

**Statement by the President of the Republic of The
Gambia H. E. Sheikh, Professor, Alhagie, Dr. Yahya**

A. J. J. Jammeh

on

**the occasion of the Third World Climate Conference
(WCC-3)**

Geneva 31 August – 4 September, 2009

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BISMILLAH RAHMAN RAHIM

Chairperson

Federal Councilor of Switzerland for Transport and Environment

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government here present

UN Secretary General

Representatives of the UN and other Organisations

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with utmost delight and pleasure that I stand before you today to deliver a statement on the occasion of the 3rd World Climate Conference. Let me start by expressing my sincere thanks to the Secretary General, World Meteorological Organization, Mr. Michel Jarraud for inviting me to this very important Conference. On behalf of my delegation, I would like to express our gratitude to the Government and people of Switzerland for the hospitality accorded to us since our arrival. Greetings from the Gambia, **the smiling coast of Africa.**

It will be worth noting that the WMO series of World Climate Conferences have a special significance that we should all recognize. Significant developments on the climate agenda have preceded this Conference and include the establishment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, establishment of the World Climate Research Programme, the development of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the establishment of the Global Climate Observing System. It is our hope that this Conference whose main theme is **“climate prediction for decision-making”**, will produce an outcome that will complement the previous achievements.

It is also worth noting that WMO and all its Partner Organisations, have a baseline structure on which all successes are dependent – the WMO Integrated Global Observing Systems. Currently, an extensive network of weather and climate observing stations, covering land, sea and air has been created and continue to provide valuable services around the world. The management of such a global network faces numerous challenges. The significance of this network cannot be over emphasized, given that WMO facilitates the measurement and provision of key parameters of the atmosphere, land and ocean surfaces every day. It is the provision of the observed data that enables scientists the world over to conduct research and studies with convincing results. Notably, the most authoritative and scientific voice of the globe on climate change, the IPCC, draws this qualification from studies and assessments based on the data gathered from this network.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates

We in The Gambia like most developing countries are vulnerable to climate risks. It is against this recognition that my government formulated and adopted a National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA) on Climate Change. No stone will be left unturned to ensure the implementation of this Plan.

Suffice to say, ever since the Sahelian drought in the late nineteen sixties and early seventies, we in The Gambia have come to accept the hard reality that the climate, though a major resource for our livelihood and development, has also become a major threat to lives, livelihoods and properties.

Understandably, when the drought struck, fingers were pointing to possible causes, for example deforestation, environmental degradation, etc at the local or regional level. But it has now become clear that the cause of the drought originated far beyond our shores.

As an active farmer myself under rain fed conditions, I have observed and worked under various climate conditions over the years, and I can safely say that ‘climate is quite unpredictable’. Despite the level of enthusiasm, commitment and investment made by farmers in preparation for the crop-growing season, the climate dictates the final outcome. I have also come to

understand that climate affects every human being in every part of the world; certainly the gravity of the impacts depend on individual and collective capacity to adapt. The climate is therefore a major challenge for all the citizens of the globe and as such the responsibility of all to find ways of managing the risks associated with this global threat.

We in The Gambia are very concerned with the current and future states of the climate, because in spite of our well meaning efforts to achieve our National Vision, alleviate poverty in our midst and meet the MDG targets, climate variability and climate change would constitute a major hindrance to the achievement of our development efforts.

My Government has realized the high stakes in being fed from outside one's country and had since issued the policy statement entitled "Back to the land". With the famous slogan "eat what you grow and grow what you eat". This call has been greatly adhered to by the people of The Gambia. However, the erratic rainfall experienced in The Gambia over the years due mainly to the negative impacts of climate change and variability tend to dampen the spirits of farmers to engage in agricultural production.

My Government recognizes the need to address disasters and has established the National Disaster Management Agency. Over eighty percent of these disasters are reported to be climate induced. During the rainy season, The Gambia experiences floods and storms and often with undesirable consequences such as loss of and damage to property. The malaria burden during the rainy season also significantly undermines economic output. Artisanal fishermen who provide the bulk of protein intake in The Gambia encounter weather hazards that sometimes lead to disasters.

As a member of WMO, we have been steadfast in our obligations to the Organization. Through our network of land surface observations, we have been contributing to the World Weather Watch. I also acknowledge with gratitude, the benefits to The Gambia from the various assistance packages provided by multi-lateral and bi-lateral partners through WMO.

As the whole world fully embraces enhanced climate change and climate variability, with its dire consequences, particularly in developing countries, the need for a radical shift from the current status of climate services provision, cannot be overemphasized. Since no nation, no peoples can control the weather and climate; the only sensible way to deal with the threat is to promote preparedness in the management of the various weather and climate outcomes. Several discussions have been taking place under the aegis of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. However, it is crystal clear that no matter what agreements are reached in the short- and long-terms, adaptation to the various weather and climate conditions is a necessity and a right for all the citizens of the world, especially for those who are least responsible for creating climate change.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates

In view of the grave threat that the climate poses to our past, current and future development endeavours, my Government is fully in support of the proposed “Global Framework for Climate Services”.

In lending my support to the Framework, I wish to remind the audience of the prevailing capacity gaps between countries and peoples. As a result, Least Developing Countries, like The Gambia would certainly require special support to enhance capacity in the implementation of the proposed Framework in order to have the desired impact on our communities. To this effect, I want to emphasize the need for training of professionals in weather and climate, as well as the training of the various weather/climate information user groups.

In conclusion, I would like to re-iterate that addressing climate change and variability within the context of adaptation and mitigation, is a *sine qua non* for sustainable development. In this regard, my Government will continue to place high on its development agenda, climate and development challenges. By the same token, we urge all Partners to fulfill their commitments to the climate challenge. Together, we can make this planet a safer place for mankind and generations yet unborn.

I thank you for your attention. May Allah The Almighty shower His bounty of blessings on all of us.