

**Statement by Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas
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Launch of the Security Sector Reform process, The Gambia

Banjul, 12 September 2017

Your Excellency, President of the Republic of The Gambia,
Honourable Ministers,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Distinguished Guests,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman,

I am honoured and pleased to address you, today, during this ceremony marking the official launch of the Security Sector Reform process in The Gambia. I come with greetings from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterrez, who, as you know, follows very closely and with keen interest, developments in your country.

This ceremony is a concrete and essential turning point in the construction of a new Gambia where the security needs and expectations of citizens are

to be the focus of the State, in the context of the democratic transition initiated, following the December 2016 elections.

By embarking on a comprehensive reform of its security sector, the Government of The Gambia has made the choice of strengthening justice and security institutions to render them accessible and responsive to the needs and rights of all women, men, girls and boys in The Gambia.

Reforming the security sector is part of the Government's wider reform agenda to further transform the country, and uphold the highest standards of democratic governance.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Security Sector Reform is eminently a political process, which requires a strong and proactive engagement of the highest state authorities. It requires strong leadership, vision and guidance for a process, which ought to be inclusive, participatory and holistic, to better address the justice and security needs of all Gambians.

The role of women, youth, and civil society

organisations in peacebuilding cannot be overemphasized as overarching and cross-cutting parameters for inclusive societies. Any Security Sector Reform, which does not factor in these aspects will only be seen as partial and discriminatory, and will undermine efforts at promoting good governance and the rule of law.

This is why the event we are attending this morning, is of utmost importance in sending the signal to actors of the security sector, that from now on, the government aims at ensuring that they accomplish their missions in line with the rule of law and democratic principles of transparency and accountability. It is the only way to ensure and sustain peace and development.

The comprehensive SSR assessments, which are now underway are part of a critical phase of the SSR process and their recommendations for change may not always be palatable for many in the system. They may, for instance, call for rank and file restructuring to fit new shapes, sizes and structures the new Gambia truly needs.

The extended experience of the United Nations in SSR processes has taught us that following such assessments, is the critical milestone of developing a National Security Policy. This bedrock policy ought to provide for the overarching guide on which the individual security institutions build their own policies for the transparent command, leadership, management, and control of their organizations in conformity with overall democratic principles. This policy should spell out the mandate for each of the institutions, which informs the development of their strategies as to how they intend to accomplish their respective marching orders.

These two processes must be supported politically by all stakeholders, and followed through to its full implementation to ensure that its tenets are entrenched across the sector.

Mr. President,

Security Sector Reform ought to be pursued along with an accelerated constitutional and institutional reform, the establishment of

transitional justice mechanisms, as mutually reinforcing elements promoting social cohesion, stability, peace and security.

Let me reiterate the availability of the United Nations, and in particular the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, UNOWAS, and the United Nations Country Team in The Gambia to continue to support you in this endeavour. As you know, the Secretary-General and the United Nations are putting an emphasis on prevention as we promote the “Sustaining Peace” approach in The Gambia.

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In closing, I take this opportunity to reiterate the commitment of the United Nations to continue to work along with the ECOWAS, the African Union and international partners in supporting the Government and the people of The Gambia to strengthen the foundations for a well-governed, peaceful, and prosperous New Gambia.

Thank you.

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