



STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY  
MR. MOHAMMED B.S. JALLOW

VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE  
GAMBIA

AT THE  
**UNITED NATIONS 2023 WATER CONFERENCE**

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Mr. President,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,

I bring you warm greetings from His Excellency President Adama Barrow, the Government and people of The Gambia. On behalf of my delegation, allow me to also congratulate the UN General Assembly for convening the United Nations 2023 Water Conference on the Mid-Term Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018 – 2028.

We also, express our gratitude to the co-hosts of this important event, the Governments of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, for their leadership and exceptional role in championing this important agenda. It is our hope that this Conference will engender more international cooperation and solidarity towards finding solutions to the world water crisis. In this view, The Gambia aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by Cuba on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We stand ready to cooperate across borders to find lasting solutions to a crisis that has become an existential threat to human civilization.

Mr. President,

The Gambia being the smallest country on mainland Africa, with a population of some 2.5 million inhabitants, is well located on the downstream of The Gambia River Basin, covering a great majority of the total area of the country. The country depends on The River Gambia for rice irrigation, ecosystem services, transportation,

fisheries, sand mining, salt production and biodiversity, to name but a few.

In view of the river's regional importance and the need for international cooperation in its proper management, The Gambia and Senegal formed The River Gambia Basin Organization (OMVG) in 1978, which was later joined by Guinea and Guinea Bissau. From the time it was established, the OMVG has registered significant progress over the years, notably, the ongoing OMVG Energy Project in all the member states, which is boosting accessibility to clean and affordable renewable energy while reducing the carbon footprint within the basin area. In pursuit of our commitment to transboundary water cooperation and governance, The Gambia is actively participating in the on-going development of the Integrated Development Master Plan (IDMP) for the OMVG basin states, with the support of our financial and technical partners.

Mr. President,

The Gambia is also located on one of the most productive transboundary sedimentary aquifer systems in Africa, the Senegalou-Mauritanian Aquifer Basin (SMAB), shared with Guinea Bissau, Mauritania and Senegal. The Gambia relies on over 90 % (ninety) percent of its domestic water needs from the groundwater and mainly, tapping from the upper aquifer.

However, the country faces significant challenges in terms of excessive and concentrated groundwater abstraction, especially, in the urban areas where the water demand is the highest, with potential risks of overexploitation.

Significantly, The Gambia joined with other riparian states to foster a regime of legal and institutional transboundary aquifer cooperation through the development of a Common Vision and Joint Regional Project for the concerted management of the Senegalou-Mauritanian Aquifer Basin (SMAB). These cooperative activities, which encompass data and knowledge exchange, capacity development and technical support, led to the signing of a Ministerial Declaration on the 28th of September, 2021 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Mr. President,

The Government of The Gambia has also, instituted the Water Sector Reform Programme which recommended institutional restructuring. Consequently, these reforms led to the enactment of the National Water Resources Management Authority Bill, 2019, The Gambia Meteorological Authority Bill, 2018 and The Gambia Water Bill, 2020 to replace the National Water Resources Council Act of 1979. These legal milestones demonstrate our Government's unflinching commitment to the proposed water sector reform and this we hope, will fast-track the degree of Integrated Water Resources Management Implementation, (SDG Indicator 6.5.1), which in 2021, was reported to be at 31% (31 percent).

Mr. President,

My delegation is delighted to inform you that for the first time in its history, The Gambia recently established the National Committee for the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP) in February, 2020.

This was achieved through collaboration between the National Commission for UNESCO of The Gambia and the Government, with a view to facilitating more exchange and cooperation in the

implementation of water-related SDG targets under the UNESCO programme of work.

Within the framework of adherence to International Water Law, The Gambia recently ratified the two UN Water Conventions and is now in the final stages of completing the accession process. In this regard, I wish to recognize the extensive support received from the Water Convention Secretariat under the UNECE, the Chair of the Bureau of the Water Convention and the EU Delegation to The Gambia.

Mr. President,

In the area of water supply and sanitation, the Government of The Gambia made a significant achievement, with 95% (percent) of the households gaining access to improved drinking water sources. Today, there is less than 10% (percent) of households without connections to their dwellings. Likewise, 72% (percent) of the households have access to improved sanitation facilities with less than 1% percent of the households practicing open defecation.

Mr. President,

The Government of The Gambia participated in the discussions of the International High-level Panel on Water Investment for Africa to support the mobilization of the requisite resources to close the water investment gap during the March, 2022, Dakar, Senegal, “9th World Water Forum” and at the COP 27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt in November 2022.

Mr President

At this juncture, allow me to highlight that The Gambia is highly vulnerable to the impacts of Climate Change as manifested by the ravaging windstorms of 2021 and the unprecedented floods experienced in the summer of 2022, with the urban settlements

bearing the brunt of the impact. The tragic climatic events led to numerous deaths, displacement of families, loss of property and unbearable hardship for hundreds of households in the affected areas. In the capital Banjul, the Kanifing Municipality and parts of the West Coast Region, the flooding quickly snowballed to national security threat as displaced residents forcefully sought answers from the Government over supernatural events beyond its control.

Consequently, The Gambia has renewed its unwavering commitment to the implementation of the Integrated Flood Management System and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, in order to strengthen our resilience and adaptation to these kinds of climatic shocks in the future.

Mr. President,

In view of the threats posed by climate change to national development aspirations, the Government has developed a Climate Change Vision 2050 and the Long-Term Climate-Neutral Development Strategy 2050 to guide our Climate Change actions, in the short, medium and long-term, and build resilience to the adverse impacts of Climate Change.

Mr. President,

Agriculture remains the bedrock of our country's economy and the biggest employer. However, it continues to be dominated by subsistence farming and heavy reliance on rainfall. The long dry spells at the onset of the 2022 rainy season, led to massive crop failures, affected production and productivity and threatened our food security. We, therefore, subscribe to the ambition to enhance Water Use Efficiency and Water Productivity in order to achieve food self-sufficiency and attain economic growth and stability.

Mr. President,

Allow me to conclude by reiterating The Gambia's firm commitment to the Water Action Agenda in order to accelerate the successful implementation and achievement of "SDG 6" and other water-related goals and targets.

I thank you for your kind attention.