

STATEMENT BY

**H.E. SHEIKH PROFESSOR ALHAJI DR. YAHYA A J J JAMMEH
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA**

ON THE OCCASION

OF THE

67TH UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SEPTEMBER 2012

NEW YORK, USA

**Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Your Majesties,
Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen;**

I thank Allah, the Almighty, for making another annual gathering of world leaders possible. Let me first of all, congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election and wish you success in your tenure as you manage the affairs of this august Assembly.

Let me also pay tribute to the Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his tireless leadership and sterling contributions towards the creation of a better world. Our world continues to be plagued by numerous challenges that can only be solved through our collective response. Multilateral diplomacy and institutions offer the best hope for tackling our development conundrum, protracted conflicts, man-made and natural disasters.

Mr. President,

Peace and security will always remain a cornerstone of our organization and for this reason my delegation welcomes your choice of the theme: *"Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means."* As we speak, many conflicts are raging across the world in ways that challenge the credibility and clout of our organization.

The paralysis displayed by our common security mechanisms is astounding. Geopolitical interests have trampled the goodwill and humanitarian concerns that should compel us all to address these raging infernos – be it in the Middle East, Asia or Africa. Our collective security will continue to be undermined by geo-political considerations unless and until we find the courage to reform the Security Council. Ongoing conflicts in Mali, Guinea Bissau and Syria are recent cases in point. The Security Council should not be the stumbling block in the settlement of disputes by peaceful or other means.

Mr. President,

My delegation is fully aware of the need for the peaceful settlement of some of the conflicts in Africa, but we are equally aware of the need for robust action in dealing with spoilers and merchants of death and misery in the continent. ECOWAS is working to find solutions to these conflicts but needs the support of the international community.

We see the role of the Security Council as a partner and enabler of decisive action. Time is running out. The elements of doom have been emboldened by our inaction. The United Nations and its UNOWA must work decisively to address the conflicts in Mali and Guinea Bissau without delay. The African Union's engagement will be crucial. Terrorists, drug dealers and organized criminal networks should be stopped in their tracks.

Mr. President,

The relevance of our organization has, at times, been questioned but one element that remains unchallenged is its character of being the best forum for confronting global challenges. As we convene to discuss the issues of climate change, economic crises, financial turmoil, food insecurity, conflicts, fighting disease, poverty or the special interests of Africa, the convening power of the United Nations confers legitimacy that is unparalleled elsewhere.

As developing countries, we believe in the work that this organization does and it is for this reason, Mr. President, that we will support your efforts at revitalizing the General Assembly – as the voice of the voiceless. We also use this forum to call on the international financial institutions to open up and embrace overdue reforms. They should be transparent, inclusive and raise the profile of their smallest members, like the low income countries or Least Developed Countries. We call on them to embrace the Istanbul Programme of Action.

Mr. President,

The fate of the Istanbul Programme of Action must not be written in the language of broken promises, unfulfilled commitments and weak resource mobilization. As LDCs we are ready to hold ourselves accountable for the implementation of the commitments we have made in Istanbul. We are equally ready to meet the targets set out in the programme. It is our hope and expectation that our partners

and the rest of the international community will equally fulfill their commitments. Let us work together to bring about the graduation of half of the LDCs by 2020. It is achievable if we all forge the appropriate global partnerships for resource mobilization.

Mr. President,

The scorecard on the Millennium Development Goals shows that while some achievements have been made in regard to some of the goals, a lot still remains to be achieved. My own country has met some of the key elements of the MDGs and is on track to meet all of them. In view of the fact that 2015 is just around the corner, we need to do more to mobilize the remaining resources that will further improve the critical link between success and failure on the achievement of the MDGs.

Critical to the achievement of the MDGs will be the scaling up of resources by enhancing the global partnerships that we have forged for the goals. We must mobilize the modest resources that are needed so that 2015 would not be another unfulfilled milestone.

Mr. President,

Rio + 20, has defined the mechanisms through which the sustainable development goals should be negotiated and agreed upon. It is our hope that the consultations on the post-Rio mechanisms will be inclusive, transparent and representative. Beyond managing the depleting resources of the earth, we must all push for ambitious and realistic goals and targets on sustainable food, water and energy. We

must equally take into account the special situation of LDCs and other vulnerable groups of countries.

My delegation is of the strong belief that in the euphoria for sustainable development goals the drive towards the achievement of the MDGs must not be compromised in any way. We must hold ourselves accountable to meeting the goals by 2015 and not try to shift the goal post when the deadline is right before us. We must equally lay a solid groundwork for the post – 2015 development agenda

Mr. President,

For developing countries to continue to benefit from the appreciable growth they are experiencing and in order not to compromise their capacities to bring education and healthcare to their peoples, debt cancellation or forgiveness is still a major option. Debt servicing still poses a major threat to our ability to attain sustainable growth. It is our belief that our partners and the Bretton Woods Institutions should consider the extension the HIPC initiative further.

Mr. President,

As we strive in the Sahel to deal with drought and crop failure from the past year, allow me to thank our partners for the support they have rendered to my government. We are grateful for their solidarity and humanitarian support. In view of the perennial nature of food insecurity, it is my humble view that the international community needs to do more to render more support to the agricultural sector of our economies.

The role of the small scale farmer needs to be boosted and we must, through, global partnerships fast track the numerous agricultural initiatives that have been announced to support African agriculture. Agricultural systems across Africa need to be made more resilient in terms of inputs, technological know-how, scientific research and the setting up of training institutions. The African farmer ought to benefit from modern farming techniques and technology.

In this context, I would like to thank the Government and people of Australia for the outstanding generosity towards boosting Agriculture and food security in Africa.

Mr. President,

With the establishment of UN-Women, the United Nations took a big step forward in mainstreaming the gender dimension into its work. As an ardent supporter of women's rights and participation in all sectors of society, I must commend UN-Women for the way it has been evolving as we look forward to the establishment of its regional offices. Upon assumption of our membership of the Executive Board, we will work with all concerned to advance the promotion of women's rights and the rights of the girl-child. Advancing the welfare of women will always be a priority for my government and it starts with the girl-child.

Mr. President,

Africa is witnessing a revolution in the information-communication technology sector and it is our view that with the completion of the Africa Coast to Europe submarine cable there will be even greater transformations in this sector. This should further help to increase the transfer of critical technology for the economic advancement of our peoples.

In this we see a greater opportunity for South-South cooperation as well as North-South cooperation in ways that will revolutionize education, agriculture and healthcare delivery. We, therefore, call on our partners to support the growth of the ICT sector with a view to enhancing our productive capacities while also generating youth employment. Youth unemployment is one of the biggest threats to our social and economic advancement. We must therefore partner across the globe to address this ugly phenomenon.

Mr. President,

Allow me to address some of the recent conflicts that are threatening the peace and stability of Africa and the world at large. Our youth are being sucked into conflicts and a life of crime with their productive talents being wasted. Our modest economic gains are being wiped out through instability and even our societal cohesion is under serious threat.

If we do not act fast and now, we risk creating more upheavals that will overwhelm our capacities to contain them. The international

community will pay a very high and dear price if it does not wake up from its slumber and solve the situations in Mali and Guinea-Bissau. In West Africa, our ongoing security challenges are being compounded by these situations. ECOWAS should not be left alone to shoulder the burden of these conflicts. The United Nations Security Council must step up to the plate and act decisively in cooperation with the African Union and ECOWAS. The signals coming from the Council are a bit disheartening for some of us. ECOWAS is ready to act. The AU is ready to act to salvage the situations in Mali and Guinea Bissau. The Security Council must act with a sense of greater urgency. We cannot let terrorists, drug dealers and organized criminal gangs establish a sanctuary in our backyard.

Mr. President,

In line with our foreign policy, The Gambia stands ready to contribute meaningfully to the settlement of these conflicts. The level of steadfastness shown in solving the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone must equally be shown in Mali and Guinea Bissau.

Mr. President,

The situation in Darfur continues to occupy the attention of my delegation. We call for more dialogue in finding a lasting solution to this conflict. We are equally concerned about the lingering conflict between Sudan and South-Sudan. Dialogue is the only way to solve this conflict. The parties must implement the recommendations of the AU High Level Implementation Panel and the Roadmap.

We urge our brothers to demonstrate the same magnanimity and extraordinary statesmanship that characterized the independence of South Sudan, as they embark on settling the outstanding issues. You will forever be neighbors; and as neighbors, you are mutually dependent on each other for your national security.

Mr. President,

Let me commend the AMISOM forces, the United Nations and the African Union for the progress they are making in Somalia. The pressure must be sustained until all of Somalia is liberated and placed under the sole authority of the Somali government. Insecurity and piracy must be stamped out. The spoilers must be denied sanctuaries lest they continue destabilizing the whole of the Horn of Africa.

Mr. President,

As we dwell on these conflict situations we are equally concerned about the various conflicts ravaging the Middle East. Afghanistan has been in conflict for too long. It is time that Afghans be given enough space and capacity to solve their problems. Dialogue and national reconciliation, that is homegrown and inclusive, is the best way to lasting peace and stability in the country.

Mr. President,

We all witnessed the dramatic and historic events that transformed parts of Middle East and Africa. It is our hope that these transformations will endure and nurture the ideals of peace, security,

development and democracy. We must not lose sight of some of the negative concomitants of these upheavals as is currently evident in Syria.

My delegation believed that the Annan Plan would have brought about stability as well as provide for space for dialogue between the parties. It seems there is lack of goodwill and trust between the parties as well as the invisible hand of external elements hell-bent on achieving one outcome or the other. Syria is now a deeply divided society and the international community is partly to blame for its actions or inaction.

We urge the parties to go back to the negotiating table and revive the Annan Plan. The international community ought to play a more positive role than it is currently doing. Innocent lives are being lost for no just cause.

Mr. President,

The Palestinian situation is deplorable. The situation has deteriorated to the point that a one-state solution may be inevitable. Israel, the occupying power, in defiance of international law, human decency and restraint is imposing a de facto situation on Palestinians through despicable settlement activity and land grabbing. The sad reality is that it is the mechanisms of the United Nations Security Council that are constantly invoked to further delay or stifle necessary action in bringing lasting peace to Palestine. The excesses of Israel - land grabbing, settlement activity, mass imprisonment of Palestinians, denial of revenue, maiming, murder of Palestinians by the state

apparatus and many others ought to be halted. Truth is bitter when told, but it is what will set us all free.

Mr. President,

Let me also address some burning political issues of our time. The embargo imposed on Cuba by the United States fifty years ago is still in place for no justifiable reason. If it ever made sense then, today it does not make sense keeping it in place! It is shameful that in the 21st century a cold war relic stands as the only stumbling block between the establishment of good neighbourly relations and the rejection of empty political cacophony in some quarters. We call on the United States to totally extirpate the embargo and throw it in the dustbin of history where it properly belongs.

Mr. President,

My delegation would like to use this rostrum to appeal to the collective membership of this organization, including China, to contribute to opening the avenues for membership of Taiwan in the various funds, agencies, treaty bodies and programmes. This will only enhance the effectiveness of these bodies for our mutual benefit. Taiwan is a key player in international trade and politics. It has enduring ties with China and so what we are appealing for is the practical extension of the rapport Taiwan has with China to the international stage. China conducts trade, business and tourism with Taiwan and both engage in discussing a range of bilateral issues. The rest of the international community ought to do the same including the United Nations. Avenues of dialogue have to be opened.

Mr. President,

Our stalled reform of the Security Council is disheartening. Year in and year out we come and make proposals and then we do not get anywhere. I will again refer to what Kofi Annan said at the time of launching his report, "In Larger Freedom – Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All" that no reform of the United Nations is complete without reform of the Security Council, is as valid now as when he said it seven years ago. The resistance to change should come to an end. The paralysis of the reform agenda must come to an end. We cannot afford to be in a state of coma when larger regional interests, especially those of Africa get shunted around or jettisoned. Africa needs to be at the table and we will not budge on this demand. It is legitimate and just. Africa must be legitimately represented on the Security Council. We must reform or risk delegitimizing the actions taken, and the decisions made, in the name of our collective security.

Mr. President,

Allow me at this point to recognize the appointment of H.E. Mr. Jan Eliasson, as the new Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations. We have confidence in his abilities and experience as an astute statesman. We also know his keen interest in and engagement with Africa at various periods in his diplomatic life. We look forward to advancing the special needs of Africa with him under the guidance of the Secretary-General.

On a final note, it is our hope that the next incoming Presidents of the General Assembly will consider the other themes beyond that of peace and security. Where possible an intermarriage of themes could also be considered.

I wish you all a successful General Assembly session.