

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY,  
PRESIDENT ADAMA BARROW, AT THE  
GAMBIA REVENUE AUTHORITY  
TAXPAYERS' AWARD CEREMONY  
HELD ON  
2ND MARCH 2024**

Honourable Speaker

Honourable Cabinet Ministers,

Honourable National Assembly Members,

Commissioner General, Board and Staff of GRA

Esteemed Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with joy and satisfaction that I am in your midst tonight to appreciate our distinguished taxpayers at this annual Award Ceremony. I am thankful, therefore, to the Almighty Allah and to you for the honour of gracing the occasion.

This ceremony is especially significant for me not only as the President of the country, but also as a witness to the crucial role taxpayers play in our nation's progress.

Given the nature of the Gambian economy, taxes form the bedrock of our financial muscle. The very fabric of our government, our infrastructure, and the essential services we all rely on are interwoven with the taxes you, the taxpayers, pay.

It is your contributions that power the engine of government, thus enabling us to invest in vital national programmes and build infrastructure to create a brighter future for all Gambians.

I am filled with immense pride, therefore, to acknowledge the continued dedication and commitment of our business community in providing the tax revenue needed to fund the government's numerous development programmes.

Let me seize this opportunity, again, to commend the Gambia Revenue Authority (GRA) for conceiving this laudable initiative and making it an annual event.

It is quite thoughtful and motivating that the rationale for awarding the taxpayers, with various categories of awards every financial year, is to promote and foster a culture of voluntary compliance within our tax base.

I have learnt that, since the inception of this annual ceremony, voluntary compliance has improved radically and that it has sparked a positive competitive spirit within the business community.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it will please you to know that, since the inception of my administration in 2017, we have realised a remarkable **72%** increase in tax revenue, rising from **D9.13 billion** in 2017 to **D15.79 billion** in 2023.

This is evidence of our sound fiscal policies, our unwavering focus on domestic revenue mobilisation, and the tireless efforts of the GRA Board, Management, and entire staff.

It is important to note that this achievement has not come about through increased tax rates; rather, it is the result of expanding the tax base and the efficiency gains made possible by the automation of our revenue collection system.

I express sincere gratitude to the entire GRA team, led by the Commissioner General, Mr. Yankuba Darboe, for the consistent increase in revenue performance over the years.

Their dedication and innovative strategies are clearly paving the way for a brighter future for The Gambia. The institutional commitment to reform and modernisation is not only commendable, but also critical for building a sustainable and prosperous nation.

Embracing digitalisation, as you have done, is critical in our ongoing reforms. My administration is thus willing to provide the necessary support to ensure that you continue to register greater successes.

I assure the business community that your contribution to the nation goes far beyond the taxes you pay. You are the lifeblood of our economy, by creating jobs, generating wealth, and driving innovation. I assure you further that my government will remain committed to making The Gambia a more attractive place for business.

At present, we are introducing trade-facilitation measures to streamline international trade, improve efficiency, and enhance your competitive advantage within the subregion and Africa as a whole.

Through GRA and other outlets, my administration will steadfastly translate into action and sustain its commitment to automating all business processes to simplify trade and ease the compliance burden on you.

To the esteemed recipients of tonight's awards I say, congratulations on this well-deserved recognition. Your compliance is not just a matter of fulfilling your legal obligation. It shows the degree of your patriotism and commitment to nation building. Wear your awards with pride, for they represent national honour.

On behalf of my government, I pledge to continue working tirelessly to create a conducive environment for all businesses to thrive. We will continue to invest in infrastructure, improve access to finance, and promote a level playing field for all. Together, we can make The Gambia a hub for investment and economic prosperity.

Do not view tax payment as a mere burden; instead, it is an investment towards our collective wellbeing and future. It is the taxes you pay that propel the development and operations of our schools, hospitals, roads, and bridges, to name a few examples.

The revenue from the taxpayers is the foundation for The Gambia where opportunity would thrive and where every citizen would have the chance to reach their full potential.

Rest assured that your taxes are being invested wisely, as we are investing in the future of every Gambian.

My appeal is that we work together, taxpayers and government, to build a brighter future for our beloved Gambia.

Thank you for your attention.