



**REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA**

Office of National Security  
Office of The President  
State House  
Banjul  
The Gambia

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16 February 2023

**Media Briefing on Security Sector Reform Process in The Gambia**

1. **Aim of the Media Briefing**

The purpose of this Media Briefing is to sensitize the public and create awareness on the ongoing Security Sector Reform (SSR) in the country and provide update on what has been achieved thus far, highlight the current challenges and way forward in addressing these challenges.

This is hoped to widen the understanding of the population who are critical stakeholders of the process, noting that the SSR is not a one-off event but a dynamic and progressive process with the citizens and residents of this country as the main beneficiaries and stakeholders of the process.

The rationale and overriding objective is to ensure that the citizens and residents of this great country have the right and accurate information regarding the SSR process. Conversely, and for the purpose of the Gambia's SSR exercise, SSR is defined as thus:

*"A political and technical process of improving state and human security by making security provision, management and oversight more effective and more accountable, within a framework of democratic civilian control, rule of law and respect for human rights." (United Nations SSR Perspective, September 2017)."*

## 2. **OVERALL OBJECTIVES OF THE SSR PROJECT**

The current Government under the leadership of His Excellency, Adama Barrow, President of the Republic and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces is committed to the promotion of a culture of tolerance, democracy, good governance, rule of law and human rights.

Based on these principles, the reforms that were introduced in the aftermath of the 2017 transition is premised on the consideration for the protection of the citizen (human-centered security) and their participation in security matters as a guarantee of their freedom and the enthronement of values that would underpin the operations of rule of law.

In this regard, the SSR set out the parameters necessary to enable the fulfilment of legitimate security functions through reforms, restructuring and institutional development counterbalanced by increased democratic oversight. This will ensure an accountable, effective and efficient security sector.

### **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:**

- To entrench democratic practices that uphold the principles of good governance and justice system in line with International conventions, treaties and best practices.
- To ensure a fully integrated and effective coordination of the Security Sector at National, Regional and District levels.
- To ensure Civilian Management and Oversight bodies execute their functions in a robust, effective and efficient manner and in conformity with relevant legal and policy frameworks.
- To mainstream gender within the security sector thus providing for the well-being of all vulnerable groups in line with international best practices.
- To have a Security Sector that is compact, well-resourced and apolitical.

- Government is to finally take command and control of the overall security responsibilities of the country, currently shouldered by ECOMIG Forces since 2017.

### 3. **KEY RESULT INDICATORS**

- Restoration of Trust and confidence of the public in the security sector.
- Respect for human rights and rule of law in line with best practice/International standards.
- Security sector composed of efficient and effective security institutions that are fully subordinate to democratic norms and civilian authority.
- Well- defined National Security Architecture and Ownership of the SSR process by The Gambia Government.

### 4. **SSR ACHIEVEMENTS**

- The security services are now reoriented and accountable in safeguarding and upholding the rights of the citizens through oversight mechanisms.
- The Minister of Interior and Defence and other Security Service Heads are now held to account, providing briefings, and answering to the National Assembly oversight committees on Defence and Security.
- The National Intelligence Agency rebranded as the State Intelligence Service since the last six years is no longer engage in arbitrary arrest, detention, torture, and other forms of right abuses as evident in the previous administration. The service is now focused on its core mandate of intelligence collection, analysis and dissemination to advice policy makers and other consumers.
- The Gambia Police Force now hardly detain suspects beyond the mandatory 72 hours as required by law and embraces the concept of community policing approach as well as accountable and respect human rights and rule of law.

- The Gambia Armed Forces is now focused on its core mandate of safeguarding the territorial integrity of the country, as well as engagement in civil – military relationship to foster better understanding with the citizens of this country.
- Evidently, the security institutions have moved away from being regime centered institutions and now focused on their core national security mandates which has rekindled public trust and confidence in them and the Government.
- The democratic space is now opened, rule of law applied, courts are independent, and citizens entitled to free speech and holding government to account.
- The current rating of the country as peaceful and stable, as well as the support of donors such as IMF, EU, WB and UNDP are testimony to and further demonstrate the gains registered in the democratic process.
- Capacity building initiatives specific to training are ongoing. The aggregate translates to the significant reduction on human rights violations and abuses and the focus is now on optimal security service delivery to the citizens based on the global approach on “Human-Centered Security”.

## **5. SOME KEY REFORM PROGRAMS UNDERTAKEN BY GOVERNMENT TO ENHANCE SECURITY**

Since the introduction of the SSR process in The Gambia, significant level of reforms activities have been undertaken in line with democratic principles and international standards.

The following are key highlights of the achievements:

- Establishment of Office of National Security and appointment of National Security Adviser to coordinate the activities of all the Security institutions and to lead the SSR process.

- Example of the new Security Policies and Programs developed and being implemented are:
  - National Security Policy.
  - National Security Strategy.
  - Security Sector Reform Strategy.
  - National Defence Policy.
  - Legal Coordination Framework.
  - National Security Council Bill.
  - Security Sector Institutional Legal Framework.
  - Creation of Legal Database Website.

## **Capacity Building and Institutional Development of the Security Services**

### **Gambia Armed Forces**

- Legal frameworks and policy documents have been reviewed, developed/ drafted (Defence Policy, Peacekeeping Policy, Defence Strategy, Terms and Conditions of Service, Gambia Armed Forces Act 85 and other subsidiary documents).
- Training has been tailored to support the professionalization of the Armed Forces particularly for the officer's corps in different military fields since 2017 (Defence College, War College and Senior Leadership Strategic Courses).
- Appointments and reassignments in the positions are based on competence, capacity and capabilities.
- Training of the lower cadre of the Military has remain an ongoing activity with a view to changing attitude, mindset and behavior.
- New Units created to move from regime security to human centered security.
- Promotional examination for Commissioned Officers to ensure that Officers are deservedly moved from one rank to the other.

### **Gambia Police Force**

- Legal frameworks and policy documents have been reviewed, developed/ drafted policies such as Crisis Management and Critical

Incidence Response, Standard Operating Procedures, Police Guidance Manual, Arrest and Detention Manual, Pocket Book on Election Security, Policing Public Assembly etc.

- Training has been tailored to support the professionalization of the General Duty Police and Police Intervention Unit such as Forensic Investigation, Traffic Management, Public Order Management, Public Safety and Crime Prevention, Community Policing Guidelines etc.
- 76 Community Policing Centers established.
- Crime Information Management System developed and up running
- New Police doctrine developed with clear Vision, Mission and Values geared towards the professionalization of the Police service.
- Major infrastructure development carried out such as the construction of Model Police Stations in Serekunda, Bundung, Barra and this will be replicated in all the administrative regions.
- Developed 5 year Strategic Development Plan.
- Developed Gender Policy.

### **State Intelligence Service**

- SIS draft Bill, Code of Conduct, Selection and Recruitment Policy, Training Policy and Manual on Diplomatic Etiquette and Protocols completed.
- Significant number of Officers have undergone internal and external trainings to argument their capacities in various facets of national security in general and intelligence trade craft in particular.
- The Agency has upgraded its training school to Academy called the "Center for National Security Studies" as a training hub for not only the SIS but the wider security sector and other stakeholders.

### **Gambia Immigration Department**

- Implemented institutional and legal reforms, including review of the Immigration Act 1965.
- Introduced secured identification and documentation for processing and issuance of national identification documents.
- Implemented measures to enhance border control and management.
- Major infrastructure development carried out such as the construction of more Immigration Post in all the administrative regions.
- Formulation of human Information Management System.

- Implemented various training tailored to support the professionalization of the department.

### **Drug Law Enforcement Agency**

- Instituted structural adjustments to improve professionalism, effectiveness and efficiency to address corruption in the Agency.
- The National Drug Control Strategy (2019-2023) is in its final year of implementation.
- Development of strategic policies such as Staff Code of Conduct, Staff Service Rules, IT Security Policy, Business Continuity Plan, Risk Management Policy and Training Policy.
- Strengthening Forensic Investigation.
- Implemented various training tailored to support the professionalization of the Agency.

### **Gambia Prisons Service**

- Implemented institutional and legal reforms, including review of the Prison's Act 1948.
- Implemented various training tailored to support the professionalization of the Service.
- Upgrade of Prison infrastructure such as refurbishment of the main kitchen at Mile II, construction of a three-classroom block at the Juvenile Justice Wing in Jeshwang Prison Camp, construction of staff quarters at Janjanbureh Prisons Camp, construction of clinic at Jeshwang Prison Camp, renovation of the training center at Mile II.
- Development of Management Information System for inmates and Officers.

### **Gambia Fire and Rescue Services**

- Implemented institutional and legal reforms, including review of the Fire Service Act 1948.
- Implemented various training tailored to support the professionalization of the Service in the areas of fire investigation skills, advanced search and rescue operation and accident and emergency.
- Expansion of the Fire Stations in the Provinces.
- Introduction of operational fire-fighting, Sea Rescue, Ambulance and Paramedics services.

## 6. **INHERENT CHALLENGES OF THE SSR IMPLEMENTATION**

Notwithstanding the concrete achievements registered so far, there remains challenges on the SSR process, which I would like to highlight again that it is not an event but a process – in essence a journey.

The following are outstanding activities that are equally central in the SSR process to be implemented:

- Enactment of the National Security Council Bill.
- Enactment of all the reviewed Bills of the Security Institutions.
- Review the Acts of Drug Law Enforcement Agency and Gambia Revenue Agency.
- Development of Robust Communication Strategy.
- Development of Internal Security Policy and Strategy.
- Development of Resource Mobilization Strategy.
- Development of Security Operational Manual for the Security Institutions.
- Increment of an underfunded budget.
- Donor coordination on the SSR process to identify alternative source of funding/Resource Mobilization.
- Development of functional training facilities for capacity building.
- Change phobia/Embracing change.
- Right-sizing of the Security Institutions to make them fit for purpose within the national budget.
- Reinforcement of Public awareness on SSR process for partnership/ownership and buy-in.
- Revision of Obsolete Legal and Regulatory Frameworks.

## 7. **THE GAMBIA GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO SSR PROCESS**

There has been renewed commitment and ownership of the process by The Gambia Government demonstrated as follows:

- Seed money of 5 million dalasi provided in the 2023 Budget.
- Alternative source of funding is been looked into to support the SSR process.
- Reconfiguration of the Office of National Security.
- Approval and launch of the National Security Policy and subsequent Strategies (National Security Strategy and Security Sector Reform Strategy).



- Active participation of Civil Society Organization and Private Sector, including Religious Groups and the Media for oversight and inclusivity.
- Ongoing engagement with Bilateral and Multi-lateral partners as key stakeholders in National Development.

## **8. WAY FORWARD**

### **Enhance Coordination**

- Strengthen the Office of National Security to coordinate with UNDP to streamline donor coordination.
- Mobilize development support towards enhanced SSR process.
- Identify and mobilize other development partners towards a collective approach to address gaps in the approaches to support SSR process.

### **Implementation of the SSR Strategies**

- Current focus as directed by The Gambia Government is the implementation of the National Security Policy and National Security Strategy.
- A Matrix has been developed which outlines the strategic approach for the implementation, monitoring and review process of the implementation process of the National Security Plan as outlined in the approved National Security Strategy, Security Sector Reform Strategy and the National Security Bill.
- The implementation would be conducted in three (3) phases, Short, Medium and Long Term. The specific steps to be followed are:
  - **Recruitment of a Communication Strategies** for public sensitization and awareness to enable the implementation of the SSR, engage partners and beneficiaries to ensure effective coordination, information sharing and timely implementation and reporting.
- This will consist of a continuum of information that is connected and consistent to demonstrate government transparency for all audiences, put individuals before processes or rules; respond quickly to change,

embrace change and look for ways to innovate, set clear goals and written ways to provide information and make information easy to find.

- **Recruitment of Security Sector Program Manager** for the monitoring and evaluation of the EU funded Security Sector Program to ensure it delivers tangible improvements in line with Republic of The Gambia’s SSR strategic priorities.
- And ensure national ownership of program activities to ensure they are fully aligned with the national context and thus deliver a tangible difference to citizens especially women and their children that will be sustained after the program ends.

### Implementation Schedule Matrix

Key Actions		Proposed Timeline
Strategic Completion		
Step 1	Implementation of the National Security Policy (NSP), National Security Strategy (NSS), Security Sector Reform Strategy (SSRS) and the National Security Bill, with the complementary National Security Architecture.	28 Feb 23
Implementation Framework		
Step 2	Adoption of National Security Strategy and Implementation Timeline by National Security Council (NSC).	28 Feb 23
Step 3	Development of an Implementation Matrix (IM) with agreed and prioritized actions for each security sector institution to undertake to achieve implementation of the NSP and SSRS.	31 Jan 23
Step 4	Review the structure, staffing, streamlining of work processes and workflow to ensure balanced management team for the Office of National Security.	30 Apr 23
Step 5	Establishment of National Security Policy Monitoring Committee to be chaired by the National Security Adviser (NSA). The committee shall be responsible for the management of National Security Policy and Subordinate Security Policies.  Development of security structures such as Security Management Team, Administrative/Regional Security Management Teams with	31 May 23

	<p>relevant protocols.</p> <p>Establishment of security committees such as the Joint Strategic Technical Committee, the Joint Intelligence Committee, the Regional Intelligence Committee and Joint Operations Coordination Committee.</p> <p>Establishment of Human Resource Development Centre to provide joint holistic capacity under the purview of the NSC.</p> <p>Development of a Framework of Accountability as one of the keystone policies that outlines the responsibilities and accountabilities of the specific roles for all the key security actors to ensure effective security service delivery and decision-making which focuses on people-centred security.</p> <p>Development of Communication Strategy as a mechanism for information sharing, advocacy, innovation, and feedback on security issues with national and international dimensions.</p>	
Step 6	<p>Development/review of strategies such as Defence Policy, Safety and Security Policy, Judicial Policy, Maritime Policy, and other strategic security polices such as National Disaster Plan, Country Security Risk Assessment, Regional Security Risk Assessment, Country Security Plan, Regional Security Plans which are to be included within the NSP-IM as priority action comprising part of the implementation process.</p>	31 Jul 23
Step 7	<p>Review of security sector budget for provision of resources to meet logistical and equipment needs for the proposed reform, restructuring and institutional development of the security institutions.</p>	31 Mar 23
Step 8	<p>Establishment of Civilian Oversight Councils/Boards to ensure the democratic control of the security services, including the reform of governance and security institutions.</p> <p>Development to begin of a Country based security mechanism to conduct and promote local management of peace and security and including civilian and local government participation security governance.</p>	31 Jul 23
Strategic and Statutory Issues		

Step 9	Review of Statutory provisions of security institutions, including the defective Public Order Act to be undertaken as priority action elements of the NSP-IM.	31 Dec 23
Capacity Building		
Step 10	Conduct satisfactory screening and vetting of personnel of all national security institutions as may be deemed necessary, as well as prospective holders of sensitive public service positions.	30 Jun 24
Step 11	Comprehensive deployment of national security institutions to ensure security coverage and service delivery through The Gambia.	31 Dec 24
Step 12	Reinforced initiatives to realize xx% women participation in the national security institutions.	31 Dec 24
Step 13	Effective execution and monitoring of the Concept of Operations (Co-Ops) of national security institutions national joint security exercises.	31 Dec 24
Step 14	Review of the National Security Strategy, National Security Policy, and NSP-IM.	31 Dec 24
Final Goal		
Step 15	Rigorous enforcement of human rights law throughout The Gambia by all national security institutions.	31 Dec 24

## 9. **COMMENTARY**

There are two (2) issues that have pre-occupied and dominate public discuss and relates to the presence of ECOMIG FORCES in The Gambia and RIGHT-SIZING of the Security Institutions in the country.

In as much as there are genuine and legitimate concerns raised by the citizens, it is important to bring context to these issues which are national security matters.

Please allow me to comment on the ECOMIG FORCES deployed by ECOWAS on a clear and defined mandate with the approval of The Gambia Government and was widely welcomed by The Gambian population. ECOMIG'S mandate is to provide security to The President, Cabinet Members and Government Institutions and conduct confidence building measures.

Over this period, they have been deployed in Barra covering the Northern Bank and the Southern Bank in Bwiam and Medina. They have executed their mandate supporting both the Military and Police in a professional manner with least interference in the domestic and internal matters of the country. It should be noted that all peacekeeping missions have timelines and ECOMIG is no exception to this reality. Hence, The Gambia Government is working in a progressive way for the eventual withdrawal of ECOMIG through training and capacity building of the Gambia Security Institutions. Therefore, government is committed to carry out a comprehensive security sector reform in the shortest possible time with the support of its development partners.

Furthermore, Government is committed to ensuring that the Security Institutions are Right sized to make them fit for purpose. Its attainment will invariably translate to a professional, flexible, and national safety and security workforce with the requisite knowledge, skills, and experience, capable of delivering an effective and sustainable internal security services, as well as address the global safety and security challenges of the country.

This exercise requires a careful assessment and approach and demands significant funding in line with international best practice. In as much as the SSR acknowledges this requirement, there are fundamental processes to be followed such as availing severance packages both monetary and training to security personnel who opted to leave on their own accord, as well as those to be retrenched based on necessity.

The monetary package is provided as incentive and life line, which is complemented with the requisite training to equip them with set skills to ensure that they have means of sustenance and livelihood after service.

The Gambia Government is aware of this requirement, recognizes their service to the nation and is engaging with international partners for support to ensure that security personnel who leave transition smoothly with a satisfactory survival means together with their family members.

## 11. **CONCLUSION**

It is worthy to state that despite the perceived slow pace from many quarters, the SSR is on course and government is determined to carry the process to a logical end and a well-defined security architecture for the country.

As we forge ahead with the implementation of the final stage of the SSR process, we will continue discussions, interactions and collaboration with Civil Society Organizations, Citizens and Residents, and our International Partners for a common approach as way forward in an optimal security service delivery for the country.

The Gambia Government remains committed to implement the key findings and recommendations of the SSR Assessment Report (2017), with a view to reforming the security sector to ensure it is democratically accountable, effective, and efficient. The end state is to attain a security sector that is effective, efficient, apolitical, affordable, accountable, transparent, and responsive to the security and justice needs of the people based on democratic norms and principles.

With the rapidly changing and complex nature of the national, regional, and global security environment, security becomes the responsibility of all and sundry. In this regard, the citizens have a huge stake in the process and I therefore call on all citizens to positively remain engaged, committed and continue to demonstrate interest in the SSR process and most importantly become genuine partners in the development of this great country.

In closing, I would like to recognize the immense support from the international SSR partners which include Senegal, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Egypt, Kingdom of Morocco, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Spain, Turkiye, Qatar, United Kingdom, United States, Peoples Republic of China, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, ECOWAS, African Union, United Nations (UNDP), European Union (through DCAF and GIZ) and World Bank.

Finally, I thank the Media, Cabinet Ministers, Government Officials and other distinguished invited guests for attending this media briefing.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Center for Research and Policy Development who are our partners in the SSR and sponsored the event, the Government Spokesperson who moderated the event and the Director of Press and Public Relations for facilitating the event.

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