

Remarks by H.E Adama Barrow
President of the Republic of The Gambia
Event: Consultative Meeting with Political
Leaders in Preparation for a
National Dialogue Day
Venue: State House
Date: 12th February 2024

Your Excellency, The Vice President,
Former Vice Presidents Present,
Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,
His Lordship, The Chief Justice,
Honourable Cabinet Members,
Honourable National Assembly Members,
Leaders and Representatives of Political Parties,
Representatives of Institutions and Organisations,
Fellow Gambians and Friends of The Gambia,

I personally welcome you to the first of a series of National Consultative Dialogue forums, organised to precede the formal launch of the National Dialogue Day initiative.

I established a National Dialogue Preparatory Committee, comprising representatives from a cross-section of institutions and organisations in the country, to coordinate the activities leading to a National Dialogue Forum.

A key objective for this consultative meeting is to build consensus on holding and institutionalising a National Dialogue Day, as recommended at the first Public Forum held last year as part of the 58th Independence Day Anniversary Celebrations.

As we look forward to celebrating the 59th anniversary of nationhood shortly, I have directed the Committee to work on this National Consultative Forum to encourage and stimulate reflection and dialogue on selected national issues to promote, protect, and nurture peace and stability in our democracy.

You may have realised that I have continually called upon my colleagues and fellow Gambians to come together and work in the best interest of the country we dearly love. It is every citizen's responsibility to contribute towards our overall security, peace and stability, be it in an official or private capacity, as public servants or bone fide citizens.

My government holds the view that we should always try to forge national consensus on national issues that generate divergent views. Such divergence must not result in enmity or disunity. Instead, it should be tapped into as a source of strength for us to tolerate, appreciate, and empathise with one another. In this way, all citizens would have the opportunity to contribute to sustaining peace and stability nationwide.

Fellow Gambians and Colleagues,

It is absolutely necessary for us to come to terms with our collective responsibility to work together in the interest of our dear motherland and her people. This is the reason for strengthening our institutions, enforcing the laws of the Land, and developing policies to guide our relationships. We are a decent people, and a nation bound by destiny to live and work together. It must not surprise anyone, therefore, that the theme for this year's Independence Day Anniversary Celebrations is a call for us to respond to "***Our Collective Responsibility of Preserving the Nation, Safeguarding the State, and Securing our Resources.***" The task is for us, as political leaders, stakeholders, and citizens, to find ways and means of positively translating this broad theme into action.

As leaders and public opinion influencers, we have a big stake in the nation; thus, we also have the huge responsibility of striving to maintain peace and stability. Huge as it may be, we can achieve this by consciously avoiding and defusing political or social tension through our public engagements with the people, within both the public and private space we occupy quite frequently.

Moving forward, I call on all citizens, who can do so, to actively participate in the upcoming national dialogue, with a view to reinforcing the social cohesion and tolerance that exist in our society.

The thematic discussions are proposed to cover the political environment, religious tolerance, ethnic diversity, sovereign security, safeguarding the media and democratic space, irregular migration, and empowerment of our youth.

Excellencies, Honourable Members,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Considering the important thematic areas identified for discussion ahead of the Public Forum for National Dialogue, I must emphasise that it is our collective responsibility to preserve the nation as a people or fall together, safeguard the State or face instability, and secure our resources or live with a weak economy.

We live in a world of uncertainty, instability, and insecurity. So, we must act collectively and resolutely ahead of any potential unrest or calamity. We are blessed in The Gambia with positive social norms and values that can always bring us together and help us to preserve our warmth and brand as the Smiling Coast of Africa.

With these remarks, I invite you all to objectively reflect on the theme and sincerely share your thoughts to enrich the discussions and positively influence the outcome of the deliberations.

I thank you for your attention.