultural exchanges, and invest in everything that would benefit the people. In this way, we would shape a brighter and more prosperous future for The Gambia and Senegal.

Excellency, Mr. President Sall,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We appreciate and commend the Senegalo-Gambian Permanent Secretariat for working tirelessly to consolidate the relationship between our two countries.

As reassurance, I firmly renew my government's commitment to deepening our collaboration with you. Through dialogue, understanding, and a shared vision we can successfully address our development agenda, build bridges of trust, and promote stability within our region.

Let us seize this moment to reaffirm our belief and commitment to this enduring partnership and natural bonds of family and peaceful coexistence, which we are obliged to promote and safeguard in our national and regional interests.

Our unique socio-economic circumstances and institutional arrangements for bilateral engagement are strong and durably built on trust and shared values. We must continue, therefore, to review these arrangements for consolidation and greater regional integration.

Your Excellency and dear brother,

Senegalo-Gambia relations offer us a springboard and a shining example for Africa's transformation. We have to dream bigger and explore viable options for a more formidable river transport system and a common rail service as flagship projects.

In general, transportation is a crucial factor in facilitating socio-economic development in various sectors of our economies. We need to further encourage our technicians to hasten the implementation of the recommendations and agreements arising from our Council Meetings.

Doing so would augment the implementation rate of our commitments, and the outcomes of our policies and programmes would have a greater impact on the lives and livelihoods of the citizens they target. Domesticating regulations on air transport between Dakar and Banjul is a clear example of positive action for enhanced socio-economic progress for our people.

My Dear Brother, your recent declaration to voluntarily step down after two terms of your presidency has not only generated hope but also revitalised the democratic aspirations of your citizens and the people of the ECOWAS sub-region.

Your Excellency has set an example for other leaders in Africa to follow, especially those whose Constitutions prescribe term limits; thus, your courage and consideration for democracy to thrive is worth commendation.

To conclude, I thank you sincerely, President Sall, and your delegation for the honour of your presence. I am confident that this Presidential Council Session will further solidify the bonds between our nations and chart the way for a brighter future of shared success and prosperity.

We pray for your well-being and ask that our deliberations yield outcomes that would elevate the well-being of our people.

God bless the Republics of Senegal and The Gambia.