

**STATEMENT BY H.E ADAMA BARROW
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA**

**EVENT: LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION STONE OF
RADISSON BLU HOTEL**

PLACE: BIJILO

DATE: 23RD JULY 2022

Your Excellency, the Vice President,
Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,
My Lord, The Chief Justice,
Honourable Cabinet Ministers,
Honourable National Assembly Members,
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps,
Senior Civil Servants and Heads of Government Agencies,
Service Chiefs, Regional and Local Government Officials,
Members of the Press,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with much honour and pride that I join you to lay the foundation stone for the eagerly awaited Five-star Radisson Blu Hotel. This is one of the major infrastructure development projects for the forthcoming OIC Heads of State and Government Summit to be hosted by The Gambia.

I am particularly excited about the prospective impact of this mega project on lives and livelihoods in the country. With a portfolio of One Hundred Million US Dollars (US\$100 million), this proposed five-star hotel project is the single biggest investment in the tourism sector since the country attained Independence in 1965.

More significantly, compared to the other OIC Summit infrastructure projects, it is the single biggest investment portfolio ever of its kind on Gambian soil.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is heartening that, within three years, my government has successfully mobilised more than Three Hundred Million US Dollars (US\$300 million) in our effort to host the world's biggest organisation of the Muslim Ummah. Heartily too, we are hosting the Summit in accordance with our trademark hospitality as the "Smiling Coast" of Africa.

Let me use this opportunity to emphasise that The Gambia will indeed host the Summit, and we are on track to doing so in a spectacular fashion. We have the will, the ability, and the resources to do so. In short, we have the capacity, and by God's grace, we will succeed.

Small as the country may be, The Gambia has always captured the attention and imagination of the world, primarily, for all the right reasons. History is, therefore, on our side.

The General Secretariat in Jeddah and the entire membership of the OIC have expressed, in no uncertain terms, their fullest support to us in this endeavour.

During his recent visit here, the Secretariat General re-echoed these sentiments. We are now engaging the General Secretariat and other partners to agree on a suitable date for the event.

While the support of our allies and development partners continue to encourage us as we prepare for this important global gathering, we will neither be complacent nor allow anyone to distract us.

My government will ensure that the contractors, consultants, and all other stakeholders deliver and complete all the necessary infrastructure projects on time.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The OIC Summit Projects are designed to be legacy projects, and their advantages, benefits and impact will far outlive the Summit. For this reason, we will make sure that we get it right in the best interest of the nation and the global Muslim community. We will not accept indifference or foot-dragging anymore.

I have directed the revival and immediate strengthening of the various levels of coordination and oversight bodies and functions. These include the Project Steering Committee and the Project Implementation Unit of the Ministry of Works, Transport and Infrastructure.

Although the COVID19 pandemic affected our plans, I have noted that the implementation stage of all the OIC Summit projects is in progress.

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The five-star hotel that will be constructed on this site will match the Radisson Blu brand in the subregion. This incorporates its facilities, architecture, services, and management.

It will house four hundred (400) high-end garden and sea-view guest rooms, as well as VIP suites. It will have royal villas, presidential apartments, meeting rooms, and other event venues.

In line with our commitment to environmental preservation, the hotel design is environmentally friendly, and features several green zones to protect and maintain the flora and fauna within the area.

Ladies and gentlemen,

You will be pleased to know that the new hotel will operate under the management of the world-renowned Radisson Blu brand, as part of an international chain of hotels. Radisson Blu Banjul on the list of Gambian hotels will uplift Destination Gambia to a new level, to rank among the favourite leisure destinations in the world.

We are proud that Radisson Blu Banjul Hotel is a project under IMMOGAM. This is a company jointly owned by the People of The Gambia, through The Gambia Government, and the investing company, Immoland Sarl.

You will agree with me that this landmark project, once completed, will have a lasting impact on lives and livelihoods, either directly or indirectly. It will contribute to diversifying our tourism portfolio further, while addressing the demand for internationally branded luxury hotels across Africa.

It is certain, therefore, that the project is very timely, especially as our tourism sector is beginning to recover from the negative impact of the COVID19 pandemic.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Tourism accounts for about twenty percent (20%) of our GDP, making it a critical contributor to the economy.

The joint operation of Radisson Blu Banjul, the Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara International Conference Centre, and the ultra-modern VVIP lounge, nearing completion at the Banjul International Airport, is expected to uniquely position The Gambia as a leading destination for International Meetings, Incentive Travel, Conferences, and Exhibitions.

Besides its macro-economic benefits, the project will create jobs for both skilled and unskilled persons during and after construction.

I encourage the youths to take advantage of these opportunities to acquire skills and generate income to become productive and self-reliant citizens.

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am bound to commend the Chairman and Founder of Immoland Sarl, Mr. Abdoulie Thiam, a Gambian by birth, for finding the courage to return home to invest massively in our dear motherland. Committing oneself to such huge investments demonstrates deep faith, affection, and love for country.

So far, we have achieved a lot since the signing of the concession agreement last year. Thanks, largely, to Mr. Thiam and all other stakeholders for their commitment and tireless efforts.

My government will continue to provide all the necessary support possible to ensure the successful completion of this project.

Many thanks are due also to The Gambia OIC Secretariat, the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Justice, and all other organisations that contributed to the realisation of this day.

I call on all Gambians with the requisite means and resources, from all parts of the world, to follow suit. With many more similar ideas and laudable projects, we could transform our motherland and catch up with the fast-growing economies on the continent much faster than we can imagine.

Every citizen is dutybound to contribute to making this country better for everyone. It is a matter of fulfilling our responsibilities or betraying the nation. The choice is ours.

As a government, we have an investment-friendly policy. We remain ready to provide incentives and other forms of support to investors, within The Gambia and beyond, to attract viable impactful projects like this hotel project. The options are many and open ended.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I now invite you to join me to formally lay the foundation stone for the Five-star Radisson Blu Banjul Hotel.