

STATEMENT DELIVERED BY SEEDY S.K. NJIE, DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA AT THE 149TH INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION (IPU) ASSEMBLY IN GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, 15TH OCTOBER 2024.

THEME: “HARNESSING SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INNOVATION (STI) FOR A MORE PEACEFUL AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE”

Your Excellency, Madam President,

As we gather today for another crucial session to address a global imperative: harnessing science, technology, and innovation (STI) for a more peaceful and sustainable future: we are reminded of our collective responsibility. The theme aligns closely with Sustainable Development Goal 16, which aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable institutions at all levels.

At this juncture, my delegation and I express our profound gratitude to those who have stood firmly for the rights of women and girls during a pivotal moment in our nation’s history. Earlier this year, a private member's bill sought to reverse the ban on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in The Gambia. This truly tested our resolve as a country. Throughout the process, we passionately ensured the bill was rejected to protect our girls and women from such practices.

On that note, I would like to thank the leadership of the IPU, particularly President Dr. Julia Auckson and Secretary General Martin Chungen, for their unwavering support. Special recognition is also due to the United Nations system in The Gambia, under the coordination of UNFPA Country Representative Madam Rose Sarr, for their relentless advocacy and support during this time. I also extend heartfelt appreciation to our development partners, coordinated through the United States Embassy under the leadership of Ambassador Sharon Cromer, the World Bank and to civil society organizations in The Gambia, largely led by Jaha Dukureh of Safe Hands for Girls.

Most importantly, I express my deepest gratitude to His Excellency President Adama Barrow for his exemplary commitment to the protection and safety of women and girls in The Gambia. These collective efforts reaffirm our shared vision to eliminate harmful practices, protect human dignity, and foster a more equitable society for all.

Madam President, Our global challenges—from pandemics to climate change and cyber threats—transcend national borders. This is why international cooperation is critical for harnessing the full potential of STI.

On the Home Front, The government of The Gambia under the leadership of His Excellency President Adama Barrow, is committed to achieving universal access to electricity, aiming for 100% coverage by mid-2025. The 23MW Jambur Solar Power Plant, completed in 2023, is a landmark achievement in expanding our renewable energy capacity and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The Gambia offers the world valuable lessons in community-based natural resource management and climate resilience. In 2017, The Gambia gained global recognition for being one of the few nations to meet its national climate goals under the Paris Agreement. This success stems from our proactive approach to environmental challenges, focusing on local climate adaptation solutions.

One notable example is the Nema-Chosso project, co-financed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). By integrating STI, the project has boosted food security in rural areas, addressed climate change, and promoted local food sufficiency mechanisms.

Our climate leadership continues with our second Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC2), which outlines our commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 49.7% by 2030, focusing on key sectors such as energy, waste management, and agriculture. By leveraging STI, The Gambia has adopted renewable energy solutions, including the 20MW solar PV plant under the Gambia Renewable Energy Program (GREP).

Under the leadership of His Excellency President Barrow, the government has also digitalized social protection systems, aligning with the global agenda to harness STI in achieving SDG 1, which aims to eradicate poverty. The Gambia Social Protection Single Registry, launched in 2021 with support from the World Bank, serves as a unified database identifying vulnerable households nationwide. This system ensures that key social protection programs, such as cash transfers and entrepreneurial loans, reach those most in need.

On the International Front, Madam President, His Excellency President Barrow being the Chairman of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), has raised concerns over the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. In regions like the Sahel, where terrorist groups operate, and conflict-ridden areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan, technology can play a decisive role in restoring peace. The global community must do more to harness STI for peace in these regions plagued by violence, resource competition, and political instability.

We cannot discuss the future of peace and sustainability without addressing the grave injustices in Palestine. The ongoing carnage against the Palestinian people is not just a political issue but a profound human rights crisis. The ceaseless bombings, forced displacements, and destruction of homes and health facilities result in the deaths of thousands, including innocent women and children. We call on the United Nations Security Council to end the politicization of the global body and to act within the ethos and values of its founding fathers. We urge the international community to adopt a unified resolution recognizing Palestine as a sovereign state under the two-state solution, in accordance with previous UN resolutions. Furthermore, if we truly care about a more peaceful and sustainable future, the United Nations Security Council dispensation requires urgent restructuring to include Africa and Middle East Asia. I call on both the African Union and the Arab league to jointly collaborate and seriously take up the issue of United Nations reform Agenda of the Security Council to get permanent seats for both the Arab league and AU.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that a more peaceful and sustainable future hinges on how we harness STI. The Gambia's experience demonstrates that even the smallest nations can wield these tools to foster peace, combat inequality, and drive sustainable development. It is the shared duty of all parliaments represented here today to ensure that STI becomes a force for good, building bridges and securing a peaceful and prosperous future for all.

Thank you.