

**Peacebuilding Commission Press Statement**  
**Transitional reform processes in The Gambia**

*24 November 2020*

Consistent with its long-standing engagement in support of a democratic transition in The Gambia, which started at the beginning of 2017, the Commission reiterated yesterday its commitment to help mobilize international support for the government's peacebuilding priorities.

The Commission expressed concern about the current impasse in the Constitutional review process and encouraged the Government of The Gambia to continue its efforts to engage in dialogue and build consensus with all relevant stakeholders around the constitutional draft with a view to re-table it at the National Assembly. The Commission took note of the participation of civil society groups in the process and encouraged the Government to continue its dialogue and consultations to ensure inclusivity and transparency in the review process that reflects the aspirations of the Gambian people. The Commission took note of the Government's intention to re-table the draft Constitution to allow for it to be put for referendum by June 2021, well ahead of the general elections in December 2021.

The Commission acknowledged that the stalled constitutional process is likely to impact on the other overlapping reforms, notably the transitional justice and security sector reform processes. The Commission praised the work of the Truth Reconciliation and Reparation Commission (TRRC), which resumed public hearings on 12 October, and welcomed steps taken to formally adopt and begin the implementation of the 2020-2024 Security Sector Reform Strategy (SSRS) and the National Security Strategy, which should pave the way for the operationalization of The Gambia's National Security Policy. In that regard, the Commission welcomed continuous collective efforts by the UN system and partners to help enhance capacity of national SSR coordination and oversight bodies and to align international SSR assistance to national reform priorities.

The Commission praised the Government of The Gambia for its efforts to enable the meaningful participation of civil society organizations in peacebuilding efforts. In that regard, the Commission recognized the important work of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and the Association of Non-Governmental Organizations in The Gambia (TANGO) and encouraged further international support to help empower young women and men who are in the frontlines of peacebuilding work on the ground, and who have so far played a critical role in the transitional reforms. Support for the work has become all the more important in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Commission welcomed the preparations of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) for the presidential election in December 2021, the National Assembly elections in April 2022 and the local government elections in May 2023. The Commission called upon The Gambia's partners to help cover the 90% budget gap for the implementation of the IEC's support project, developed by UNDP, for the 2020-2022 electoral cycle.

The Commission reiterated its concern about the negative socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has already curtailed economic activity and resulted in lay-offs in the tourism and business sectors, disrupted the livelihoods of farmers, and increased unemployment among

youth further straining social safety nets. With 81.3% of Gambian women working in agriculture and retail trade, the impact is felt disproportionately by them. Reported cases of gender-based violence have increased during the pandemic requiring more effective efforts to better protect women. The Commission also called for strengthened strategic partnerships between the United Nations regional and sub-regional organizations and IFIs in support of peacebuilding priorities in The Gambia.

The Commission noted the significant contributions of the Peacebuilding Fund in support of peacebuilding in The Gambia, with a total investment of US\$20 million since March 2017 in support of transitional justice, security sector reform, women and youth empowerment and other peacebuilding priorities. The Commission expressed hope that the replenishment of the PBF in January 2021 will enable the Fund to continue to support critical peacebuilding priorities in The Gambia and other conflict-affected settings around the world.

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