

**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
THE GAMBIA SHEIKH PROFESSOR ALH. DR. YAHYA AJJ JAMMEH AT THE
US-AFRICA LEADERS SUMMIT, WASHINGTON DC, USA 5-6 AUGUST, 2014**

Mr. Chairman and President of the United States

My Fellow African Heads of State and Government

Secretaries of State and Hon. Ministers

Members of Congress

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

First, I would like to register my profound appreciation and gratitude to President Obama and the United States Government for hosting this historic summit here in Washington. As I understand it, the Summit is a concrete follow-up to President Obama's visit to Sub-Saharan Africa last year, which was intended as a prelude to launching a new vision and chapter in US African relations by advancing the administrations' focus on trade and development in Africa and to demonstrate America's commitment to Africa's security and its ongoing democratic development. We welcome the new partnership envisaged under this commitment and the likely consensus that this historic summit would produce.

As the relations between Africa and the United States of America has evolved for centuries with significant impact on the economic and social wellbeing of our peoples, we believe that this Summit is appropriate and laudable because it provides the platform and opportunity to move to a higher level of mutually beneficial cooperation between the United States and the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa.

There is no gainsaying that for the world and especially Africa to be a better place tomorrow we must invest in the future today. Africa is on the move with an unprecedented pace of development. In many African countries, the fundamentals are improving as reflected in impressive growth rates in recent years. Therefore, African leaders must strive to maintain and advance these trends while we endeavour to ensure peace and security on the continent, and preserve our cultural norms and values as the fundamental pillar for our development.

Demographic change, combined with technological advancement and social mobility, will significantly change the profile, needs and requirements of future generations in Africa. With this in mind, we in the Gambia have focused on developing the key social services of education and health, public infrastructure, agriculture, trade and technological innovation.

In education, we have expanded the infrastructure and opportunities at all levels of the education system, improved the curriculum and increased enrolment of pupils, especially girls. The University of the Gambia was established over ten years ago and has produced locally trained young men and women in the critical fields of medicine, law and agriculture among others. The University of the Gambia continues to be expanded to have better facilities and improved curricular as the future of the Gambia depends on a highly qualified workforce. We have also focused on the health sector especially maternal and child health with the ultimate objective of drastically reducing the maternal and child mortality rates.

As a government, we are convinced that a stable and prosperous future depends on food self sufficiency and security. Therefore, in the agriculture sector we have embarked on various initiatives, often with the youth, with a view to create more employment and ensure food self sufficiency and security. To this end we have recently launched Vision 2016 initiative for food self sufficiency, especially in rice production. The goal is that by Year 2016 all the rice consumed in the Gambia would have been locally produced. In order to achieve this lofty objective, we have put under cultivation thousands of acreages of land around the country for rice production. As a matter of policy, we are determined to showcase, especially for the young, the attractiveness of agriculture as the mainstay of our economy. We want to show to the young the glory of farming as an occupation and a dependable source of income.

One of the objectives of investing in the future is investing in public infrastructure. Our Government has significantly expanded the road network and all major growth centers around the country are now linked by paved high class roads. This expansion of the road network has ensured access to health facilities and markets for the rural agrarian society resulting in significant improvement in their wellbeing.

Considering that technological advancement underpins modern development we have developed a Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) policy to promote innovation and boost creativity among young people through the development of sustainable indigenous technology. Furthermore, the Information technology sector is rapidly expanding both in scope and quality with young people continually engaged in various aspects of information technology.

A significant investment we have made in this regard is in the Africa Coast to Europe (ACE) submarine cable for broadband and high speed internet connection. An effective and efficient global communication system continues to reshape the world, especially through widely accessed and used social media. Therefore, communication would undoubtedly shape the future generation of the youth, especially in developing countries, and as such we must continue to plan ahead.

The new vision or partnership between the US and Africa augurs well for the future. Therefore, we welcome any initiative on economic partnership as long as this partnership does not disadvantage us or lead to one partner dictating and exploiting the other. It must be transparent based on mutual trust and honesty. Moreover, such economic cooperation and partnership must be premised on increased market access for processed or value added products from African countries whereby the exporting country determines the price of its products be they agricultural, mineral or petroleum products. Therefore, we expect a partnership based on a win-win situation and not a lopsided arrangement whereby one partner becomes rich at the expense of the other. Furthermore, we must make sure that economic partnerships would not entrench Africa's disadvantaged position or the main exporters of raw materials. We will also not go into partnership with any entity, big or small rich or poor that does not respect our cultural and religious values, our dignity, independence and sovereign right to determine our own ways of doing things.

The selection of sectors for investment should not be imposed but must be based on consensus and mutual respect. We note with appreciation the AGOA scheme but its application should be extended to cover other primary

products as well as manufactured goods from Africa. Where quality bars exist for African manufactured products such should be lowered or eliminated to support efforts at promoting fair trade. In addition, we on our part will support any investment that would not eventually harm the environment, the health and safety of our people but one that would allow sufficient public policy space for the host country. It is only through such arrangements that the host country would be able to exercise its responsibility to minimize and control disruptive exposures to investment arbitrations.

It is well known that Africa is generally viewed by investors in developed countries as a high risk region. However, investors who remain reticent about Africa may be missing great business opportunities. We know that the impressive performance of African economies in recent years has also reflected in highly positive balance sheets of companies operating in the region. We therefore call on American investors to seize the opportunities that this new partnership would create in Africa.

Mr. Chairman, Your Excellency,

As the world is gradually recovering from the recent global financial crisis, the attention of national governments is being refocused from stabilization and austerity measures to the more traditional challenges of productivity, growth and development. It is in this light that we welcome this Summit and its promise of renewing and re-energizing US-Africa relations. Critics and cynics have often argued that Summits of Heads of State and Government (particularly within the United Nations framework) are a mere gathering where dignitaries exchange pleasantries, deliver speeches and make

declarations, and in the end no significant achievements are made. I believe, Mr. Chairman, this summit does not fall within that category perceived by critics. Nevertheless, it would be in order for this summit to develop meaningful parameters and measurable targets as a basis for assessing the achievements of our new partnership as we move forward.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, Your Excellencies,

In recent years, the issue of economic equality within and among nations received considerable attention in many countries. Indeed every country has to deal with this and related problems as a major development challenge. At the level of the United Nations, the question of balance and equity is no less significant. For a long time, the African region has been calling for some measure of balance in the membership of the UN Security Council, taking into account the fact that the majority of members come from the Africa region and other regions of the developing world. The present set-up of the Council created since 1945 is clearly out of step with the geopolitical realities of the 21st Century. The African countries in their desire to address a historic injustice have demanded two seats on the Council. We remain committed to this demand, knowing fully well that for the Security Council to be legitimate, genuinely reflecting the entire membership of the United Nations, the current imbalance must be addressed. As the first US President to convene such a historic Summit in Washington, it will be great, Mr. President, if you also become the first President of this great country to be in the forefront in the fight for Africa's representation on the Security Council.

I thank you for your attention.