

**STATEMENT BY: HER EXCELLENCY THE
VICE PRESIDENT & MINISTER OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF
THE GAMBIA TO THE 3RD IAFS NEW DELHI, INDIA.**

Honourable Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi
Your Excellences Heads of State and Government
Madam Chairperson of the African Union
Honourable ministers here present
Excellences Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Development Partners
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen
All other protocols duly and respectfully observed

**BISMILAH ARAHMAN ARAHEEM
ALHAMDU LILLAH RABIL ALAMEEN (3 TIMES)**

I have the honour and pleasure to convey to you Honourable Prime Minister of India warmest greetings from His Excellency The President of the Republic of The Gambia, H.E. Sheikh Professor Alhaji Dr. Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh who entrusted me to represent him at this all important India-Africa Summit. His Excellency would have liked to be with us today but due to unavoidable circumstances, he was unable to attend this important forum. However, he personally asked me to further convey to you Honourable Prime Minister, the Government and people of India and to the African Union his fraternal best wishes for the successful organization and conclusion of the 3rd India Africa Summit.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

While we acknowledge that a lot has taken place between India-Africa since the promulgation of a new framework of cooperation and partnership in Delhi in 2008, the impact of Indian interventions in African development both in terms of capacity building and infrastructure has led to improvements in the quality of services rendered in national development and of the lives of the people in the continent. However, there is still room for further engagement between the continent and India in trade, investments, economic and culture ties. For enhanced cooperation however, it is strongly advocated that implementation mechanisms be put in place as a follow-up on the IAFS decisions that will be reached at this 3rd session.

In this connection, Chairperson, the Government of India should recognize that the authority of African Heads of State and Government created two levels of representation in dealing with India -i.e. the African group at the AU and the African Group in New Delhi. We therefore, expect both representatives to be effectively engaged in dialogues and in the implementation of the IAFS decisions from henceforth so that our respective Governments can be adequately informed on the progress of the framework of cooperation and partnership between the continent and India.

As we celebrate the deep ties of cooperation and partnership between India and Africa. It is my fervent hope that the outcomes of our deliberations will lay emphasis on this strategic cooperation for the mutual benefit of our two peoples.

A few weeks ago, I had the privilege to represent The President at the recently concluded UN summit that endorsed Agenda 2030. Seeing that our cooperation already spans across several focus areas of the SDGs like goals 1 and 2 - Ending Poverty and hunger, Goal 13 on climate change and goal 16 – to live in peace, it is our belief that this strategic partnership coupled with South-South cooperation between Africa and India will play an effective role in the implementation and attainment of this ambitious agenda.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

For this celebration to be of any significance there must be a radical change, both in policy and implementation, to the socio-economic matrix where all governments concerned would aggressively endeavor to erase the scars of poverty, inequalities and underdevelopment that has, and still, plagued our continent almost beyond reverse. It is our fervent hope that our cooperation as a continent with India will be a model of success for all other development partnerships coordinated through the African Union Commission.

As we also seek, as a continent and as respective countries, for new horizons to add impetus to our development drives, let it be done in a manner and spirit that showcases and amplifies our unity as a continent and as Africans.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen

Coming back to the home front, The Gambia and India share a very fruitful relationship of friendship, cooperation and partnership and this continues to grow from strength to strength. The Gambia continues to enjoy immense support and assistance from the Indian government. There is huge development in The Gambia thanks to the effective leadership provided by President Jammeh and the support we receive from genuine friends and brotherly countries such as India. India's contribution to sustainable development in Africa in general and in The Gambia in particular has been remarkable. The Government and people of The Gambia express their profound thanks to the Government of India for the support to our efforts at socio-economic development.

We recognize India is an important player in global affairs. The Gambia and India have common interest in international affairs and sometimes share common points of view on international issues. The level of cooperation at the international scene between our two countries is very much encouraging especially at the level of the United Nations.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is common knowledge that the Present structure organization and functioning of the United Nations does not reflect the concerns and expectation of the world in tackling problems of International politics such as more conflicts causing millions of people dead, drug trafficking, international terrorism and environmental degradation to name a few. The need for reorganization and restructuring of the UNO with expanded Security Council membership cannot be overemphasized. In this connection, The Republic of The Gambia, I am confident for most of Africa, stands ready to lend support to a major developing economy and partner country to Africa like INDIA to have a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. After all, India and Africa are inextricably linked by history, culture, shared values and by vision-thanks to Mahatma Gandhi and African leaders of the time who were the sources of this collaboration.

In conclusion, let me reiterate my Government's steadfast resolve to promoting the very pillars on which India-Africa Partnership is built. I am confident that with the continued support of the Indian Government through this partnership, we will witness a peaceful, stable and enviable Africa as well as a prosperous and secured India.

I thank you for your kind support

Long live African unity

Long live India-Africa Partnership