

REMARKS TO THE MEDIA

Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, congratulates the government and the people of The Gambia for organizing a peaceful, transparent, and credible election

Banjul, 03 December 2016

- Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your presence,

This is my third visit to The Gambia this year. In May, I came here as a member of the ECOWAS-AU-UN Joint High Level Mission. I was also here on 10 November. The main objective for those missions was to reiterate the support of the United Nations, and indeed the international community at large, to the people of The Gambia during the electoral process. In that regard, we have been urging political stakeholders including national institutions and political parties to play their respective roles in ensuring the delivery of peaceful and credible elections, as well as the resolution of electoral disputes through legal and constitutional channels, in a pacific manner.

During my visit today, I have been able to hold discussions with President-elect Adama Barrow and representatives of the Gambia Opposition for Electoral Reform (GOFER), as well as those of the Alliance for Patriotic Re-Orientation and Construction (APRC), the CSO-Coalition on Election/Situation Room, and members of the Diplomatic Corps.

These interactions offered me the opportunity to discuss with various stakeholders the way forward following the declaration of the results of the just-ended presidential election, which will cause The Gambia to experience for the first time an alternation of political power through peaceful democratic means.

Allow me to congratulate, once again, the government and the people of The Gambia for organizing a peaceful, transparent, and credible election. I wish to commend in particular President Jammeh for the gracious manner in which he conceded defeat and for his pledge to work for a smooth transfer of power to his successor. In the same vein, we congratulate President-elect Barrow for his historic victory.

The United Nations reiterates its commitment to accompany the people of The Gambia in its uncharted first journey to peaceful transfer of political power through elections. What happened has ushered in a democratic alternation of political power; and therefore the spirit and practice of democratic conduct should govern every consideration of all Gambian political stakeholders. Accordingly, I would insist that the way forward should be characterized by the ideal of national reconciliation, the quest for harmony, and the respect for the rule of law in accordance with the Gambian constitution and international laws.

Political parties should continue to have a responsibility to defend not only the interests of their own

party and its supporters, but also to safeguard the unity of the whole nation. We call on the coalition of opposition parties to be magnanimous in victory, to be moderate in their celebrations and to appeal to its cadres to eschew all acts of violence directed at APRC supporters. Likewise, it is expected of state security institutions to play their roles by adhering to the principles and practices of the civilian control of the armed forces in accordance with both national and international conventions.

Let me also call on the Gambian Civil Society Organizations to stay actively involved with the people of The Gambia and to contribute to safeguarding the principles of good governance and acting to continually enhance the conscience of society.

The results of the elections and the change in government will not alter the appeal of the United Nations for the respect of human rights and rule of law in The Gambia. For, only the respect of rule of law can strengthen national unity and ensure solid foundations for the challenges ahead. In this respect, I would like to reiterate that the incoming authorities of The Gambia should exercise their responsibilities in full adherence to the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and the AU African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, among other international instruments that uphold basic freedoms and civil liberties for all.

You would recall that in my last visit I urged the government and people of The Gambia to commit to the respect of human rights. For example, I specifically requested that the government should conduct an independent investigation into the deaths of Ebrima Solo Krumah and Solo Sandeng while they were in police custody. I also called on the government to reconsider the sentencing of the thirty protestors involved in the demonstrations of April 2016 as well as the continuing detention of fourteen people who were still in detention awaiting trial in relation to the demonstration in May 2016.

Let me, once again, congratulate you, the people of The Gambia, - and I would like to take this opportunity to convey the warm salutations of our Regional Economic Community ECOWAS, and our continental organization the African Union, with whom the United Nations released a joint statement praising the Gambian nation- for this peaceful and successful election, which will be cited as a model of political maturity and pragmatism of its leaders and its people.

On behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, I urge you to forge ahead in unity, conciliation, peace and harmony for the development of your great country.

Thank you.

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