

**Statement by His Excellency Adama Barrow,  
President of The Republic of The Gambia and  
Chief Patron of The President's International  
Award Programme**

**Event: The Gambia's 10<sup>th</sup> National Gold Award  
Ceremony**

**Venue: Never Again Memorial Arch, Banjul**

**Date: 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

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Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,  
Honourable Cabinet Ministers,  
Honourable National Assembly Members,  
Secretary General and Head of the Civil Service,  
Chief of Staff, Office of the President,  
Security and Service Chiefs,  
Deputy British High Commissioner to The Gambia,  
Global Operations Manager - International Award Foundation,  
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps,  
Resident Representatives of the UN System in The Gambia,  
Senior Public Servants,  
Distinguished Invited Guests, Participants and Members of the Media,

As Chief Patron of The President's International Award (PIA) Programme in The Gambia, it is indeed gratifying for me to preside over the 10th National Gold Award Ceremony.

I am particularly glad to state that this is the first PIA ceremony held here since I assumed office in 2017. Allow me, therefore, to congratulate all the Awardees, officials of the programme, and the parents of the participants.

It is impressive and reassuring that the programme aims to instil a sense of responsibility and patriotism in the Awardees so that they can positively impact the lives of others and contribute their quota to our nation's development. The strategy employed is to attain this through community services rendered during the routine activities of the PIA participants.

For many years now, the Award Programme, also known as the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award, has equipped young persons with opportunities through well-structured programmes designed to boost the moral standing, skills, and knowledge of its participants.

It has challenged them as well to explore and exploit new opportunities and make the most of their talent and potential to excel.

Ladies and gentlemen, over time, the Award Programme has continually built the lives, livelihood skills, and influenced the character development of young people. This is the category of our population that is highly cherished but uniquely vulnerable, yet eagerly looked upon to participate in the transformation of the country.

For this reason, my government strongly believes that to guarantee a brighter future for The Gambia and Africa, we must continue to support and empower the youths through programmes such as this Award Scheme.

My government recognises the enormous contribution of the PIA not only to enhancing youth participation in national development, but also protecting and adding value to the lives of young people. The programme is consistent on guiding the participants to become national assets that play a vital role in national development as model young citizens and exceptional leaders.

I have noted that some of the former programme participants and Gold Award Holders are proudly in our midst serving as Ministers, Service Chiefs, Academics, Entrepreneurs, Diplomats, and the list goes on. We are proud of all of you and the various roles you now play in advancing the affairs of our dear motherland.

Today, we are here to recognise those who completed the programme during the past eight years but have not received their gold awards.

In doing so, we must remember and celebrate all those who went through the Award Programme since its inception in The Gambia. Fittingly, we pay tribute to the late Mr. Salifu Kujabi who is credited for introducing the programme to The Gambia and several other African countries.

Distinguished Guests and Awardees,

Youth matters are prominently prioritised in our Recovery-Focus National Development Plan. To cite examples, in addition to expanding the PIA's programmes, we have upgraded the Gambia Technical Training Institute into a University of Science and Technology to train as many youths as possible. Also, the first Phase of the UTG Campus in Faraba is complete, and classes will start this semester.

Added to these, I recently launched the National Youth Service Graduate Programme, and we will continue to create and maintain enough space and a conducive environment for youth participation in national affairs.

Besides, the Government has opened up new avenues for the Ministry of Youth and Sports to fund some of its programmes, including The Gambia's participation in international competitions.

A recent outcome of this is the national football team's back-to-back qualification for the African Cup of Nations (AFCON), following our outstanding performance in AFCON 2021. I congratulate every Gambian on this accomplishment.

Similar successes have been registered in other competitions. Proudly, we are the Beach Volleyball senior category champions in Africa, and the Under-19 football team were runners-up at the last regional football tournament. Meanwhile, our star female athlete, Gina Bass, and her colleagues continue to do well at the international level. These successes, among many more, could not have come without Government support.

As we look up to our partners-in-development for closer cooperation to improve the lot of our youths in every way feasible, the task at hand is for all Gambians to remain committed, steadfast, and united to improve on these achievements.

Moving on, I invite all those who can do so to join me and "The Friends of The Award Foundation" to promote and complement the efforts of the Award Programme in The Gambia.

Finally, in accordance with the International Award Status and domesticated PIA Act of 2015, I, Mr. Adama Barrow, President of The Republic of The Gambia and Chief Patron of the PIA, hereby bestow on all Awardees of the 10th cohort of the President's International Award, the PIA Gold Medal and accompanying certificate.

I commend you all and wish you greater achievements in the future.

Thank you for your attention.