

**PRESIDENTIAL PUBLIC ADDRESS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY,
MR. ADAMA BARROW GMRG,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
THE GAMBIA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE GAMBIA'S
59TH INDEPENDENCE DAY ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
HELD ON 18TH FEBRUARY 2024
AT THE McCARTHY SQUARE, BANJUL**

Your Excellencies, the First Lady, Fatou Bah-Barrow and Madam Sarjo Mballow-Barrow,
Former Vice Presidents Present,
Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,
My Lord, the Chief Justice,
Honourable Members of Cabinet and the National Assembly,
Lord Mayors of Banjul and Kanifing Municipality,
Regional Governors,
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps,
Representatives of International Organisations and Partners,
Political Party Leaders,
Government Officials and Service Chiefs,
Community and Religious Leaders,
Fellow Gambians, Boys and Girls,
Proudly and closely bound as a nation, we have come together once again, as we do every
year, to commemorate our beloved country's attainment of political independence on 18th
February 1965.

Ever since, particularly from 2017 to date, we have come a long way as a nation, defying
all odds to make remarkable achievements in the process of national development.

In fact, the successes we registered since I assumed office as President, seven years ago,
are spectacularly phenomenal, tangible, and undeniable. Our socio-economic
achievements, especially in infrastructure development, are physically visible, cutting
across all sectors, regions, communities, and demographic characteristics.

The Coronavirus pandemic, climate change, and other global crises, severe as they may be,
have not deterred us from marching forward. Rather, we continue to make progress in a
turbulent world of ever-increasing and unforeseen unrests, leading to instability in every
corner of the globe. This notwithstanding, we must continually seek solutions to all
possible challenges, even before they emerge.

In light of the upheavals, fears, and threats within the sub-region and beyond, we must
endeavour to educate our people and inspire them to remain steadfast in safeguarding the
nation, contributing to its progress, and helping to secure the peace and stability we so
lovingly enjoy.

For this reason, it is necessary to ask searchingly: How can we preserve the nation as a people, together with our successes and build on them? How can we safeguard the Nation, inclusive of our sovereignty, symbols of authority, and institutions? How can we secure our resources and utilise them in the best interest of the people?

These questions compelled me to conclude that this year's National Day Celebration should be devoted to reflection on ***Our Collective Responsibility of Preserving the Nation, Safeguarding the State, and Securing Our Resources.***

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Boys and Girls,

Preserving the nation, for what it is worth, requires us to cherish and safeguard our identity, history, culture, social structures, relationships and everything else that distinguishes us as a people. Embedded in these traits are our shared values and ways of co-existing in peace and harmony as Gambians, hence we must make sure that they are not corrupted to give way to indecency.

To succeed in this national endeavour, the government we choose to manage our affairs, the Constitution and Laws that regulate behaviour, the institutions that provide services and the territorial boundaries that define our land surface must be at the heart of whatever we do. Without this, our resources would be wasted, which we must collectively resolve to prevent.

At the core of our development is the economy, which lies at the centre of three important features; namely: our resources - human and material; our productivity in scope and intensity; and thirdly, our level of creativity to initiate positive change, execute appropriate action, and utilise goods and services appropriately and maximally. These cannot be attained in any country without the active and collective engagement of its people.

The dynamics that frustrate such efforts may crop up from within or outside. With a united front tied to a common goal, and with collective vigilance reinforced by civilian cooperation with the Security Services, we will always repel all acts of subversion and crime against the State, either arising from within the country or elsewhere.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls,

We have successfully developed massive infrastructure to the point that there are formidable road links in every region of the country. The agriculture sector is now booming, following the bumper harvest recorded this year. Tourism is peaking again, and energy generation stands at a level never recorded before in the history of The Gambia.

The expansion in education and health services is prominent, and my government continues to receive positive feedback in all areas of development.

We are fully aware, nonetheless, that development is a never-ending process. As a result, we will continue to work hard and invite all Gambian citizens and supporters to come on board and be part of the national bandwagon to fly the Gambian flag much higher. This flags the collective responsibilities that lie on every one of us.

To spell it out, these are the civic responsibilities of acting passionately and legitimately on our mandates, roles, duties, and assignments as public servants or private citizens, or both.

Our national plans, sector policies, programmes and projects, legal frameworks, and service delivery are done transparently to allow for public participation and scrutiny.

Every citizen and friend of The Gambia, therefore, has the opportunity to be part of the process, and we encourage everyone to come on board.

I challenge you to transform these thoughts into sustained meaningful dialogue to educate the people and allow everyone to play their roles as patriotic and constructive Gambian citizens.

I suggest further that such themes be the thrust of formal and informal discussions, including engagements in educational and non-educational institutions, to feed into the public discourse on our collective responsibility to protect, preserve, and make the most of the nation and its resources.

The ultimate goal of all such engagements must, however, rest on the attainment of our development targets and objectives.

The recent consultative activities with the political leaders and National Dialogue were both received with approval and were successful.

The response and participation of the political leaders, civil society organisations, and the public were healthy and constructive.

I thank the participants and organisers alike for this accomplishment and urge that we continue the process with the same good spirit and good will. I thus endorse the National Dialogue initiative to be an annual event.

Fellow Gambians,

Boys and Girls,

Life has never been rosy all the way; therefore, we do not promise that life in The Gambia could be trouble-free. It is unrealistic to expect this. We are bound to encounter difficulties, such as those imposed on us due to global developments.

Price rises, shortages of essential commodities, and budgetary constraints should be expected. In such circumstances, we should unite patiently and apply remedial measures. The Government will always seek ways out of every difficulty that confronts the nation, and we expect the people to support us to resolve such challenges.

I pay tribute to all those who have contributed to our progress and attainments so far. These include those within and outside the country, be they in government or in any other domain of public or private life. The citizens of The Gambia, in general, and our partners, in particular, fall within this bracket.

Distinguished Personalities,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Boys and Girls,

As we celebrate our National Day, my government reaffirms its commitment to building an education system that is not only a pillar of national pride but also a catalyst for sustainable, inclusive development.

Indeed, we are charting a course towards a brighter, more educated future for every child living in The Gambia. At the forefront of our achievements is the remarkable progress in inclusive and equitable education. The success story on providing school infrastructure is equally unprecedented. This is meant to influence learning outcomes and positively impact enrolment.

Besides increasing access to quality education, my government is setting the stage to adequately equip our citizens with expertise in digital technology through the school curriculum. We will continue, as well, to recognise, honour, and celebrate both teachers and students who excel, without injustice to anyone within the sector.

Boys and Girls,

There are lots of opportunities at your disposal. Nations, particularly the youth, thrive on education and training. You must realise, therefore, that skills education and training could speedily result in building the economy, expanding self-employment, and allowing you to take control of the economy.

The recent establishment and upgrading of tertiary and higher education institutions by my government are meant to multiply your chances of success.

The future is yours, but so is the present being modelled in your favour. Make the most of both worlds and your families, communities, and nation will forever remain proud of you.

As the adage goes, “the key in use is never rusty.” Stick to your school work, read extensively, and work like disciplined citizens so that you shine bright wherever you may be.

The education sector personnel and students, the Security Services, parents, and the organising committee of this 59th Independence Day Anniversary Celebration deserve special mention. I thank you all most sincerely.

Together with our outstanding Security Services, the exciting voluntary organisations, and resourceful teachers, we thank every student for the brilliant parade displayed this morning.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Boys and Girls,

We appreciate your attendance and congratulate everyone on this auspicious occasion. I pray that we celebrate the Day together for a long time to come and humbly ask God to bless us and bless The Gambia.

Thank you for your attention.