



REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

2024 BUDGET SPEECH

**“Consolidating Recovery and Accelerating Reforms Towards
Building Economic Resilience and Improving the Wellbeing of
The Population”**

Delivered on Friday, 8th December 2023

AT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**BY THE
HONOURABLE MINISTER
OF
FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**





HONOURABLE SEEDY K.M KEITA

MINISTER OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

ACRONYMS

AfDB	African Development Bank
AFRITAC	African Regional Technical Assistance Centre
ASYCUDA	Automated System for Customs Data
ATI	Africa Training Institute
AU	African Union
BADEA	Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa
CBG	Central Bank of The Gambia
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Agreement
CRC	Constitutional Review Commission
CRR	Central River Region
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EIF	Enhanced Integrated Framework
ENABEL	Belgian Development Agency
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GAMSR	Gambia Social Registry
GAMTAXNET	Gambia Tax Management System
GBA	Greater Banjul Area
GCCPC	Gambia Competition and Consumer Protection Commission
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIA	Gambia International Airline
GIEPA	Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency
GIRAV	Gambia Inclusive and Resilient Agricultural Value Chain
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GLF	Government Local Fund
GNPC	Gambia National Petroleum Company
GPA	Gambia Ports Authority
GPPA	Gambia Public Procurement Authority
GRA	Gambia Revenue Authority
GSRB	Gambia Strategic Review Board
HFO	Heavy Fuel Oil
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFMIS	Integrated Financial Management Information System
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPSAS	International Public Sector Accounting Standard
ITAS	Integrated Tax Administration System
ITC	International Trade Centre
LRR	Lower River Region
LTDV	Long-Term Development Vision

MDA	Ministry, Department, and Agency
MOTRIE	Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NAWEC	National Water and Electricity Company
NBR	North Bank Region
NDA	Net Domestic Assets
NDP	National Development Plan
NEA	National Environment Agency
NFA	Net Foreign Assets
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NRM	National Referral Mechanisms
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
OMVG	Gambia River Organization for Development
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability
PFM	Public Finance Management
PHC	Primary Health Care
PIP	Public Investment Program
PPA	Power Purchase Agreement
RCIC	Rural Communities Information Centres
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SDR	Special Drawing Rights
SENELEC	Senegal National Electricity Company
SOE	State-Owned Enterprise
SOP	Standard Operational Procedure
SSHFC	Social Security and Housing Finance Corporation
TDA	Tourism Development Area
TOT	Training of Trainers
TRRC	Truth Reconciliation and Reparations Commission
TSA	Treasury Single Account
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization:
URR	Upper River Region
USD	United States Dollar
USET	University of Applied Science, Engineering and Technology
UTG	University of The Gambia
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WACA	West Africa Coastal Areas
WACOMP	West Africa Competitiveness Project Gambia
WAPP	West Africa Power Pool
WARDIP	West Africa Regional Digital Integration Project

WB	World Bank
WCR	West Coast Region
WEO	World Economic Outlook
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
YEP	Youth Empowerment Project
MPR	Monetary Policy Rate
FX	Foreign exchange
CFA	African Financial Community
UK	United Kingdom
RF-NDP	Recovery Focused National Development Plan
AFD	Agence Française de Développement
MoFEA	Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs
CRB	Complaint Review Board
SPUs	Special Procurement Units
GDA	Governance Diagnostic Assessment
AIC	Audit Implementation Committee
PBB	Program Base Budgeting
MoHERST	Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science, and Technology
NSPS	National Social Protection Secretariat
NaNA	National Nutrition Agency
RISE	The Gambia Resilience, Inclusion, Skills, and Equity Project
PPA	Project Preparation Advance
CPPR	Country Portfolio Performance Review
PIUs	Project Implementing Units
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
PPR	Peste des petite ruminant
NCD	New Castle Disease
CBPP	Contagious Bovine Pleurae Pneumonia
ROOT	Resilience of Organization for Transformative Smallholder Agriculture Project
RPSF	Rural Poor Stimulus Facility
SREP	Small Ruminant Enhancement Project
NDMA	National Disaster Management Agency
NARI	National Agricultural Research Institute
FMC	Fisheries Monitoring Centre
VMS	Vessel Monitoring System
AIS	Automatic Identification System
PSMA	Port State Measures Agreement
CSRWASHDEP	Climate Smart Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Development Project
MoCDE	Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy
GAMTEL	The Gambia Telecommunication Company Limited
GAMCEL	The Gambia Cellular Company Limited
GTHI	Gambia Tourism and Hospitality Institute
TVET	Technical Education and Training
NCAC	National Council for Arts and Culture
QPR	Quadrennial Periodic Reporting
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
CAA	Civil Aviation Authority

PPP	Public Private Partnership
GAMREN	Gambia National Research and Education Network
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
NAQAA	National Accreditation and Quality Qualification Authority
GNFQ	Gambia National Qualifications Framework
MDI	Management Development Institute
GTTI	Technical Training Institute
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
NHSI	National Health Insurance Scheme
SWEDD	Sahel Women's Empowerment Demographic Dividend
MoYS	Ministry of Youth and Sports
NYSS	National Youth Service Scheme
NEDI	National Enterprise Development Initiative
GSI	Gambia Songhai Initiative
AFCON	Africa Cup of Nations
DCAF	Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance
WAPIS	West African Police Information Database system
GFRS	Gambia Fire and Rescue Service
GID	Gambia Immigration Department
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drug and Crime
DLEAG	Drug Law Enforcement Agency, The Gambia
NDCS	National Drug Control Strategy
ATI	Access to Information
ATIIF	Access to Information Implementation Framework
NDI	National Democratic Institute
IMB	Information, Media and Broadcasting
PAMP	Public Administration Modernization Project
PMO	Public Management Office
PACD	Program for Accelerated Community Development
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
NFL	National Land Policy
DCD	Department of Community Development
LoCAL	Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
NCM	National Coordination Mechanism on Migration
KMC	Kanifing Municipality Council
NSDS	National Strategy for the Development of Statistics
NSS	National Statistical System
EHSSS	Essential Health Services Strengthening Survey
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys
GBoS	Gambia Bureau of Statistics
MNO	Mobile Network Operators
ITAS	Integrated Tax Administration System
CRM	Compliance Risk Management

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	9
MACROECONOMIC OVERVIEW.....	11
<i>Developments in the Global Economy.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Developments in the Domestic Economy</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Real Sector</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Fiscal Sector.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Monetary Sector.....</i>	<i>16</i>
KEY SECTORS.....	19
<i>Finance and Economic Affairs.....</i>	<i>19</i>
PRODUCTIVE SECTORS.....	24
<i>Agriculture.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Fisheries and Water Resources</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Communication and Digital Economy.....</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Tourism and Culture.....</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Trade Industry Regional Integration and Employment</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Works, Construction and Infrastructure.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Petroleum and Energy</i>	<i>33</i>
SOCIAL SECTORS	35
<i>Basic and Secondary Education</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Higher Education.....</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>Health</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Gender Children and Social Welfare</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Social Protection.....</i>	<i>40</i>

<i>Youth and Sports</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>CROSS CUTTING SECTORS</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Interior.....</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Information.....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Justice</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>Public Service, Administrative Reform, Policy Coordination and Delivery</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>Environment, Climate Change and Wildlife.....</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Lands and Regional Government.....</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>Foreign Affairs.....</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Data and Statistics</i>	<i>52</i>
<i>REVENUE ADMINISTRATION</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>MEDIUM TERM GROWTH OUTLOOK</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>SALIENT FEATURES OF THE 2024 BUDGET</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>RATIONALE FOR 2024 BUDGET ALLOCATIONS</i>	<i>59</i>
<i>MEDIUM TERM POLICY REFORMS</i>	<i>63</i>
<i>PROPOSED REVENUE MEASURES FOR 2024</i>	<i>65</i>
<i>Administrative Revenue Measures</i>	<i>65</i>
<i>CONCLUSION</i>	<i>70</i>
<i>ANNEXES.....</i>	<i>72</i>

Honourable Speaker,

I beg to move that the bill entitled “An Act to provide for the services of the Government of The Gambia for the period 1st January 2024 to 31st December 2024 (both dates inclusive)” be read a second time.

INTRODUCTION

1. The economy of the Gambia has displayed remarkable resilience in the face of global economic challenges that threatened to slowdown the gradual recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The headwinds include the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the spillover effects of the Russia-Ukraine War, and the growing impacts of climate change and adverse weather events. The combination of these multiple and overlapping exogenous shocks led to disruptions in global supply chains, high volatility in global financial markets, high inflationary pressures fueled by rising food and energy prices, tightening of global financial conditions, and increasing cost of capital and debt servicing.
2. The impact of these shocks was reflected in the decline of the country’s real GDP growth, which is estimated to have slowed to 4.9 percent in 2022, from 5.3 percent in 2021. Although, this growth rate is lower than the country’s pre-pandemic level of 6.2 percent in 2019, it is stronger than the world average of 3.4 percent and surpassed regional performance of 3.6 percent in West Africa, underscoring the country’s resilience despite the extraordinary challenges in navigating these adverse shocks.
3. Notwithstanding, tighter global financial conditions in response to multi-decade highs in global inflation rate is adversely affecting the country’s macroeconomic fundamentals, generating foreign exchange shortages, weighing on forex reserves, and exerting pressure on the Dalasi. To aggravate the situation, the balance of payments was negatively affected by high food and fuel import bills, disruptions of cashew and elevated freight costs.
4. Added to high global food and energy prices, strong domestic demand strengthened inflationary pressures in the country. Inflation reached a record-high level of 18.5 percent (year-on- year) in September 2023, but this has reduced to 18.05 percent in October 2023.

This macroeconomic environment makes fiscal policy management and consolidation efforts more difficult as the Central Bank of the Government increased its policy rate to curb inflationary pressures.

5. The Government of The Gambia intervened using both fiscal and monetary policy instruments to sustain macroeconomic stability and lessen the spillover effects of these global economic challenges on the domestic economy. From January to end-November 2023, Government through the CBG conducted foreign currency interventions of US\$59.28 million to ease supply-side constraints and support the importation of essential commodities that reached critically low stock levels. The Government also tightened its monetary policy stance, increasing its policy rate by 4 percentage point over the course of the year to curb rising price levels.
6. On the fiscal front, as at end October 2023, the Government provided subsidies on fuel products to the tune of D479,190,237.89 to ease the effects of high global fuel prices on the lives of the citizenry. Whilst this gave much needed assistance to the Gambian population, it also meant over D479 millions of forgone revenues for government, which is unsustainable given our limited fiscal space. In addition to fuel price subsidies, the Government made other fiscal interventions including the provision of substantial subsidies on food and agriculture inputs amounting to D664,499,675 to support domestic production and to ease the effects of high global food prices on vulnerable households. The 30 percent basic salary increment implemented last year is also helping civil servants cope with the increasing cost of living.
7. With that said, it is imperative to note that it has been a challenging task striking a balance between fighting the downside effects of recent global economic developments and keeping the economy on a sustained growth path. In the face of uncertainties on global economic developments, prudent policy response is essential to strengthen the country's economic fundamentals as the main input to *Consolidating Recovery and Accelerating Reforms Towards Building Economic Resilience and Improving the Wellbeing of The Population*. Reforms in key sectors remain critical to strengthening resilience and growth in the medium term.

MACROECONOMIC OVERVIEW

Developments in the Global Economy

8. Gloomy developments in 2022 have been followed by an increasingly resilient global economy, driven largely by the improvement in the services sector. Global supply chain continued to recover from the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, helping to mellow down energy and food prices from their war-induced peak. In May 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that COVID-19 is no longer considered as a “global health emergency.” Concerns about the stability of the banking sector have subsided thanks to the forceful response of policy makers in the US and Switzerland.
9. Notwithstanding, the headwinds that dampened growth in 2022 continues to constraint economic activities in 2023. Inflation remains high and continues to erode household purchasing power; monetary policy tightening in response to record-high inflation has raised cost of borrowing, restricting credit to productive sectors; China’s pace of recovery has slowed; and geopolitical tensions are far from over. Higher interest rates adversely passthrough on public finances, especially in developing countries struggling with increasing debt servicing payments, limiting the ability of fiscal authorities to respond to emerging challenges and to invest in infrastructure and social sectors such as health and education. Corollary, output losses compared with pre-pandemic levels remain large, especially in developing countries.
10. Overall, the global economy is expected to slow down from 3.5 percent in 2022 to 3.0 percent in 2023 and 2.9 percent in 2024, according to IMF projections. While the forecast for 2023 is modestly higher than initially predicted, it remains well below the historical (2000–19) annual average of 3.8 percent.
11. Across regions, growth is generally strongest in emerging Asian economies, and weakest in the United States and major European economies. Advance economies are expected to experience a pronounced growth slowdown of 1.5 percent in 2023, from 2.6 percent in 2022. Baseline growth in the United States is estimated at 2.1 percent in 2023, owing to resilient consumption growth and stronger business investment in the second quarter of 2023, before declining to 1.5 percent in 2024.

12. This resilient in consumption in the U.S. reflects gains in real income and a recovery in vehicle purchases due to still-tight labour market conditions. In the Euro Area, growth is expected to decline from 3.3 percent in 2022 to 0.7 percent in 2023, before increasing to 1.2 percent in 2024 given improved prospects for tourism and services in Italy and Spain. In Germany however, growth is expected to contract from 1.8 percent in 2022 to -0.5 percent in 2023 due to fragility in manufacturing output and slower trading-partner demand (IMF, October 2023 World Economic Outlook).
13. The economic growth in emerging market and developing economies is projected to be broadly stable at 4.0 percent in both 2023 and 2024. This stable average rate masks wide growth variations between countries and among regions in this group of economies. In Emerging and Developing Asian countries, growth is expected to increase from 4.5 percent in 2022 to 5.2 percent in 2023 owing to an expected rebound in China from 3 percent in 2022 to 5.0 percent in 2023 (IMF, October 2023 World Economic Outlook).
14. China's relative strong growth performance is driven by recovery in consumption. Stronger-than-expected net exports offsets underperformance in investment caused by ongoing real estate downturn in the country. Similarly, real GDP for Emerging and Developing countries in Europe is expected to increase by 1.6 percentage point owing to stronger-than-expected performance in Russia. The Russian economy registered a growth rate of 2.2 percent in 2023, from a recession of -2.1 percent in 2022, strengthened by a substantial fiscal stimulus, strong investment, and resilient consumption in the context of a tight labor market (IMF, October 2023 World Economic Outlook).
15. On the other hand, growth outlooks have been deteriorating in Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and Central Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. In Latin America and the Caribbean, real GDP growth is expected to decline from 4.1 percent in 2022 to 2.3 percent in both 2023 and 2024, due to weak recovery in two of the region's largest economies (Brazil and Mexico).

16. Sub-Saharan Africa economic outlook remain subdued on the back of deteriorating external environment. Growth is expected to fall from 4.0 percent in 2022 to 3.3 percent in 2023 before picking up to 4.0 percent in 2024. The downgrade in 2023 largely reflects pessimistic growth projections for both Nigeria and South Africa, the region's two biggest economies. In Nigeria, growth is projected to shrink to 2.9 percent in 2023 due to security concerns in the oil sector. Likewise, in South Africa, growth is projected to drop to 0.9 percent in 2023 hindered by power shortages, weaker commodity prices and the challenging external environment.
17. Global inflation remains high due to high energy and food prices. Global Crude Oil Prices saw its biggest monthly increase since January, which was attributed to the decision by OPEC to cut production levels. The FAO Food Price Index increased by 19.7 percent due to the suspension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative and India's ban on exporting non-Basmati white rice. International prices of rice, in particular, continued to surge, reaching the highest level in almost 12 years.
18. Nonetheless, global headline inflation is expected to decline from its peak of 8.7 percent in 2022 (annual average) to 6.9 percent in 2023. This is projected to decline further to 5.8 percent in 2024 as central banks raised interest rates to combat inflation. Thus, monetary tightening around the world and geopolitical tension will continue to weigh on economic activities.

Developments in the Domestic Economy

Real Sector

19. The Gambia's economy is expected to continue its recovery path, although at a slower pace. Real GDP growth is projected at 5.6 percent in 2023, compared to 4.9 percent in 2022 and 5.3 percent in 2021 when recovery from the pandemic was underway. This relatively weak performance results from the spillover effects of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which has severely dampened growth prospects. Previously optimistic projections have been revised downwards owing to increasing interest rates to counter rising price levels.
20. The agriculture sector is expected to continue on a steady path to recovery after the downturn in 2022. Its growth rate is projected to increase to 8.3 percent in 2023, compared to the 3.6 percent growth rate registered in 2022. Growth in the agriculture sector was driven mainly by contributions from the fishing and crop production sub-sectors with 7.3 and 10.1 percent. Contributions from Forestry and Logging is estimated to decline.
21. Performance in Industry is also expected to recover on the back of strong performance in the Electricity and Construction subsectors. Growth in industry (including construction) is projected at 7.4 percent in 2023, signaling recovery from the combined effects of the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war. The Mining and Quarrying subsector is also expected to remain on a decent path fueled by improved supply chain conditions.
22. The services sector is expected to register a subdued recovery from the combined effects of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine. Growth is projected at 3.5 percent in 2023, with the tourism and wholesale and retail trade subsectors being the main drivers of the recovery. Tourism is expected to recover from the COVID disruption by 2026 when the arrival of tourists will match pre-COVID arrivals.
23. Overall, growth will continue to be supported by recovery in tourism, strong performance in construction and agriculture as well as robust public and private sector consumption and investments.

Fiscal Sector

24. Revenue and Grants increased from D15 billion in the first nine months of 2022 to D20 billion in the same period in 2023. This is largely due to a rise in both tax and non-tax revenues. The increase in tax revenue collection was mainly due to significant reduction in fuel subsidies; rebound in tourism, cross-border trade, and increased enforcement exercises; and the successful implementation of ASYCUDA World and an enhanced version of GAMTAXNET in all tax offices. Dividend payment from Central Bank of The Gambia also contributed to the significant increase in non-tax revenue.
25. Total Expenditure and Net Lending increased from D20.5 billion in the first nine months of 2022 to D22.9 billion during the same period in 2023. This was due to a 19 percent and a 7 percent increase in capital and current expenditures respectively.
26. During the first nine months of 2022, personnel emoluments increased from D4 billion to D5.04 billion, as a result of increased allowance payments including allowance payments to diplomatic staff and their movements.
27. Interest Payments amounted to D2.5 billion compared to D2.3 billion a year ago, recording a growth of 8.7 percent. Domestic and external interest payments increased by 8.1 percent and 15 percent, respectively.
28. The overall fiscal deficit excluding grants improved from D10.2 billion as of end-September 2022 to D8.3 billion in the review period in 2023. Including grants, the deficit also improved from D5.4 billion in 2022 to D2.7 billion in 2023.
29. Revenue loss due to exemption increased from D2.2 billion in the first nine months of 2022 to D3.09 billion in 2023. This is largely due to duty waivers granted by government for the implementation of on-going road works, agriculture, energy and education projects.

Monetary Sector

30. Monetary policy stance has been restrictive during the year to fight soaring price level as the Government remains committed to maintaining price stability and the overall economic well-being of Gambian citizens. The Monetary Policy Rate (MPR) was raised to 17 percent in the Monetary Policy Meeting in August 2023, from 13 percent at the beginning of the year.
31. Annual growth in broad money decelerated to 5.6 percent at end-September 2023, from the 9.9 percent growth observed in the corresponding period last year, mirroring the decline in the Net Foreign Assets (NFA) of the banking system.
32. The NFA of the banking system contracted to D19.2 billion at end-September 2023 from D21.9 billion a year earlier, recording a 12.6 percent decline. The NFA of the Central Bank also declined significantly from D13.2 billion to D9.1 billion as of end-September 2023. The decline in the net foreign assets of the banking system reflects the impact of adverse external shocks on the balance of payments.
33. Growth in the Net Domestic Assets (NDA) of the banking system, the main source of liquidity, remained robust increasing to D48.4 billion or by 15.0 percent at end-September 2023 but lower than the growth of 30.8 percent in September 2022. The increase in the NDA was supported by increased borrowing by government and private sector. Domestic credit rose by 8.9 percent as a result of a 9.5 percent increase in net claims on government and an 18.2 percent growth in private sector credit.
34. Reserve money, the bank operating target grew by 12.2 percent in September 2023 compared to a contraction of 6.0 percent registered in the corresponding period in 2022, reflecting the expansion in the NDA of the banking system. Of the components of reserve money, currency in circulation recorded a growth of 12.9 percent, and reserves of commercial banks registered a growth of 11.1 percent in the period under review.

35. The Foreign Exchange market is operating with challenges in the sector. From October 2022 to September 2023, volume of transactions measured by the aggregate of purchases and sales of foreign currency decreased to US\$2.1 billion from US\$2.5 billion in the same period in 2022. Purchases of foreign currency, which indicates supply, decreased by 15.3 percent, to US\$1.0 billion. Similarly, sales of foreign currency declined by 16.1 percent, to US\$1.1 billion in the same period.

External Sector

36. Preliminary Balance of Payments estimates show that the Current Account deficit widened to US\$209.0 million (10.1percent of GDP) in the nine months ending September 2023, from US\$74.7 million (3.8 percent of GDP) in the corresponding period of 2022, due to higher imports bills, despite significant growth in total exports.

37. The Goods Account registered a deficit of US\$702.1 million (34.0 percent of GDP) in the review period, higher than US\$444.9 million (22.4 percent of GDP) recorded in the corresponding period in 2022. The widening of the deficit in the Goods Account is because of the increase in the value of imports (FOB) from US\$489.0 million in the nine months of 2022 to US\$702.1 million in the nine months of 2023. The main merchandise imports include electricity, vegetables, rice and cereals, fuel, and oil, and the main import partners in the review period were Senegal, India, and China.

38. Exports of goods grew significantly to US\$215.8 million in the nine months of 2023, from US\$44.1 million in the same period in 2022. The main export items were edible fruits, fish, cashew, and groundnut, destined mainly for India, China, UK, and Turkey.

39. The Services Account balance is estimated to have registered a surplus of US\$136.4 million in the nine months ending September 2023, up from US\$19.0 million in the comparable period a year ago. This was driven by an increase in tourist arrivals, which is gradually picking up. From January to September 2023, total arrival numbers recorded 137,187, higher than 116,283 registered in the same period in 2022.

40. The Secondary Income Account (current transfers) declined marginally by 0.9 percent to a net inflow of US\$372.7 million in the nine months 2023, from a net inflow of US\$376.1 million in the corresponding period of 2022. This growth can be associated with the seasonality of remittance inflows, which normally peak during the months of Ramadan, Lent and Tobaski.
41. The Capital Account balance improved to a surplus of US\$75.6 million in the nine months of 2023 from a surplus of US\$23.4 million in same period in 2022. The net lending/net borrowing (capital account + current account) results to a deficit of US\$133.5 million in the nine months of 2023, indicating that The Gambia continues to be a net borrower from the rest of the world.
42. Developments in the Financial Account during the review period indicate a moderate net incurrence of liabilities as non-resident investments are slightly offset by domestic investment. Total net inflow of US\$159.4 million was recorded in the nine months ending September 2023, compared to US\$216.8 million in the same period a year earlier, highlighting a moderate inflow from foreign direct investments and other investments.
43. On reserve's assets, a confluence of the effects of the two external shocks (Ukraine war and COVID-19 pandemic) disrupted external reserve build up efforts.

KEY SECTORS

Finance and Economic Affairs

Honourable Speaker,

44. The Government of The Gambia has recently finalized the formulation of a Green Recovery-Focused National Development Plan (RF-NDP) for the period 2023-2027, with a results framework for monitoring and evaluation purposes. The main goal of the new development plan is to build on the gains registered during the 2018-2022 NDP and to address the country's recovery needs in the short and medium term, underpinned by the concepts of green recovery and resilience as guiding themes. It aligns with the UN Agenda 2030 and the African Union Agenda 2063. The RF-NDP 2023-2027 received Cabinet approval in April 2023.
45. Following Cabinet approval, The Government of The Gambia has developed a financing strategy to serve as a framework for mobilizing resources and building partnerships to implement the Plan. The financing strategy takes into consideration the challenging external environment, developments in the international development financing landscape, as well as the domestic financing context.
46. In the face of limited fiscal space, three financing mechanisms have been proposed to meet the funding needs of the RF NDP 2023-2027; including the development of a domestic resource mobilization strategy to enhance domestic revenue generation capabilities; the utilization of innovative financing mechanisms for critical development projects; and the utilization of concessional funds to attract private capital – blended finance. Under constrained fiscal situations characterized by high risk of debt distress and challenges imposed by tightened global financial conditions and increasing cost of capital and debt servicing, financing the Plan would require complementing government and concessional resources with greater private sector investment in the country.
47. In this context, carbon finance and green finance hold considerable potential in supporting resource mobilization efforts in the country. These mechanisms encompass instruments like carbon pricing, green bonds, and green investment funds, which can create new revenue streams. For instance, projects focused on carbon emissions reduction, such as

renewable energy ventures (solar, wind, hydro), energy efficiency improvements, and afforestation, can generate carbon credits traded in international markets, thus bolstering revenue while addressing developmental challenges. This approach not only mitigates environmental issues but also aligns with global sustainability goals.

48. In a bid to free up fiscal space and bolster growth, a series of PFM related reforms have been implemented. These reforms will address fiscal risks emanating from underperforming State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), and weaknesses in public procurement processes; and increase the strategic focus on domestic resource mobilization efforts. To this end, the Government has legislated a new Gambia Public Procurement Act that seeks to address the weaknesses in public procurement and strengthen regulatory and oversight functions of the Procurement Authority. The procurement reforms include the introduction of e-procurement, integration of procurement into budget planning, harmonization of procurement plans with approved MDA budgets, and certification of Special Procurement Units. A further step includes the adoption in September 2023, of regulations to enforce the GPPA Act. On the SOE reform agenda, the government will continue to roll-out performance contracts to SOEs under the supervision of the Directorate of SOEs. Of the 13 SOEs, 4 have signed performance contracts with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs and the remaining 9 to follow by 2024. Similarly, in ensuring that legal, financial and operational governance framework of SOEs respond to the requirements of modern-day SOE functions, a new SOE Act has been promulgated.

49. On domestic resource mobilization, the Directorate of Revenue and Tax Policy continues to provide strategic focus on policy design, formulation and analysis of revenue and tax policies that build resilience in our revenue mobilization drive. To boost revenue collections, the government has issued in April 2023 regulations on electronic tax stamp traceability system on excisable goods and fuel products. We have also issued a circular standardizing border clearance procedure and establishing a new risk management system at all Border and in-land control posts.

50. In addition, the Integrated Financial Management Information Systems (IFMIS) has been rolled-out to all local government authorities, some subvented agencies, and all foreign

missions to ensure timely preparation and recording of financial information, and timely submission of financial statements to the National Audit Office. In this regard, the Ministry of Finance in partnership with the Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy is working with the Government of Rwanda to support in developing a home grown IFMIS system using our human resource. This will be more cost effective and will go a long way to eliminate the over dependence on external consultants for maintenance and support.

51. The 2022 Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) Performance Assessment Report, supported by the African Development Bank (AfDB), highlights weaknesses in PFM indicators such as budget reliability, transparency of public finances, management of assets and liabilities, policy-based fiscal strategy and budgeting, predictability and control in budget execution, accounting and reporting, and external scrutiny and audit. The PFM reforms will be geared towards addressing these highlighted weaknesses.
52. For the first time since 2017, The Gambia's overall Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) score has increased to 3.1 in 2022. Measured by the World Bank, countries are rated on a scale of 1 (low) to 6 (high). The improvement in the Gambia's CPIA score reflecting improvements in the quality of the country's policies and institutions owing to efforts being made to improve debt management and inclusive growth include rural development, social protection, and investments in human capital and infrastructure.
53. The Government of The Gambia and Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) signed a US\$25 million threshold program to support the country's biggest constraint to economic growth – the unreliable and inadequate supply of electricity. Every year each MCC candidate country receives a scorecard assessing performance in three policy categories: Ruling Justly, Investing in People, and Encouraging Economic Freedom. The Gambia has met performance standard of 16 out of the 20 MCC indicators that makes up the three policy categories.
54. The Government, in collaboration with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have also conducted a Governance Diagnostic Assessment (GDA) to identify vulnerabilities in governance and anti-corruption frameworks. The final report offers granular

recommendations for strengthening anti-corruption efforts. As a result, a Cabinet Paper has been submitted and necessary actions will be taken as recommended by Cabinet.

55. The Government, through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, has consolidated thirteen (13) audit findings of suspected fraudulent cases and have referred them to the police for investigation. Furthermore, some cases are currently in court and judgements have been delivered in others.
56. The Government of The Gambia, with support from AFRITAC West 2, has formulated an Asset Management Policy (AMP) to ensure effective management of government assets. The AMP provides a detailed framework that governs asset acquisition, utilization, maintenance, and disposal. To implement the policy, MOFEA has established an AMP committee. Presently the Ministry is working on a project proposal and budget for an upcoming exercise to take stock, value and record of all government assets. The AMP is one of the fundamental pillars towards migrating to International Public Sector Accounting Standard (IPSAS) Accrual accounting.
57. In addition, the Ministry has played a coordinating role in the pursuit of Program-Based Budgeting (PBB) as prescribed in the PFM Strategy 2021-2025. The Ministry facilitated a workshop to strengthen the conceptual framework for PBB and enhance the understanding of the PBB guidelines. This will contribute to the successful implementation of Program-Based Budgeting in various ministries.
58. With support from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Ministry has also developed and validated a new Gambia Aid Policy to support the effective and efficient use of aid resources through Aid Coordination activities. The aim of the new policy is to ensure that aid resources are utilized effectively and efficiently by supporting the activities of aid coordination. A Cabinet Paper has been prepared for submission to the Cabinet for approval.

59. The Ministry organized a Country Portfolio Performance Review (CPPR) with the World Bank and a Project Managers' Forum to discuss progress on ongoing projects. The purpose of these workshops is to bring together government, development partners, and Project Implementing Units to discuss challenges facing project implementation and provide recommendations to address them.

PRODUCTIVE SECTORS

Agriculture

60. In the 2023 fiscal year, the agriculture sector has witnessed substantial growth in the scale and number of agricultural projects, underscoring the government's unequivocal commitment to and prioritization of this sector.
61. The Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) has made commendable progress toward its objectives and continues to engage in partnerships aimed at implementing initiatives aligned with the Recovery Focus National Development Plan, further advancing the sector's transformation.
62. Notably, the Ministry of Agriculture has introduced a comprehensive post-COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan, focusing on bolstering the resilience of farmers through the National Agricultural Extension Policy. This policy is designed to foster sustainable production, enhance capacity, improve governance, and facilitate partnership establishment.
63. Furthermore, the recent introduction of a Cooperative Policy reflects the Ministry's dedication to fostering a nationwide approach to cooperatives while upholding the principles and values that underpin these entities, particularly their autonomy. The policy also outlines essential legal and regulatory measures to facilitate its effective implementation.
64. Within the country, the Ministry of Agriculture is channeling its efforts towards prioritizing the rice value chain, small ruminant improvement, and the development of a national strategy to combat and eradicate Peste des petite ruminant (PPR).
65. Notably, the prevalent livestock diseases in the country, including PPR, Contagious Bovine Pleurae Pneumonia (CBPP), and New Castle Disease (NCD) for poultry, are being addressed through extensive vaccination campaigns for small ruminants and poultry. In the current year, a significant total of 208,231 small ruminants have received the required vaccinations.

66. In addition to these efforts, the ROOTS project has played a pivotal role by offering crucial services such as ploughing assistance for 80 hectares of land, distributing 160 bags of Urea fertilizer (each weighing 50kg), and providing input materials, including 2,800 sachets of herbicides and 5,300 kilograms of seeds through the Rural Poor Stimulus Facility (RPSF) 2 program.
67. The Small Ruminant Enhancement Project (SREP) is dedicated to the development of community pasture fields and individual farms. To date, it has successfully established 20 community pasture schemes and facilitated the development of 150 individual one-hectare farms, covering a total of 150 hectares.
68. While food availability in the market remains generally robust across the country, there has been a notable increase in the prices of cereal crops in 2023 compared to the preceding year. This price surge is primarily attributed to global inflation and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. The Gambia's dependence on food imports has amplified the impact on the prices of basic commodities, further exacerbated by the continuous rise in fuel prices, which has subsequently led to elevated transportation costs.
69. The National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have achieved significant milestones in agriculture research. This includes the final screening and availability of five groundnut varieties, five new findi varieties, and three cassava varieties to benefit local farmers. The Institute has also pioneered the development of innovative technologies for livestock feed and soil fertility enhancement, leveraging indigenous multipurpose shrubs and tree species pruning.
70. To support these developments, the 2024 Budget allocation to agriculture increased by 17 percent, with about D500 million budgeted for Input Subsidy, including support for organic fertilizers and seeds for farmers. In addition to Government's budgetary contribution to the sector, project loans and grants directed to the agriculture sector is in excess of D2 billion for 2024. Donor funding continues to be relevant for the sector, supplementing government's effort to transform the agriculture sector. The Ministry of Agriculture is expected to receive D661.4 million from the African Development Bank for the

implementation of the Building Resilience Against Food and Nutrition Insecurity Project, The Gambia Agriculture and Food Security Project, The Gambia Incentive-Based Risk Sharing system for Agricultural Lending Project (GAMIRSAL), and The Africa Emergency Facility Project Fund. The Ministry will also receive D231 million from the World Bank Group for the Gambia Inclusive Agriculture Value Chain Project (GIRAV) and another D686.75 million for the Small Ruminant, the Rice Value Chain and Regional Soil Mapping projects. Furthermore, IFAD is expected to provide the Ministry of Agriculture with D140 million for the Roots Project.

Fisheries and Water Resources

71. The fisheries sector is faced with increasing number of challenges ranging from the degradation of habitats (related to pollution and/or their destruction), overexploitation (linked to legal overfishing and illegal fishing), climate change and variability, and the effects of COVID-19 and the current Russia-Ukraine conflict. The latter has increased oil prices for sea going fishing vessels and impacted the average cost of fish.
72. To address the managerial gaps confronting the fisheries sector, the Ministry of Fisheries is currently reviewing the instrument governing the fisheries sector including the Fisheries Act 2007 and its implementing Regulations 2008. Cabinet has approved the review of the licensing fee for fishing vessels and Fish Meal Factories operating in the country. The Ministry of Justice is currently finalizing the necessary legislation and the subsequent gazetting of the new proposal for immediate implementation.
73. The US\$25 million Climate Resilient Fishery Initiative for Livelihood Improvement project (PROREFISH) funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) was recently launched and project implementation has started. The overarching objective of the project is to conserve and protect fisheries resources and their habitat through sustainable mitigation and adaptation measures; thereby enhancing climate resilience of fishing communities.
74. Two climate friendly fish smoking ovens (NOPALE), fish drying racks and fish processing materials and equipment have been installed at Tanji and Gunjur Fish Landing Sites. This innovative technology will reduce post-harvest losses, enhance the life of fish products,

and improve the income status of actors in the value chain. The construction of two fish landing platforms is also underway at Tanji and Gunjur at a tune of GMD12 million funded under the EU-The Gambia Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement.

75. Activities at the established Fisheries Monitoring Centre (FMC) in Banjul is ongoing. This platform, equipped with vessel monitoring system (VMS) and automatic identification (AIS) hardware and software, will enable the Fisheries Department to monitor the activities of all licensed fishing vessels operating in the fisheries waters of The Gambia from base. The establishment of the FMC will enhance the ability of the Fisheries Department to detect spatial offences by vessels with ample evidence to successfully prosecute cases under the law (Fisheries Act 2007 and Fisheries regulation 2008).
76. In the area of water resources, the sector is presently undergoing major reforms. Among them include the development of a new Water Bill to replace the National Water Resources Council Act [No 22 of 1979]; and the preparation of two additional bills for the creation of The Gambia's Water Resources management authority and an authority to provide Meteorological Services and up-to-date climate information. The Gambia has also acceded the two UN Water Conventions on the 17th of July, 2023 during the High-Level Forum on Sustainable Development.
77. With support from UNESCO and the World Food Programme (WFP), the Government procured eight Automatic Weather Stations to increase the accuracy of the Ministry's weather forecasts and monitoring. In addition, the "Strengthening of The Gambia's Climate Change Early Warning Systems Phase II" project has undertaken capacity buildings on climate change early warning systems for selected local communities in the seven local government administrative areas.
78. The Climate Smart Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Development Project (CSRWASHDEP) funded by the AfDB, will construct and install fifty-five (55) large solar-powered piped-water supply systems that will provide safe and quality drinking water to additional 250, 000 rural people. Upon completion in December 2024, this intervention would significantly increase the number of Gambians with access to potable safe and

quality drinking water and proper sanitation. The Government of The Gambia has allocated D10 million for drilling of boreholes, reticulation systems and solar powered systems for ten rural communities in addition to 110 boreholes which have been successfully drilled by the contractor under the supervision of the Department of Water Resources.

79. The Department of Water Resources, through Climate Smart Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Development Project (CSRWASHDEP) funded by the AfDB, has developed a WASH Map and establishment of a functional web-based M&E System which was launched on 28th May 2023. The Government of The Gambia, through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs is engaging the African Development Bank (AfDB) to mobilize resources for the water supply infrastructure for the remaining 55 project sites.

Communication and Digital Economy

80. In a bid to offshoot research and innovation for employment creation and local development in ICTs, the Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy (MoCDE) in partnership with the University of The Gambia is working on implementing a technology Hub and the extension of the initiative across three regions of the country.
81. MoCDE is currently finalizing the Cybercrime Bill as well as the Data Protection and Privacy Bill 2023 to safeguard the Gambia's cyberspace, and to ensure a resilient digital transformation process. Both bills are expected to be submitted to the National Assembly for enactment by the end of 2023. In addition, the Ministry plans to roll out advanced cybersecurity and cybercrime training and has identified the Formulation of a Cybersecurity Regulatory Framework as a priority intervention in 2024.
82. In an effort to revitalize and reposition GAMTEL/GAMCEL, the Ministry is drafting a National Fibre Protection Policy to address the network interruptions caused by frequent cuts on the national fibre backbone. The Government is supporting GAMTEL's network upgrade and expansion initiatives geared towards enhancing inclusivity, providing adequate redundancy, and building resilience. To achieve this, the Government will restructure GAMTEL and privatize GAMCEL in a bid to attract and induce the much-needed capital to help revive the sector and restore its competitiveness.

83. Furthermore, MoCDE is prioritizing the development of a comprehensive National Postal Service Policy and Strategy, along with a thorough review of the existing Postal Service Act to ensure it is up-to-date and entails modern-day realities of postal services.
84. In accelerating The Digital Terrestrial Transmission Process, the Ministry continues to intensify resource mobilization efforts for the deployment of a robust platform that will anchor the digital migration process, ensure nationwide coverage, and provide better-quality television transmission.

Tourism and Culture

Honourable Speaker,

85. Tourism is expected to continue its recovery throughout 2023 as the sector navigates through a challenging economic and geopolitical environment. Several initiatives have been implemented to increase the number of tourist arrivals and, consequently, its contribution to GDP. Some of these include awareness creation programs on tourism products and services, e-marketing activities, overseas representatives, sub-regional market representatives, joint marketing campaigns with stakeholders, trade shows, and ad-hoc marketing.
86. Efforts are also being made to develop the tourism product suite. The construction of three cluster roads, totaling about 2km, within the Western Coast Tourism Development Area roads have been completed. Construction is underway for three new eco-lodges in the North Bank Region (Barra), Central River Region (Kunkilling), and Upper River Region (Sotuma Samba). These eco-lodges have been established to address the challenge of providing decent accommodation for tourists and locals in rural areas. The Sotuma Samba Koi eco-lodge has been successfully completed and has been handed over to the Gambia Tourism Board. This initiative will greatly improve up-country accommodation and attract more tourists to these regions. The construction of a new craft market has been successfully completed for craft vendors at Palma Rima. The craft market is well built with 30 stalls and plans are on the way to build more stalls next year to accommodate more vendors.

87. The Ministry of Tourism and Culture, through the Gambia Tourism and Hospitality Institute (GTHI), has brought training to the doorsteps of rural youths and women through the "TVET on Wheels" initiative. The collaboration with the National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Authority (NAQAA) has also led to the development and monitoring of occupational standards, aimed at improving quality and standards in the sector.
88. In the area of culture, the Ministry has completed the Regulations for the operationalization of the National Endowment Funds for Arts and Culture. This Fund will support the financing of arts and culture-related activities in the country and help to create jobs among the youth. It is envisaged that the Fund will be operational in 2024. The Ministry through the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) has successfully completed the Quadrennial Periodic Reporting (QPR) of the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.
89. In January 2024, The Gambia Government will commemorate the Bicentenary of the establishment of Georgetown now called Janjangbureh as an asylum for Liberated Africans, in 1823. The festival will reinvigorate the conservation and displaying of authentic Gambian culture, strengthen national cohesion, and boost tourism for economic growth.
90. Under the World Bank Tourism Diversification and Resilience project, Kunta Kinteh Island will receive major conservation interventions starting in the last quarter of 2024. This project aims to improve the diversification and resilience of the Gambian tourism sector by strengthening institutional and policy framework, improving capabilities and access to funds for tourism-related Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) suppliers, and building resilience through the strengthening of sustainable coastal infrastructure and rehabilitation of existing tourism sites.

Trade Industry Regional Integration and Employment

91. Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment (MoTRIE) plays a pivotal role in enhancing the export market and facilitating access to international markets for Gambian products. The Ministry supports agricultural value addition, small and

medium-sized enterprises in adopting smart technologies and facilitates access to export financing. The Ministry prioritizes the establishment of accredited testing laboratories for both food and non-food products to help local producers meet global standards,

92. Additionally, a new Legal Metrology Bill is set to be presented before the National Assembly, with the intention of merging the Gambia Standard Bureau and the Weights and Measures Bureau to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness.

93. In the realm of industrialization, the Ministry is actively pursuing the construction of a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) along the Trans Gambia Bridge corridor. A feasibility study has been commissioned to assess the viability of this project, and efforts are underway to mobilize resources for the necessary infrastructure. Furthermore, the Ministry plans to establish three additional agropolis, to strategically focus on value chain crops along recognized trade corridors.

94. Facilitating investment is a key focus, and the government, through the Ministry of Trade, is in the process of reviewing the GIEPA Act of 2015. The government acknowledges the challenges faced by investors in acquiring land for commercial activities, which is crucial for boosting economic productivity. To address this issue, a high-level technical committee is being formed to collaborate with regional governors and allocate land for commercial activities. These lands will be held by GIEPA under a head lease arrangement.

95. In 2023, the government has provided incentives to 11 companies through the GIEPA Special Investment Certificate. These companies are projected to invest a total of US\$37.4 million, creating over 1,000 jobs. Most of these investments are concentrated in the manufacturing sector, and roughly half of them is led by domestic investors.

96. The Gambia Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (GCCPC) has been diligently working to protect consumer rights and ensure fair competition. The Commission has successfully handled 88 consumer cases with a total value of GMD1,921,250; conducted market investigations into essential commodities; and has taken decisive actions against businesses found in violation of the Competition Act 2007.

The Commission also initiated bi-weekly market surveillance of essential commodities to combat anti-competitive practices; and carried out weekly inspections of expired products to safeguard consumers, in compliance with the Consumer Protection Act of 2014.

97. Recognizing the importance of improving labor conditions and enhancing employment and productivity, the government has launched the new Employment Policy for 2023-2028. In line with modern labor standards and practices, the government has enacted a revised Labor Act 2023. To further enhance the policy environment, the Ministry of Trade plans to submit a revised Injuries Compensation Bill, Revised Factories Act of 1963, and Trade Union Bill for consideration in 2024. These initiatives collectively reflect the government's commitment to strengthening labor administrative systems for the betterment of workers and the economy.

Works, Construction and Infrastructure

98. The Rehabilitation of Roads, Sewage and Drainage systems in Banjul is in its final stage of implementation. The Project seeks to rehabilitate the pump house at Bund Road and install new pumps to evacuate storm water during the rainy season. Currently, 98 percent of the road's component in the initial scope and 87 percent of those in the additional works have been completed as at end of September 2023.
99. As part of the OIC Infrastructure Development Projects for the hosting of the upcoming OIC Heads of States Summit in The Gambia, the Construction of 50km Urban Roads which requires upgrading of 17 roads in the urban network is currently on-going. This project intends to decongest urban traffic with safe, attractive, and vibrant links leading to efficient traffic management during the summit and beyond.
100. The Government has also committed funds for the construction of 86km Niumi - Hakalang and other secondary roads to support the country's transport sector. The purpose of the project is to upgrade the existing gravel road and tracks in Niumi- Hakalang to a modern standard road with a bituminous sealed carriageway and shoulders, appropriate drainage structures, modern road furniture and safety facilities.

101. The Government has also embarked on an exercise to reform the aviation sector in the country to make it more efficient and viable. This involves the separation of regulatory and service provision functions in the industry in line with international standards and recommended practices. The decoupling process is ongoing and will culminate in the establishment of a new Airport Company and a Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) which will focus only on regulatory oversight. In addition, the Government plans to enter into a Public Private Partnership (PPP) in the operations and management of the Banjul International Airport. It is envisaged that such reforms will enhance the performance of the aviation industry and its contributions to the development of the country.
102. As part of preparations for the hosting of the OIC Heads of State Summit scheduled to take place in The Gambia in May 2024, the construction of a new VVIP Lounge and the rehabilitation of the Terminal Building at the airport were completed. These improvements will enhance operational capacity at the Banjul International Airport, in line with Government's strategic objective to improve air transport facilities and infrastructure.
103. The African Development Bank has approved the financing of the procurement of a new green ferry as part of the Banjul Port 4th Expansion Project at a tune of about US\$13.0 million. The ferry is about the size of the current Kunta Kinteh ferry which would greatly improve the ferry crossing times in Banjul/Barra. The green ferry would contribute to the SDGs on carbon emissions reduction and also contribute towards the Green Recovery-Focused National Development Plan. The country's huge infrastructure deficit is being addressed. Currently, 350km road construction contracts have been awarded. Hence, the increased budgetary allocation to this sector.

Petroleum and Energy

104. The energy sector has been severely hit by the spillover effects of the Russia-Ukraine war; with spikes in fuel prices, depreciation of the Dalasi, and shortage of foreign currency creating challenges in the sector. Consequently, NAWEC experienced a huge jump in fuel, lubricants, and spare parts cost of over 25percent compared to pre-war prices. Freight costs and logistics challenges have also made it extremely difficult to get the needed spare parts on time, coupled with an over 50 percent increase in freight cost.

105. Despite these challenges, Government, with support from development partners, has helped promote the development and efficiency of the energy sector. For example, the new 30MW Dual Fuel Power Project at Kotu and the 23MWp solar plant in Jambur are in advanced stage. Moreover, a 150MWp Regional Solar Power Park at Soma-Karantaba is going through advanced procurement stage.
106. Additionally, there are ongoing electricity access projects covering over 800 communities with the aim of meeting universal access by the end of 2025. The upgrading of NAWEC's transmission and distribution networks from 33KV to 225KV and the Control Centre interventions are all geared towards modernizing the country's electricity infrastructure and to enhance the quality of electricity supplies. The Water and Sanitation Networks Rehabilitation Project of US\$22.5 million, which aimed to minimize current water shortages, is expected to be completed by 2025.
107. The Ministry of Energy and Petroleum, through its Geology Department, has made substantial efforts in the management of mineral resources for wealth generation. Additional flagships will be the formulation of a Minerals and Mining Policy for the establishment of a Mining Cadastre System for The Gambia in 2024.
108. Moreover, special approvals of overland importation of fuel products from Senegal were granted as stop gap measures to avoid fuel stock out. Furthermore, to address the stability of fuel supply in the country, the Gambia National Petroleum Company (GNPC) in 2023, has in its expansion drive continue to build additional fuel stations in line with their strategic plan.

SOCIAL SECTORS

Basic and Secondary Education

109. By its mandate of ensuring universal access to education, the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education is undertaking a review of its education sector policy which covers the period of 2016 to 2030. A comprehensive consultation is ongoing with key stakeholders to address the inherent weaknesses and capture pertinent emerging issues while consolidating gains registered thus far. This will guide education service delivery in The Gambia from Early Childhood to Tertiary and Higher Education for the remainder of the policy period.
110. To ensure quality education delivery at all education levels, the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, through a collaborative effort with The Gambia College, the University of The Gambia, and the University of Science, Engineering and Technology continues to train and increase the number of qualified teachers across all levels. The Ministry has also embarked on a comprehensive curriculum review for all levels and a new curriculum framework has been developed and translated into Arabic and French. As a result, the Ministry made TVET a priority area in line with the Government's desire to invest in skills development initiatives that enhance independent learning, creativity, intrapersonal skills, and critical thinking capabilities.
111. Furthermore, the Ministry has updated the 2014 Scheme of Service to improve the working conditions of teachers across all levels. This is in pursuit of the Government's commitment and resolve to address both contemporary and emerging issues confronting the teaching cadre. The new service scheme will guide the operation, recruitment, redeployment, and posting of teaching and non-teaching cadres as outlined in the revised General Orders 14101(September 2013).
112. To improve the health and nutrition of children, the government, in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP) and USA support implemented by CARITAS, has scaled up the home-grown school feeding intervention in the Lower River Region and West Coast Region. A plan has been put in action to intervene in 186 schools, which has started in October 2023, with an estimated 51,000 students expected to benefit from the program.

113. With support from MRC Holland Foundation, over 775 new classrooms and 1,030 toilet cubicles with facilities catered for physically challenged students between Madrassas and conventional schools are being constructed to make quality education affordable and accessible to all in the country. Rehabilitation works for classrooms and other basic amenities for both students and management staff are ongoing in 10 schools across different regions. This is geared towards teacher motivation, welfare improvement, and performance enhancement.
114. The importance of Basic education to investment in human capital development forms the basis for this sector's attraction of the second highest budgetary allocation after debt service.

Higher Education

115. As part of Government-wide efforts to enhance effective and efficient service delivery, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology has signed performance contracts with the Chairpersons of all Governing Councils and Boards of tertiary and higher education institutions under its supervision. The Ministry has also established a Tertiary and Higher Education Trust Fund aimed at providing financial support to tertiary and higher education institutions; a National Research and Innovation Fund to improve entrepreneurship and product development, thereby increasing employability and job creation. These interventions are being implemented to increase equitable access to quality tertiary and higher education for all Gambians.
116. Through the National Accreditation and Quality Qualification Authority (NAQAA), the Ministry launched the first-ever Gambia National Qualifications Framework (GNQF) to harmonize all qualifications for a well-functioning, and skill-driven labour market system.
117. The University of Applied Science Engineering and Technology (USET), formerly Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI), has begun operations at Ndemban Skills Centre in the West Coast Region with 100 student all given Gambia Government

scholarship. Kanilai Skill Centre is also ready for use and will provide a one-year bridging programme for Madrassah students. Mansakonko TVET Centre in LRR and the Julangel TVET Centre in URR have all been refurbished and provided dormitories for both male and female students, just as in the Gambia College Basse Annex. These are geared towards increasing access to tertiary and higher education country-wide, including TVET.

118. Through funding from the World Bank, the Ministry is establishing two new TVET centers of excellence; one focusing on Agribusiness in Sapu and the other on Fisheries in Gunjur. These centers of excellence will mainstream innovation and entrepreneurship in their programs.

119. Lot I of the Fixed Package of the University of The Gambia Development Project has been completed, and lectures have commenced in the Faraba Banta Campus with state-of-the-art facilities. The Lot II of the Fixed Package, including two more schools and the chancery building, as well as the road network of the Campus, has kickstarted. The process of transforming critical public institutions such as the Management Development Institute (MDI) and Gambia College into a Civil Service College and a National Education University respectively is also ongoing. The Ministry has set up committees to lead the transformation and the committee on MDI transformation has just presented its report for implementation.

Health

120. The Ministry of Health is committed to providing accessible, affordable, and responsive healthcare services, focusing on primary healthcare, efficient service delivery, a well-trained healthcare workforce, and robust health infrastructure. This policy direction serves as the first line of defense against outbreaks, promoting health and reducing inequalities.

121. Before the pandemic, Western Regions 1 and 2 had non-functional incinerators, prompting actions such as procuring environmentally friendly waste treatment machines, containerized dual-chamber incinerators, and refrigerated waste collection trucks to improve healthcare waste management. Infrastructure projects, including new health

facilities, and enhanced healthcare capacity for effective response to health challenges and emergencies.

122. A postgraduate medical training program at the Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital (EFSTH) reduces the cost of training medical professionals. The country's commitment to Primary Health Care (PHC) has led to improved health, especially in maternal and child health and communicable disease treatment. The Ministry also advances control and prevention of HIV and TB with increasing accessibility to services.

123. In collaboration with partners, the Ministry enhances health emergency preparedness, engages in risk communication, and implements early warning systems. In 2024, the Ministry's focus is on enhancing healthcare services, improving infrastructure, procuring equipment, and strengthening the healthcare workforce, all in line with the goal of achieving Universal Health Coverage.

124. In The Gambia, HIV and AIDS continue to be a public health problem, and the prevalence in the general population is 1.5%. Currently, prevention program strategies are reinforced using the information gathered and appropriate programs designed to ensure the continuum of care for people affected with the ultimate objective of reducing HIV transmission among the community and suppressing viral loads and patients.

125. The Gambia Government continues to receive support from the Global Fund to fight HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. The Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) of the Global Fund, National AIDS Secretariat, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, and other partners has successfully negotiated a grant in the amount of US\$23,415,791 to continue the fight against HIV and AID, Tuberculosis and Health System of the Gambia.

126. The implementation of the grant will begin on the 1st of January 2024 and run to December 2026 as a continuation of the 2020- 2023 funding cycle. Additionally, Global has committed funds to support the provision of a CT scan as part of the Country's Health System Strengthening for US\$2.4 million. As part of the Global Fund's support, The

Gambia has been awarded US\$7,859,024 to cover unfunded demand in the following strategic priority areas: TB Mitigation, Surveillance and Data, Oxygen and respiratory care, Laboratory systems and Diagnostic Networks, and Community Health Works for implementation in 2024.

127. Equally, the malaria program of the Ministry of Health has received a recommendation for grant-making following the submission of the Grant Cycle 7 proposal to continue the implementation of the malaria prevention and control strategies of the country, and a grant amounting to US\$ 17,551,376 is allocated by the Global Fund for implementation from July 2024 to 30 June 2027.

Gender Children and Social Welfare

128. The government is dedicated to achieving gender equality, equity and promoting women's participation in all social, political and economic activities. In line with this, the Central Bank of the Gambia has provided GMD17 million to the Women Enterprise Fund, which will help to expand investment in the productive sectors of the economy by supporting women horticultural producers. A total of 435 women's groups throughout the country have benefited from this lending facility.
129. The Gambian government has requested the implementation of the Sahel Women's Empowerment Demographic Dividend (SWEDD), with a budget of US\$25 million over a period of five years. The Regional SWEDD project aims to increase access to education, economic opportunities, and healthcare services for girls and women, and to strengthen the institutional environment for gender equality across the region. The Gambia has already received nearly US\$1.2 million as part of the preparation process.
130. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare and UNDP jointly implemented the Women Gardens project to build resilience of communities to climate change effects. The project seeks to address constraints affecting women and youth in the horticulture sector, with the aim of increasing their productivity, profitability and sustainability using a value chain approach. The project covers four main components:

Production Support; Processing and Packaging; Marketing and Promotion; and Participatory Planning Monitoring and Evaluation.

131. As part of the Government's response to the adverse effects of COVID-19 and the spillover effects of the Russia-Ukraine war, the Family Strengthening Program has supported vulnerable families and elderly persons with cash transfers to improve their nutrition and living standards. The program, which started in 2020, has supported 500 vulnerable families and 250 vulnerable elderly persons amounting to D1,250,000 from 2020 to 2023. The Government intends to expand this program to 3,000 beneficiaries with support from EU to the tune of D30 Million.

Social Protection

Honourable Speaker,

132. The Government has demonstrated its commitment to Social Protection by articulating it in the recently formulated Green Recovery-Focused NDP (2023-2027) which has its Pillar 5 as "Empowerment, Social Inclusion, and leaving no one behind".
133. The National Social Protection Secretariat has spearheaded the development of The Gambia Social Registry, an integrated database and information system, which will transform the way social protection service are delivered. It is gratifying to mention that, even at its embryonic stage, The Gambia Social Registry has supported five (5) programs, including the lean season support implemented by the World Food Programme (WFP). Going forward, the Government will utilize the Gambia Social Registry for better targeting of subsidies in the future. The Government will gradually mainstream social assistance into the national budget rather than rely on ad-hoc and project-based cash transfers. In 2024, the government in collaboration with the European Union Delegation, will pilot the expansion of the Family Strengthening Program at the Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare. The target beneficiaries will be Orphans, Vulnerable Children, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), and older persons.
134. Social Protection expenditures in key sectors include the following: On health for example, the government has established the National Health Insurance scheme which is expected to contribute to reducing out-of-pocket health expenditure. In more direct social

protection-sensitive budget lines, the government has expended roughly D160,911,162 year-to-date which involves critical spending on vaccines and other essential medical supplies, to the benefit of our poor and most vulnerable people. Government expenditure on social protection in the education sector approximately stands at D420,076,981. This includes school improvement grants, teaching aids and learning materials, open scholarships and bursaries, School Bus services and the school feeding program which go a long way to improving both access and quality, especially for poor and vulnerable children.

135. To consolidate the gains, there will be direct legislation on the social assistance sector, through the Social Protection Bill, currently being discussed in this august house. This Bill will seek to set standards of social service delivery to the poor and vulnerable communities especially marginalized groups such as people living with disabilities, widows, orphans, and people living with HIV/AIDS amongst others.

Youth and Sports

136. The Government of the Gambia is committed to prioritizing youth empowerment and sports development. This is due to the country's demographic structure, where young people make up the largest demographic group and dominate the sports industry. The National Youth Council has implemented various programs aimed at empowering youth in the areas of leadership, entrepreneurship, and career development. The Council has been actively engaging policymakers to advocate for policies that benefit young people, and to ensure that the youth's perspective is captured in decision-making processes. The National Youth Council has also partnered with Local Authorities across the country to promote and encourage the participation of women and youth in leadership roles and politics.
137. The National Youth Service Scheme (NYSS) has helped equip youth with requisite skills and knowledge to become productive citizens. A total number of 5,470 young people have been supported in various skills including electrical installation, construction, masonry, rice agronomy, horticulture, auto mechanics, tailoring, carpentry, plumbing, electronics, catering, welding and fabrication, painting and among other livelihood activities. In collaboration with the University of The Gambia, the Scheme has launched

the National Youth Service Graduate Program in September 2023, targeting one hundred University of The Gambia (UTG) graduates for a one-year piloting period. The program aims to empower young people, provide them with an opportunity to serve country and create a pathway for knowledge building, skill acquisition, and employment opportunities.

138. National Enterprise Development Initiative (NEDI) has successfully established business incubation centers that provide comprehensive training to young entrepreneurs in business development through a combination of mentoring and coaching. NEDI has also partnered with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to provide business management training to 300 migrant returnees, with the IOM providing re-integration packages to support this initiative. The initiatives have contributed towards job creation and economic empowerment, which has helped the youth to become self-reliant and play an active role in the country's economy. The Government fully provided and funded support grant of GMD50,000 each to 32 youth and women entrepreneurs.

139. During the review period, the National Sports Council improved sports infrastructure and conducted talent identification and development programs across various sports disciplines. Gambian athletes showcased the country's sporting potential by delivering impressive performances in international competitions, bringing pride to the nation. In the same period, the senior national football team participated in the 2024 AFCON qualifiers and qualified for the second time after the 2021 AFCON. Additionally, the U20 national football team won a silver medal at the African U20 Nations Cup, qualifying for the U20 World Cup held in Argentina.

140. In addition to the budget allocation, The Ministry is funded through the levy for Sports and Youths, amounting to more than D90 million. This reflects the diverse funding to this important sector.

CROSS CUTTING SECTORS

Interior

141. The Government has embarked on several reforms to ensure that the security services are more professional and responsive in delivery services. The Ministry of Interior has drafted a Bill for the Peace and Reconciliation Commission and established a Peace Building Unit (PBU), which is near completion. As a result, the Ministry has hired a Peace Building Facilitator to operationalize the Peace Building Unit and has developed an Internal Security Policy. These are all geared towards supporting the implementation of the Government's peace and reconciliation programs.
142. Furthermore, the Janjanbureh Prison Staff Quarters have been constructed and three cells in Jeshwang have been renovated to alleviate inmate congestion at Mile II. Globally, Prison Centres are required to adopt correctional principles as per the Mandela Rules in the rehabilitation process of inmates. In this regard, the Government has embarked on strategic reform initiatives including Janjanbureh prison rice field and fishpond, multipurpose centre, horticulture (gardening) in Jeshwang prison camp, poultry, and animal husbandry. Prison officers and inmates have received information technology training, and senior officers were trained in collaboration with the Nigeria Correctional Service.
143. The Gambia Police Force (GPF) will also continue to work with the communities and other relevant stakeholders in the fight against crimes and criminalities. This strong partnership and collaboration led to the construction of four model Police Stations in Serrekunda, Bundung, Bakoteh, and Brusubi by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the development of policies such as a Gender Mainstreaming Policy, Internal Investigation Policy, and the Deployment Policy by the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance.
144. The Government will continue to expand and strengthen the practice of human rights and rule of law in the Gambia through the use of robust Community Policing activities and programs. Personnels of the GPF remain the topmost priority of the Government as more police quarters are expected to be constructed or renovated including the maintenance of the existing bus services. The Government of the Gambia will work

with relevant partners to mobilize resources for the realization of its maiden dream Police College in Kiang and the revitalization of the Police Radio Communication System for timely and effective response to incidences.

145. To usher into modern-day policing, the Gambia Police Force intends to migrate from its usual paper-based case file compilation to the digitalized West African Police Information database system known as WAPIS. In addition, the Gambia Police Force will create new Canine (dog) and Highway Patrol Units to address the current realities of modern-day policing in the fight against crimes and to reduce road accidents.
146. The Government intends to construct staff quarters for the Gambia Fire and Rescue Service in Basse and Farafenni and to construct other fire stations in both urban and rural Gambia. Additionally, the Government will construct a multipurpose Fire and Rescue Service Training Academy in Mandinary, provide adequate gear for Sea rescue operation, and improve the capacity of Ambulance and paramedic service Delivery. This will improve the capacity of operational firefighting.
147. Given the rising number of young people falling victim to drug abuse, the Government of the Gambia through Drug Law Enforcement Agency (DLEA) has intensified its demand-reduction activities and making efforts to establish a rehabilitation centre to cater for the plights of drug victims. This is a positive step towards approaching drug abuse as a public health problem rather than a matter of criminal justice. The National Drug Control Strategy 2019-2023, which is in its final year of implementation, will continue to provide general guidance on the Agency's activities.

Information

148. The Government has been working on the transformation of the information and communications landscape through effective consultation, collaboration and collective delivery. The Ministry of Information, in collaboration with Freedom House, developed a medium-term strategic plan spanning 2024-2028. The Ministry in partnership with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) has developed the Access to Information (ATI) Implementation Framework (ATIIF) to outline the implementation timelines and work

schedules for the full-scale implementation of the 2021 ATI Act. The Framework had been validated by stakeholders in late September 2023 and will be adopted as the National Roadmap.

149. Through support by the National Democratic Institute, the Ministry also developed the National Communications Frameworks that is expected to establish the systemic anchor for the emergence of a scientific approach to the development of a coherent public sector communication regime.

150. The Ministry of Information, in collaboration with the Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, is in the process of presenting a Cabinet Paper on Personal Data Protection and Privacy Bill to advance data security, processing, storage and dissemination. In addition, the Ministry in consultation with the Ministries of Finance and Justice will develop Information, Media and Broadcasting (IMB) Bill to give stimulus to current efforts designed to establish a vibrant information value chain that meets the collective expectations of diverse stakeholders.

Justice

Honourable Speaker,

151. The implementation of TRRC recommendations is progressing well under the leadership of the Ministry of Justice. The Implementation Plan was launched in May this year at a widely attended stakeholders' conference and donor roundtable.

152. In the area of justice and accountability, the Ministry of Justice has completed the drafting of two critical legislations which will soon be laid in this august Assembly for enactment. These are the Special Prosecutor's Office and the Special Accountability Mechanism Bills respectively. Through these legislations and others to come, the Ministry seeks to create an accountability mechanism which will consist of a Special Prosecutor's Office, a Hybrid Tribunal and the Special Criminal Division of the High Court of The Gambia.

153. Concerning reparations, the passing of the Victims Commission Bill during your last session was a great milestone in this regard. Once the Act comes into force, the Victims' Commission will be established within the first quarter of 2024. The Commission will administer the Victims' Fund, admit new victims, maintain a victim's database and also reassess and establish a fair quantum of compensation for the various types of injuries suffered.
154. In the area of institutional and legislative reforms, the government through the Ministry of Justice has embarked on an ambitious reform agenda which is an unprecedented number of draft legislations that are pending before this august Assembly. Many more sector and institutional legislation are on their way to being brought before you in due course for your consideration.
155. During your last extraordinary session, this Assembly also passed the Ban from Public Office (TRRC) Bill, the Former President's Bill and the Commission of Enquiry Amendment Bill respectively. Additionally, earlier this year this Assembly passed the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act 2023, thereby domesticating the Convention Against Torture for the first time in The Gambia.
156. In this current session, this Assembly is expected to consider and pass the Criminal Offences and Criminal Procedure Bills and the Anti-Corruption Bill.
157. In addition to the Transitional Justice process, the Ministry of Justice continues to deliver its core mandate including Criminal prosecutions, Civil Litigation and the provision of quality and timely legal services to Government Ministries, Departments, Agencies and The Gambia's overseas missions.

Public Service, Administrative Reform, Policy Coordination and Delivery

158. As part of the Civil Service Reform program 2018-2027, the Government is working on a number of initiatives with a view to making the civil service more efficient and effective to be more responsive to the needs of the citizenry. In this regard, the Government with support from the World Bank is preparing a Public Administration

Modernization Project (PAMP) which aims to improve fiscal and Human Resource Management capacity for improved service delivery.

159. The Personnel Management Office (PMO) has initiated the process of functionally reviewing Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to streamline and rationalize the overlapping roles of MDAs. PMO has also taken charge of the administration and management of Public Service Pensions after the coming into force of the Public Service Pensions Act 2022. This has helped in making the pension payment process in the civil service faster and less cumbersome. With the new system, retirement benefits of retired civil servants are now processed within 30 working days.

160. Furthermore, PMO has carried out capacity building trainings for ICT Officers of various MDAs on the management and monitoring of the biometric time attendance systems to improve work ethics of civil servants and other performance accountability measures. These trainings aim to strengthen the institutionalization of the biometric time attendance system. The Ministry of Public Service, Administrative Reform, Policy Coordination and Delivery is working on linking these biometric time attendance machines to a centralized server, with a view to enhancing effective monitoring of attendance in the civil service.

161. As the Technical arm of the Ministry of Public Service, the Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery has continued to provide instrumental support to the Office of the President. The Delivery Unit remains steadfast in its mission – serving as the Executive's diligent eye; and ensuring projects across the board are tracked, measured, and steered towards timely completion. In this quest, the Department pivots around three fundamental activities: Delivery Forum, Compendium of Government Infrastructure Projects, and Program for Accelerated Community Development (PACD).

Environment, Climate Change and Wildlife

162. The Government, in collaboration with local, regional, and international partners, is incessantly working to preserve the country's environment and natural resources. Through the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources

(MECCNAR), the Government is in the process of formulating a legal regulatory framework that would guide the carbon trading market in The Gambia to better-managing climate risks. The Ministry successfully also launched the West Africa Coastal Area Resilient Investment Program (WACA) at a cost of US\$46 million in May 2023. This project is designed to improve flood and coastal risk management in selected risk-prone areas in the Greater Banjul Area (GBA). In addition, the National Environment Agency recently established a Geographical Information Systems (GIS) Training Centre to build capacity in GIS and Remote Sensing Technologies across all sectors of the government.

163. In a bid to improve forest cover in the Gambia, the Ministry granted technical support to 620 Communities to undergo comprehensive Preliminary Community Forest Management Agreement (PCFMA). This exercise has increased the total forest cover under community forest schemes to 45,237 hectares nationwide. The Department also distributed 250,000 poly pots and seeds of assorted indigenous tree species to all the central nurseries nationwide for seedling propagation totaling of 468,617 tree species of Gmelina and mangrove across the country.

164. The Ministry has also engaged in the expansion of three Protected Areas (PA) of 24,000 hectares. This brings the total area under Protected Area coverage to 92,549 hectares representing 9.2% of the national land mass. The designation of the first Man and Biosphere Reserve in The Gambia is in progress, awaiting approval by UNESCO. The development of the EU Life Project is completed, and approval is granted for implementation in 2024. On the restoration of mangrove ecosystems, the Ministry has planted 4,000 hectares of mangrove ecosystem to support the improvement of the marine ecosystem, which could be used for carbon trading in the near future.

Lands and Regional Government

165. The Government of the Gambia through an additional financing of US\$45million from the World Bank for the “*The Gambia Inclusive and Resilient Agricultural Value Chain Development Project*” (GIRAV) is developing the first National Land Policy (NLP) for the Country. The GIRAV project will now introduce a new subcomponent “*Securing Access to Land*” of which resources will be allocated to support the Ministry of Lands to

formulate an inclusive, gender-sensitive and climate change informed National Land Policy to guide land tenure, land governance, land management and land administration reforms in The Gambia. This policy will establish an effective land tenure system that will recognize and regulate all legitimate land ownership and tenure rights; ensure tenure security and equitable access to land for all citizens; and promote responsible, inclusive, and ecologically balanced use of land and land-based resources to generate wealth, reduce poverty, and increase resilience. The project will finance three main activities: (a) Institutional and legal support to land administration institutions; (b) Digitalization of the land administration system; and (c) Demarcation and registration of land rights.

166. The Ministry of Lands intends to develop an automated Cadastral/land resources management system that will diversify the economy, protect land title ownership, enhance revenue base and address the endless land disputes in the country. Under the West Africa Coastal Area Resilience Project, the Ministry will develop both the Cadastral and land use plan for the whole country.

167. The Ministry through the Department of Community Development (DCD) is implementing two major projects. The first, supported by UNICEF, seeks to create opportunities for citizen empowerment and participation, facilitate increased demand for essential care, and promote behaviour change for protective practices under the *Capacity Building and Strengthening of the Decentralized Structures Program* locally called “NSAA KENOO” (which means in Mandinka ‘We Can Do It’). The initiative brings back community and human capital at the center of the development process, as a pre-requisite to effect change and address gap in children’s rights. By putting local governance structures at the center of all community interventions, it seeks to empower decentralized agencies to communicate and engage with community structures and communities to drive change.

168. The second is *The Job, Skill, and Finance Program for Women and Youth in The Gambia*, a four-year initiative funded by the EU through the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) at a tune of EUR15.2 million. The program supports social inclusion and employment of youth and women, with specific emphasis on promoting gender equality and addressing climate change. Fundamentally, it seeks to contribute to job

creation for youth, women and local communities, develop skills and improved access to finance. During the period 2023, a total of US\$719,999.99 equivalent to GMD43,804,800.02 was directly disbursed to 32 Wards in four Local Government Areas. Cumulatively, a sum of US\$1,119,999.99 amounting to GMD68,140,800.02 was disbursed in 2023. The types of subprojects implemented by the wards included: Integrated vegetable garden (Solar Powered Borehole Reticulation System/Livestock Production); Culvert; household and Street Solar Lightening Systems; Solar powered Bore-Hole Reticulation Systems for Domestic Use; and Poultry scheme.

Foreign Affairs

169. The Government continues to implement its foreign objectives with the ultimate aim of promoting, safeguarding, and achieving the country's socio-economic interests, including through the harnessing and mobilization of domestic and external resources for the realization of the Green Recovery Focused National Development Plan (2023-2027). Despite current challenges, the Government has continued its engagements with partners at the national, regional and international levels geared towards the maintenance of durable peace, stability and development of the country. Our major international and regional partners such as the United Nations, the OIC, the European Union and the African Union continue to support our development and reform agenda. At the bilateral level, relations between The Gambia and several countries continue to thrive progressively. Follow-up engagements are underway with bilateral partners in ensuring effective implementation of various mutually beneficial cooperation agreements.

170. The Government continues to strengthen the country's economic, social and political ties with its Asian partners and friends. In line with this spirit, the Government of the Gambia has participated at high level international fora such as FOCAC and TICAD; received capacity building support from China, India, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand and most recently Indonesia in preparation for the OIC Summit; facilitated the provision of health care services by China and India, and infrastructural projects with China; as well as wide ranging economic/financial assistance in the form of grants, loans and material support which are all aimed at enhancing the systems, processes and ICT infrastructure of the public service.

171. The European Union (EU) and its Member States are one of the crucial partners for the Gambia. Since the change of Government in 2017, the EU stood by The Gambia and ensured the implementation of many projects that positively impacted governmental operations and lives of the people. Recently, the Gambia has been included in the EU funded MAC Programme 2021-2027, a cooperation programme whose objective is to strengthen sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation. The Gambia also received EUR4 million from the West African Competitiveness Project (WACOMP), implemented by UNIDO. For the maintenance of a balanced and mutually beneficial relationship, The Gambia organized the Gambia-EU Partnership Dialogue (Article 8 Dialogue) on the 10th of January 2023. The event was fully graced by Honourable Ministers from almost all sectors of the economy.
172. Within the framework of our continued engagements with development partners, the Gambia Government, on 24th October 2023, together with the Office of the UNRC, jointly signed and launched the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework between The Gambia and the United Nations. This Cooperation Framework is the partnership agreement between the Government of The Gambia and the United Nations. The Framework aligns with our national development priorities, global development agenda such as the 2030 SDGs and the 2063 African development agenda.
173. Migration has become a key priority of the Government of the Gambia. Aligned with the principles and the objectives of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the Government of the Gambia has established a National Coordination Mechanism on Migration (NCM) to strengthen and support the coordination, synergy and complementarity of all stakeholders in the migration landscape. Similarly, the Government recognizes the value that the diaspora brings to its development efforts and has been tapping the opportunity to increase the human capital and financial resources that Gambians abroad contribute to the development of the country. Beyond remittances, diaspora members fulfil a key development role in The Gambia as major direct investors in critical and emerging industries, generous philanthropists and first movers in the growth of important sectors such as tourism, and agriculture.

Data and Statistics

174. The Gambia was unable to conduct the Population and Housing Census on the initial scheduled date (April 2023) due to the effects of the COVID-19 and implementation challenges associated with digital censuses. For the smooth conduct of any census, pre-enumeration activities should start at least two years prior to the census. Population and housing census needs to be preceded by a capacity needs assessment to determine the ICT, Geographic Information System (GIS) material, and the human resource needs of the different stages of the preparatory process and to serve as input for the development of the census project document. However, this was not possible due to measures to mitigate the spread and impact of COVID-19 as well as diverted focus by Government and development partners which led to low disbursement of funds to support pre-enumeration activities. Travel restrictions also affected the movement of technical experts to conduct this assessment and the implementation of regional workshops to boost the capacity of census personnel. The delay in starting pre-enumeration activities has a domino effect on the overall census roadmap and its implementation.
175. Nonetheless, the Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS) has successfully completed data collection for phase III of The Gambia Social Registry Project which covers all the districts in Kombo. With the completion of this phase, a total of 40 districts are now covered in the country leaving only KMC and Banjul not covered. Resources are being mobilized to complete the exercise in the remaining mentioned areas. In partnership with PARIS21, the GBoS organized a special engagement with the National Assembly in February 2023 to promote data usage to improve policy decision-making and outcomes.
176. The Government also developed and validated the Third National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS III) in response to data demand of the RF-NDP (2023-2027), the African Union's Agenda 2063, and the United Nations' Agenda 2030. The Third National Strategy for the Development of Statistics aims to strengthen the National Statistical System, which serves as a tool for producing reliable statistics and indicators for objective monitoring of the implementation of the National Development Plan (NDP) as well as continental and international development agendas.

177. In coordination with the Ministry of Health, the Gambia Bureau of Statistics led the conduct of Essential Health Services Strengthening Survey (EHSSS). The EHSSS was commissioned by the Essential Health Services Strengthening project for the Gambia. The purpose of this World Bank funded project is to improve the delivery and utilization of quality essential Primary Health Care (PHC) Services in Gambia. The baseline information used to evaluate this project were sourced from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and the Gambia Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), which were conducted by the Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS).

REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

Honourable Speaker,

178. The Gambia Revenue Authority (GRA) has faced challenges in revenue collection as a result of the spillover effects of the Russia-Ukraine war and government interventions to lessen its impact on the population. Nonetheless, ongoing reforms have contributed positively towards performance.
179. Some of the notable reforms carried out thus far include the successful implementation of the ASYCUDA World system and the Single Window Solution at the Seaport. Reforms are also being implemented in the areas of Border and Inland Border Control; Post Clearance Audit; and Risk Management. In addition, efforts are being made to implement the new Integrated Tax Administration System (ITAS) for the administration of domestic taxes; develop a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system; automate internal audit processes; and cleanse Taxpayer Registry. The Authority is also working with the ECOWAS Commission as part of a regional initiative to implement SIGMAT, which is meant to assist in the tracking of goods in transit within the ECOWAS region.
180. As part of efforts to improve domestic resource mobilization, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs in partnership with GRA signed a Public Private Partnership contract early this year for the implementation of a Revenue Mobilization Solution for Excisable Goods, Telecom Services and Refined Fuels with SICPA SA, a Swiss based company, with GRA as the implementing Agency. The Project governance structures have been established, and the Regulations for the Excisable goods and the Refined fuels were signed in April 2023.

MEDIUM TERM GROWTH OUTLOOK

181. Recovery and growth prospects over the medium term are expected to be subdued as conditions remain precarious due to recent global developments. The downward revisions of global growth to 3 percent in 2023 and 2.9 percent in 2024, promises a challenging medium term. Although the West still grapples with weaker-than-expected growth, tourist arrivals in 2023 has greatly improved, signaling positive moves towards recovery in the services sector. The service sector is projected to grow at a rate of 3.5 percent in 2023 ramping up to 4.9 percent in 2024, driven by the tourisms and wholesale and retail trade subsectors. With the ongoing post-COVID recovery and reform agenda, The Gambia Tourism Board placed great emphasis on inclusive, culture-oriented tourism development as well as on public-private partnership. It is in this vein; the Board rolled-out the Eco Lodge Project in strategic locations across the country to boost ecotourism as well as domestic tourism. Other plans include market development and diversifying source markets, including development of sub-regional tourism, enhancing tourism products and product diversification, enhancing quality in hospitality and digitalization in the tourism industry, boosting air access as well as improving travel facilitation and increasing the geographic spread of tourism. Institutional strengthening and infrastructure developments are also given lot of attention within the ongoing reform process.
182. Performance in Industry is also expected to recover on the back of strong performance in the electricity and construction sub-sectors. Construction of OIC roads and other infrastructure for the conference should be completed in 2024. However, this does not signal an expected slowdown in public investment. In contrast, public investment in infrastructure is expected to increase in the medium term. Key among the priority infrastructure projects include the Banjul Port Expansion project, the University of The Gambia (UTG) Project Phase II, solarization of schools and hospitals, construction of a new Government Complex, and rural and urban roads such as the Sting-Corner-Abuko-Lamin-Mandinarin Bypass, and the widening of Kairaba Avenue. Private construction is also expected to remain vibrant in the medium term. Furthermore, the Mining and Quarrying sub-sector is expected to remain on a decent path in the medium term fueled by rising export of heavy mineral concentrates and improved supply chain conditions.

183. The agriculture sector is expected to continue on a steady path to recovery after the downturn in 2021 with growth rate projected at 8.3 percent in 2023 and 7.1 percent in 2024. On the back of good rainy seasons, these projections largely rest on two factors; first is improved investment efficiency and reforms in agricultural projects coupled with increased private sector participation in rice and vegetable farming as well as in poultry and animal husbandry. Second, fisheries and aquaculture production, which in 2021 represented almost half of total agriculture production, is expected to perform well over the medium term. The Ministry of Agriculture has developed a National Agricultural Extension Policy to promote sustainable intensive agricultural production and value addition which will boost agriculture production and efficiency in the medium term. The establishment of a cogeneration plant for groundnut, which is anticipated to be commissioned in mid-2024, is also expected to contribute to the projected growth in the sector.
184. Going forward, the economy will rely heavily on the productive sectors to perform as projected in the medium term. Nevertheless, the risk of a poor rainy season could exacerbate volatility hence recovery efforts must be premised on a strong commitment to medium-term policy reforms to ensure resilience.
185. On the fiscal front, the domestic revenue collection is projected to increase from D16.9 billion (12.9 percent of GDP) in 2023 to D22.8 billion (13.02 percent of GDP) in 2024. This positive growth trend is expected to remain constant over the medium term at an average annual growth rate of 20 percent in nominal terms between 2023 and 2027. This improvement reflects robust revenue mobilization efforts and the implementation of the GRA reform agenda geared towards improving compliance and expanding the tax-base. With the Revenue and Tax Policy Directorate handling all tax-related matters, several reforms are being initiated to increase government tax revenue including reviewing contracts of organizations that are not paying tax and reforms related to Duty Waiver and Special Investment Certificates (SIC). These with other reforms explained the increased revenue projections.
186. Total grants are anticipated to decline from the expected D16.3 billion in 2023 to D12.2 billion in 2024. Budget support grants is expected to hit D3.2 billion in 2024, from

D2.8 billion in 2023 while Project Grants are expected to decline from D13.6 billion in 2023 to D 9.0 billion in 2024.

187. Total government expenditure is projected to decline from D32.3 billion in 2023 to D27.4 billion in 2024, but over the medium-term, it is expected to increase gradually to the tune of D40.1 billion in 2027. The projected decline in total expenditure in 2024 is largely attributed to the anticipated decline in project grants and the reduction in capital expenditure due to the expected completion of ongoing road projects (including urban roads such as Kanifing-Brufut and the rural roads such as Nuimi Hakalang, Sabach Sanjally, etc.), the Bertil-Harding Highway and the practically completed Trans Gambia highway.

188. Total Expenditure and Net-lending is projected to increase slightly by 6 percent, rising from D37.15 billion in 2023 to D39.38 billion in 2024. This increase is mainly driven by increases in debt interest, which is projected to increase by D2.20 billion in 2024 (or by 76%). Personnel Emolument expenditures are also projected to increase from D6.10 billion (revised to D6.7 billion) in 2023 to D7.43 billion in 2024. However, Personnel Emoluments have been revised in 2023 to take into account adequate adjustments relating recruitment.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE 2024 BUDGET

189. Total revenue is expected to increase by 5% on the back of an 86%, 24% and 15% increase in non-tax, tax and budget support grant respectively. However, project grants are expected to decline by 34 percent.
190. Total expenditure to increase by 8% mostly attributed to increases in capital expenditures to the Ministries of Higher Education and Foreign Affairs, and debt service payments. These allocations are allocated for the University of The Gambia (UTG) Project Phase II and the construction of Chancery for the Gambia embassies in Abuja, Dakar and Brussels.
191. The budget deficit in 2024 as a percent of GDP is estimated to decline to 2.55 percent compared to 3.0 percent in 2023 and therefore result to a reduction in the net foreign borrowing by 21 percent.
192. Social sectors – education, health and agriculture – spending accounts for 26% of the budget.
193. Capital Expenditure will constitute 28% of the budget to build the infrastructure and capital base for economic development.
194. The key priority of the budget and the medium-term fiscal objectives will be to reduce the budget deficit and the overall debt of the country.

RATIONALE FOR 2024 BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

Honourable Speaker,

195. The Rationale for the 2024 Budget Allocation being discussed below is focusing mainly on Government Local Funds (GLF).

National Debt Service

196. Debt Service payments have increased from D4.3 billion in 2023 to D7.5 billion in 2024, representing a 74 percent increment year-on-year. As a share of the total GLF appropriation, debt service comprises more than 25 percent of the total budget. This is roughly equivalent to the budget allocation to education, health and agriculture sectors combined.

Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE)

197. The 2024 budget allocation for the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education stands at D4.2 billion, representing a 20 percent increase from the 2023 budget of D3.5 billion. This increased allocation reflects government's strong interest and continuous support for the development of education in the country. It is important to note that most of the basic and secondary education budget goes towards personnel emoluments, subvention to schools, school feeding and improvement as well as for payment of exam fees. School feeding, especially for lower basic education, continues to be an important area of the Ministry's budget. About D162.5 million has been dedicated for school feeding, representing an increment of 30 percent over last year's budget. West African Examination Council (WAEC) fees of D120 million has also been factored for examinations. In addition, D255 million has been budgeted for the school improvement grant, which continues to be relevant, especially for Secondary Education.

Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MoHERST)

198. The 2024 budget for Higher Education is D240 million, which include support to tertiary education services. D82 million has been budgeted as subvention to support tertiary institutions –D25 million each for the UTG, MDI and the Gambia College and D7 million for the USET. The government also intends to continue supporting needy students through

Open Scholarships by budgeting D75 million and bursaries for students amounting to D15 million. More importantly, students will now have the opportunity to apply for higher education funding through a student loan scheme. An initial seed contribution of D5 million has been included in the budget for such purpose. Cognizant of the need for innovation, D2.3 million has been included in the budget to support research and innovation. In addition, the School Bus Service currently being offered to students will continue to be supported, with an amount of D3.5 million budgeted for Payment for School Bus Services.

Ministry of Transport, Works and Infrastructure

199. The 2024 budget for the Ministry of Works increased to D2.64 billion from D1.95 billion in 2023, representing a 35 percent increment. 98 percent of the Ministry's allocation is Development, mainly directed towards the completion of on-going road projects such as the Bertil Harding Highway (D760 million), Lots I and II of the North Bank Roads (D315 million), Kiang West Roads Sankandi (D75 million), Kiang Phase II (D200 million), Nuimi-Hakalang (D171.96 million), OIC Urban Roads (D135 million), and the Banjul Rehabilitation project (D105 million). New roads are also provided with an estimated amount of D592 million.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

200. The 2024 budget for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is D1.8 billion. Personnel Emoluments constitute D822 million of the Ministry's allocation. This includes cost of living Allowance i.e. Exchange Concession Allowance (ECA) of D339 million budgeted to be paid to overseas diplomatic staff. Furthermore, Rents and Rates for Embassy staff also represents a significant portion of the Ministry's budget, with an approved budget of D263.6 million compared to a budget of D236.2 million for 2023. As part of efforts to rationalize expenditure on Rents, the Government has adopted a strategy of constructing new chanceries to minimize the expenditure on rent. Hence, preliminary estimate of D80 million has been programmed for the construction of new Chancery buildings in Abuja for D30 million, Brussels for D20 million and Dakar for D30 million. Additionally, D300 million has been budgeted for the hosting of the OIC Summit in May 2024.

Ministry of Health

201. The 2024 health budget stands at D2.3 billion compared to D1.9 billion in the 2023 budget, representing a 21% increase. About D1.07 billion has been budgeted for the Management of Subvented Institutions as transfers to hospitals to provide support for the operation of hospitals. Another D36 million has been budgeted for the National Health Insurance Authority – the body in charge of the Health Insurance Scheme. The support for Disease control also remains paramount, with D283.42 million budgeted for the program. The Disease Control Program caters for National Pharmaceutical Services, which include a budget of D240.72 million for drugs. With respect to Consultancies, D95 million has been budgeted to support the payment of Cuban Doctors. Overseas Medical Treatment remains relevant for emergencies and D50 million has been budgeted for 2024. Another D27.44 is budgeted for Diagnostic Services (Lab Blood Transfusion).

Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)

202. Budget allocation to the Ministry of Agriculture increased by 17 percent from D722.86 million in the 2023 Budget to D844.81 million in the 2024 Budget. About D500 million has been budgeted for Input Subsidy, including support for organic fertilizers and seeds for farmers. The Ministry's total 2024 Development budget is D50 million which is meant for government counterpart funding for the various projects under this Ministry.

Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (MoFEA)

203. MOFEA's budget allocation for 2024 stands at D1.97 billion, representing an increase from the D1.48 billion approved in 2023. The bulk of this allocation is earmarked for subventions. Subventions for the Gambia Revenue Authority (GRA) is budgeted at D770 million, indicating a drive towards increased domestic resource mobilization; and another D111.3 million is budgeted for subventions to the Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS) including support for the upcoming census activities. Moreover, there has been the addition of The Millenium Corporation Challenge National Coordination Activities and the SOE Commission in the 2024 budget. The SOE Commission was created due to the urgent need to minimize fiscal risk emanating from State Owned Enterprises (SOEs). In this regard the budget includes an amount of D27 million for the SOE Commission. Likewise, in a bid to strengthen governance and the institutional capacity of Internal Audit services,

government has decided to increase the budgetary allocation from D27.72 million in 2023 to D50.70 million in 2024, representing an 83 percent increase.

204. The Accountant General's Department (AGD) Budget also features meaningfully on the MOFEA budget and includes a cost-of-living allowance for Finance Attachés in Diplomatic Missions, which increased from D72.4 million in 2023 to D85 million in 2024 – representing an increase of 17.4 percent. The budget also includes an additional D66 million for IFMIS Software systems and Licensing fees. Furthermore, an allocation of D30 million is provided for Printing expenses to support government services and clear government printing arrears owed to the Gambia Public Printing Corporation (GPPC). In addition, D272 million is budgeted for Equity Participation in multilateral and international organizations, this is for Capital Subscriptions to AfDB, EBID and IsDB.

Ministry of Interior

205. The Ministry's budget for 2024 is D1.61 billion. A large share of the Ministry's budget constitutes Personal Emoluments, which is equivalent to 65.5 percent of the Ministry's overall budget. Other major budgetary provisions include Food and Food Services amounting to D115 million, Fuel (D82.4 million), Electricity and Water (D18.7 million) are also pressure points. Subvention to the Drug Law Enforcement Agency amounts to D168.98 million.

Ministry of Defence

206. The budget for the Ministry of Defence (MoD) increased by 16 percent, from D852 million in 2023 to D992 million in 2024. The Ministry's budget for PE is D639 million, which represents 64.4 percent of the Ministry's total budget. The increase in the recurrent budget for the Ministry Defence is attributed to increases in Personnel Emoluments (PEs) Food and Food Services for the Army and Fuel. Food and Food Services increased by 32 percent compared to the 2023 budget. An amount of D25 million has also been allocated for the purchase of trucks for the Army. For Development, there are plans to renovate some military barracks, facilities and structures. Funds amounting to D23.2 million have been set aside for renovations in the 2024 budget.

MEDIUM TERM POLICY REFORMS

207. To ensure fiscal sustainability and improve future conditions in terms of revenues and expenditure management, the following reforms must be considered and implemented:
- a. Extension of performance contracts to all SOEs and repositioning of strategically important ones to reflect good corporate structures with a view to improving their financial viability, service delivery, and reducing fiscal risk to the budget;
 - b. Development of a pipeline of bankable and commercially viable development projects (in line with the flagship priorities of the Recovery-Focused NDP 2023-2026) and provide risk guarantee schemes to unlock private and institutional financing including the pension fund;
 - c. Strengthening of public investment management through the institutionalization of medium-term Public Investment Programme (PIP) for all sectors, and ensuring all public investments pass the Gambia Strategic Review Board (GSRB) selection criteria;
 - d. Development of a Domestic Resource Mobilization Strategy to enhance revenue collection;
 - e. Review of the GIEPA Act 2015 to Rationalize Incentives and Improve Monitoring, Reporting, and Tax Returns Filing;
 - f. Development of a Tax Expenditure Policy to ensure that tax incentives align with the government's overall fiscal objectives;
 - g. Development of a Duty Waiver Policy that incorporates Tax Compliance Management;
 - h. Corporate tax Payments by Major Public Works Contractors;
 - i. Deployment of an Excise Tax Stamp/Petroleum Marking Solution for Excisable Goods, Telecoms and Energy;
 - j. Digitalization of Duty Waiver Application and Approval Process;
 - k. Use key performance indicators to monitor and analyze MDAs' operations;
 - l. Development of a travel policy for the entire public sector to ensure value for money;
 - m. Development of a Foreign Service Policy with the aim of rationalizing foreign missions;

- n. Finalization of the Vehicle Policy and commencement of implementation as a matter of urgency, in order to rationalize expenditure on the purchase of vehicles, fuel and maintenance; and
- o. Review of the Vehicle Management Plan by Riders for Health to rationalize costs.

PROPOSED REVENUE MEASURES FOR 2024

Honourable Speaker,

Administrative Revenue Measures

208. With effect from 1st January 2024, all public institutions, including SOEs, Agencies and Local Government Agencies procuring goods and services shall be required to request for a tax clearance certificate issued by the Commissioner General from suppliers/contractors as a prerequisite before entering into contracts with any supplier or contractor.
209. Going forward, all concession contracts and agreements that maybe considered for tax exemptions shall conform to Section 149 (3) of the 1997 Constitution and section 33 of the Income and Value Added Tax Act 2012. In line with the above, all current contracts/agreements with tax exemptions are currently under review. Therefore, all MDAs are advised to refrain from offering tax exemption clauses in concession contracts or agreements without following the legal process for such exemption.
210. To improve tax compliance in the management of duty waivers, a New Duty Waiver Form with an in-built tax compliance management mechanism will be introduced from January 1st, 2024.
211. The fees, mentioned below, are transactional and payable only upon utilization of services.
- a. As part of efforts to ramp up domestic resource mobilization, the Ministry in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will be introducing user charges for the legalization, authentication and translation of documents at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The schedule of fees will be gazetted and come into force thereafter.
 - b. On land registration, documentation, and administration, current fees will be increased to reflect the service cost. The new schedule of fees will be gazetted and come into force thereafter.

- c. In the Health Sector, certain user fees will be increased to support cost recovery. The Ministry of Health will work with relevant stakeholders to inform the necessary increment.
- d. The fees in the fisheries sector will also be revised to ensure that fees charge reflects the cost of the administration in the Fisheries sector as well provide more funding for the sector for job creation and employment growth.

212. The current travel moratorium issued via the Office of His Excellency, President Adama Barrow, will continue for the 2024 Fiscal Year. Official travels will be restricted to statutory travels only and the size of delegations will also be trimmed.

GAMBIA REVENUE AUTHORITY

213. Amend Section 230 of the IVAT Act as follows:

- a. A person who fails to file an Annual Tax Return for Corporate Income Tax shall be liable for a penalty of 1% of the revenue reported in the return, with a minimum of D10,000 and a maximum of D250,000. Any return filed after the cut-off date (March 31st of the following year), the maximum rate of D250,000 is applicable. Penalties will be applicable immediately after the filing due date and late payments shall attract penalty and interest charges in accordance with the IVAT Act 2012;
- b. A person who fails to file an Annual Tax Return for Personal Income Tax shall be liable for a penalty of 1% of the revenue reported in the return, with a minimum of D5,000 and a maximum of D50,000. Any return filed after the cutoff date (March 31st of the following year), the maximum rate of D50,000 is applicable. Penalties will be applicable immediately after the filing due date and late payments shall attract penalty and interest charges in accordance with the IVAT Act 2012;

- c. A person who fails to file a Monthly Tax Return (including but not limited to PAYE, VAT, and Withholding Tax) to 1% of the tax due in the Return, with a Minimum of D1,000 and a maximum of D5,000 per month or part of a month;
- 214. The definition of a “tax return” under section 195 is hereby amended to include PAYE return. Under section 98, the withholding statement hereby changed to a tax return and shall be filed monthly.
- 215. Introduce a withholding tax on rental income by MDAs and all businesses under the category of large taxpayers as prescribed below:
 - a. A person occupying a property used for commercial purposes shall at the time of making rent payments withhold tax on the rental income at the rate of 15%.
 - b. A person occupying a property used for residential purposes shall at the time of making rent payments withhold tax on the rental income at the rate of 8%.
 - c. This provision shall only be applied by MDAs and established private corporations.
- 216. Increase the pool and betting tax on the winnings on betting, gaming, lottery, prize competition and gambling from 10% to 30% with effect from January 1st 2024;
- 217. A sole proprietor of a business with no employees shall be exempted from the payment of Payroll Tax levied under the Payroll tax Act;
- 218. With Effect from 1st January 2024, excise tax on the following imports will increase accordingly:
 - Spirits from D245 per litre in 2019 to D260 per litre in 2024
 - Beer from D135 per litre in 2019 to D150 per litre in 2024
 - Wine from D210 per litre in 2019 to D225 per litre in 2024

219. Progressively increase the excise tax on used vehicles that are more than 15 years old. Used vehicles up to 20 years old will attract 20% excise tax, vehicles up to 30 years old will attract 25% excise tax. And any vehicle older than 30 years will attract a 45% excise tax. This is intended to discourage or reduce the importation of old vehicles into the country which post environmental hazards;
220. Resume the collection of domestic excise duties on flour at 5% of ex-factory price from 1st January 2024;
221. Commence the implementation of excise stamps on some domestically produced and imported excisable commodities as outlined in the Excise Stamp Regulation from 1st January 2024;
222. Commence the implementation of fuel marking during the year;
223. Implement the Revenue Assurance System for Mobile Network Operators (MNOs);
224. Cigarettes and other tobacco products tax increment as follows:
- a. Increase specific excise tax on cigarettes, cigar or cigarillos from D35/pack to D40/pack in 2024;
 - b. Increase the environmental tax on cigarettes, cigars or cigarillos from D5.22/pack to D7.22/pack in 2024;
 - c. Increase the excise tax on other tobacco products from D420/kg to D450/kg in 2024;
 - d. Increase the environmental tax on other tobacco products from D200/kg to D220/kg in 2024;
 - e. Introduce an additional 10% ad valorem excise tax on all imported tobacco products;

- f. Introduce excise tax at 15% on all electronic cigarettes, vapour and gadgets;
- g. To continue the Gambia's commitment under the WHO Framework convention on Tobacco Control and ECOWAS Excise Directive on Tobacco Products, we will introduce a Tobacco Control Levy at D 0.50 on cigarettes, cigar or cigarillos.

A Legislation embodying the above-mentioned revenue measures will be promulgated to provide the legal framework for the collection of the said taxes, duties and levies.

CONCLUSION

225. As we draw the curtains on the 2023 fiscal year and prepare for 2024, let me conclude by drawing the attention of this August Assembly to the very challenging and unprecedented position we find ourselves. Multiple and overlapping shocks send destabilizing waves to economies across the world, worsening global economic prospects and the domestic economy. While the country is still grappling with the immediate and long-term effects of the pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine conflict is negatively impacting the recovery process. The rise in global food and energy prices as well as high cost of borrowing due to contractionary monetary policy stances contribute to creating a pass through on the domestic economy. As we relentlessly work to surmount these challenges, it is worthy to note that the outlook remains grim.

226. In these circumstances, we have been forced to look inwards. In doing so, we have realized that to weather this storm, we must build resilience from within. This requires serious commitments to reforms in critical areas to strengthen recovery and build sustainable resilience. It is essential to enhance revenue collection and ensure value for money in expenditures to strengthen macro-fiscal sustainability over the medium term. The Government, through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, is strongly committed to promoting fiscal discipline across MDAs, and implementing robust Public Financial Management (PFM) systems and sound pro-poor fiscal policies to achieve macroeconomic stability and the broader goal of inclusive growth and poverty alleviation.

227. To reinforce the country's macroeconomic and socioeconomic fundamentals, reforms are urgently needed across the board especially in the areas of digitalization and agriculture value chain development, in strong and close partnership with the private sector. The growing impacts of climate change and adverse weather events heightened the threat to food security.

228. The Government remains committed to intensifying resource mobilization to fully implement the RF-NDP 2023-2027. A draft Financing Strategy has been prepared and a Domestic Resource Mobilization (DRM) strategy will also be developed to serve as a tool

that will inform DRM policy reforms to strengthen our national resource mobilization drive. In addition, The Gambia continues to benefit from the unwavering support of development partners in tackling key challenges and advancing our national development agenda. Stronger collaboration is urgently needed to tackle our shared challenges and get on a path to recovery. The recent shocks to the global economy have brought to light the simple fact that the world has become a global village.

229. On behalf of the Government and the entire Gambian population, I will use this occasion to record our profound gratitude to all Development Partners for their resolute in supporting our development agenda. It is with deep appreciation that I mention the World Bank Group, the International Monetary Fund, the European Union, the African Development Bank Group, the Islamic Development Bank Group, UN Agencies, the African Union, the OPEC Fund for international Development, the Arab Bank for Economic Development, GIZ, IFAD, ECOWAS, the MRC Holland Foundation, the Commonwealth, the Red Cross, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Saudi Fund for Development, Kingdom of Morocco, Türkiye, the State of Kuwait and the Kuwaiti Fund, Russia, The People's Republic of China, Japan, South Korea, the Republic of France, The United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

230. I would like to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency, President Adama Barrow for his supportive leadership stance. I also thank my colleagues in Cabinet and the team of hardworking staff at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs. I am equally thankful to this august Assembly and the staff of the National Assembly under the leadership of the Speaker and the Clerk for working tirelessly to approve the 2024 budget estimates. We remain committed to sustaining this partnership. We believe that as we work together, we will jointly deliver on our joint mandate to our people.

On this note, Honourable Speaker, I beg to move.

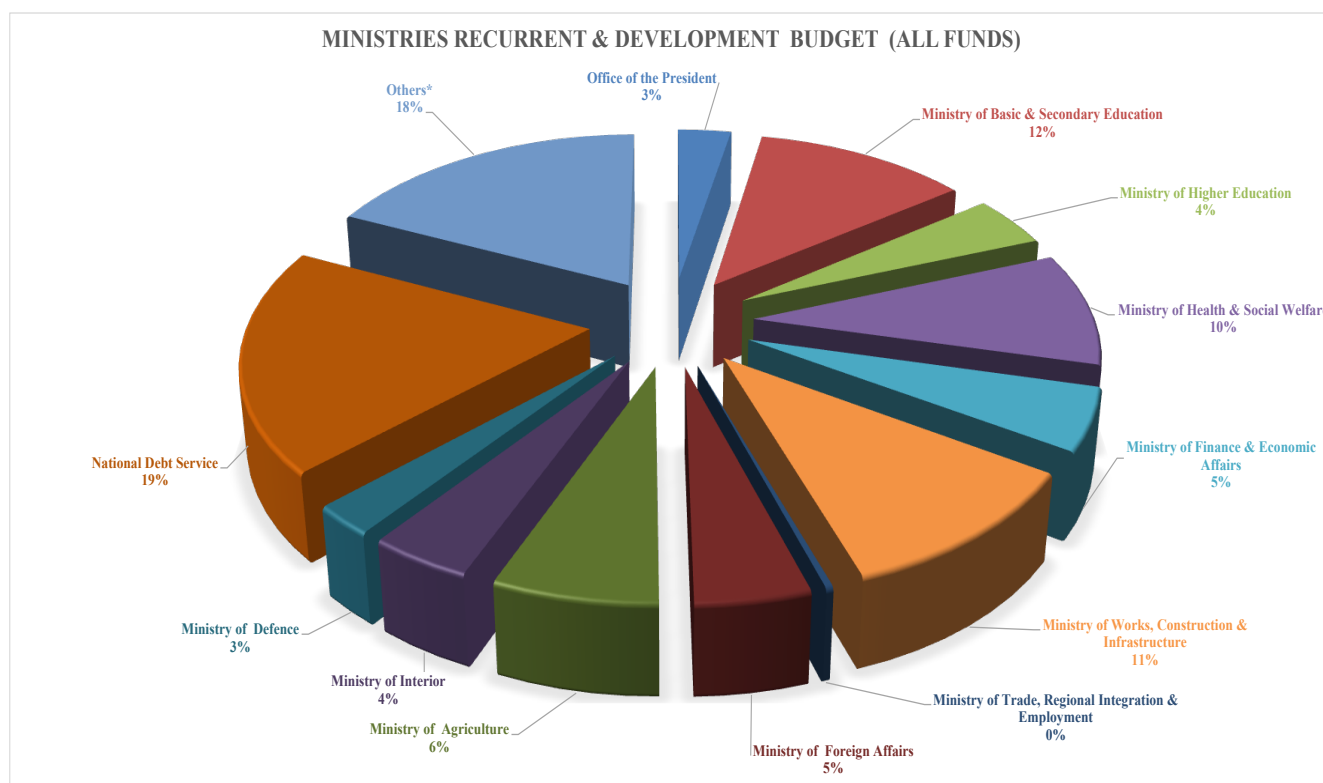
ANNEXES

ANNEX 1

SECTOR ALLOCATION FOR 2024 BUDGET

Ministries Recurrent & Development Budget (All Funds)	D' Millions	% of Total
Office of the President	1,166.22	2.96
Ministry of Basic & Secondary Education	4,662.85	11.84
Ministry of Higher Education	1,737.10	4.41
Ministry of Health & Social Welfare	3,801.93	9.65
Ministry of Finance & Economic Affairs	2,070.74	5.26
Ministry of Works, Construction & Infrastructure	4,244.58	10.78
Ministry of Trade, Regional Integration & Employment	116.42	0.30
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	1,793.40	4.55
Ministry of Agriculture	2,563.97	6.51
Ministry of Interior	1,611.40	4.09
Ministry of Defence	992.92	2.52
National Debt Service	7,509.40	19.07
Others*	7,111.07	18.06
Total	39,382.00	100.00

***Others: Ministries not listed above**

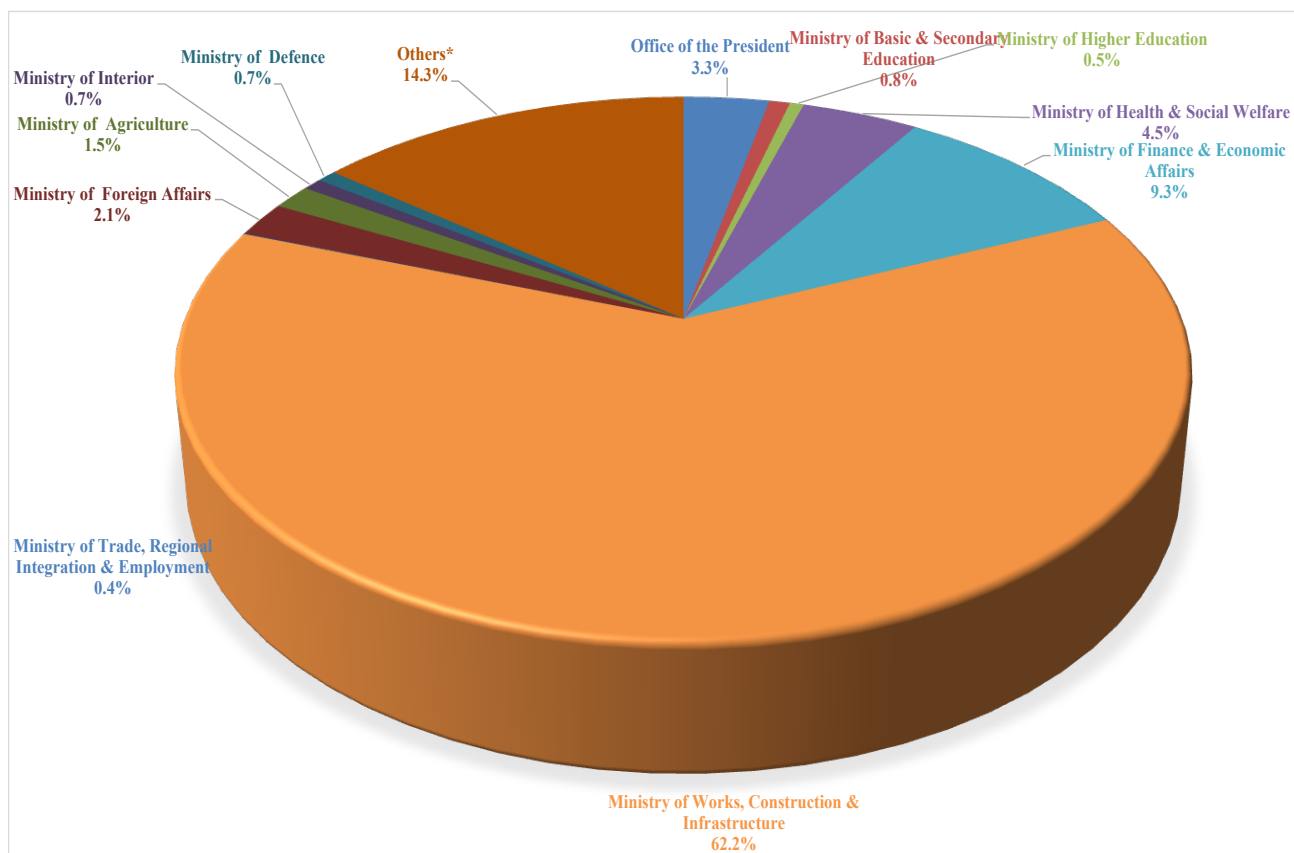


ANNEX 2

MINISTRIES DEVELOPMENT BUDGET ALLOCATION FOR 2024 (GLF)

Ministry	D' Millions	% of Total
Office of the President	135.50	3.3
Ministry of Basic & Secondary Education	32.85	0.8
Ministry of Higher Education	22.00	0.5
Ministry of Health & Social Welfare	184.70	4.5
Ministry of Finance & Economic Affairs	387.43	9.3
Ministry of Works, Construction & Infrast	2,581.88	62.2
Ministry of Trade, Regional Integration & I	2.50	0.1
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	86.40	2.1
Ministry of Agriculture	62.06	1.5
Ministry of Interior	30.00	0.7
Ministry of Defence	30.20	0.7
Others*	595.00	14.3
Total	4,150.52	100.0

**Ministries not listed above*

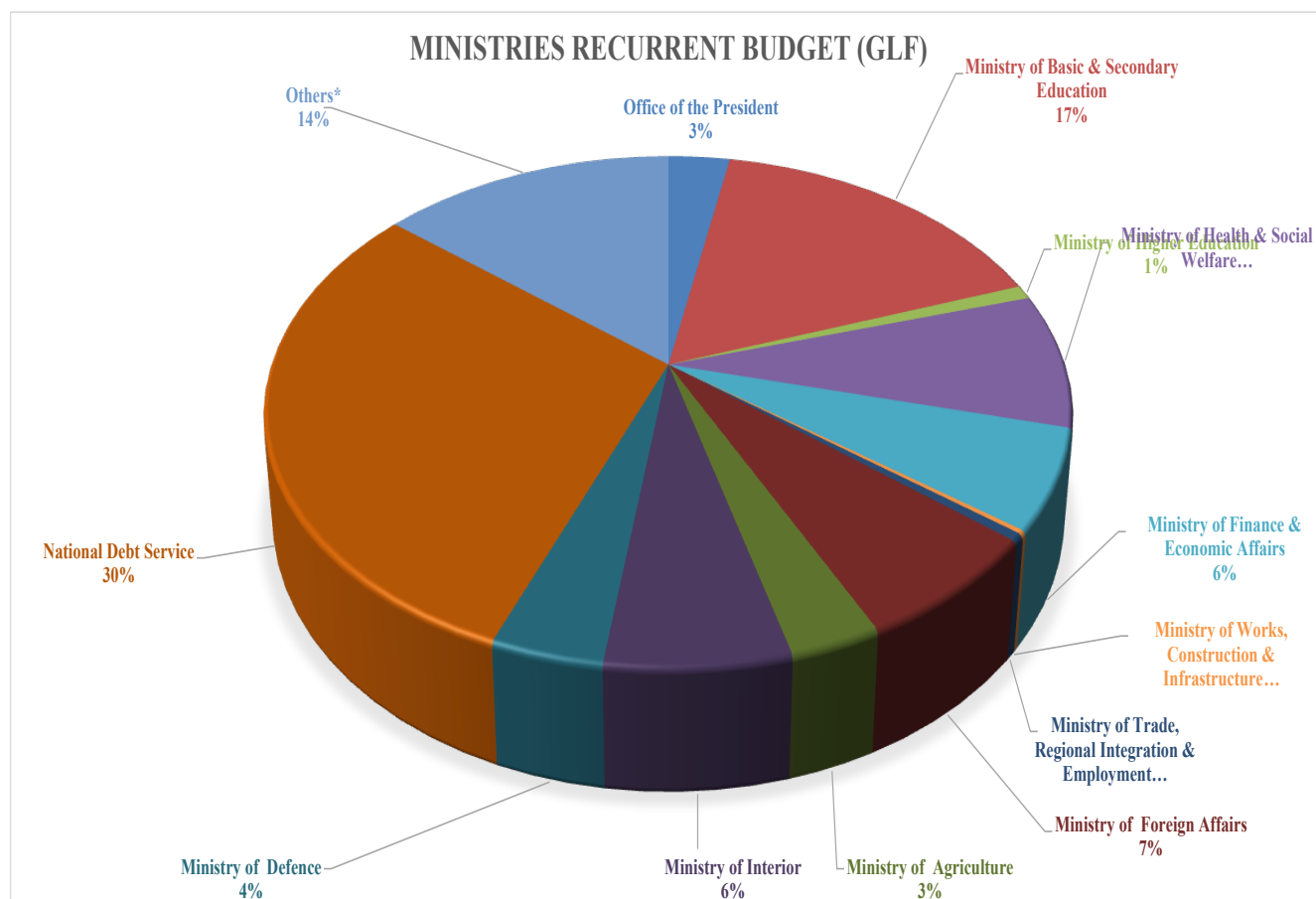


ANNEX 3

MINISTRIES RECURRENT BUDGET ALLOCATION FOR 2024 (GLF)

Ministry	D Million	% of Total
Office of the President	736.57	2.9
Ministry of Basic & Secondary Education	4,162.00	16.6
Ministry of Higher Education	218.41	0.9
Ministry of Health & Social Welfare	2,139.22	8.5
Ministry of Finance & Economic Affairs	1,580.97	6.3
Ministry of Works, Construction & Infrast	55.25	0.2
Ministry of Trade, Regional Integration & I	113.92	0.5
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	1,707.00	6.8
Ministry of Agriculture	782.75	3.1
Ministry of Interior	1,581.40	6.3
Ministry of Defence	962.68	3.8
National Debt Service	7,509.40	30.0
Others*	3,520.91	14.0
Total	25,070.48	100.0

*Ministries not listed above

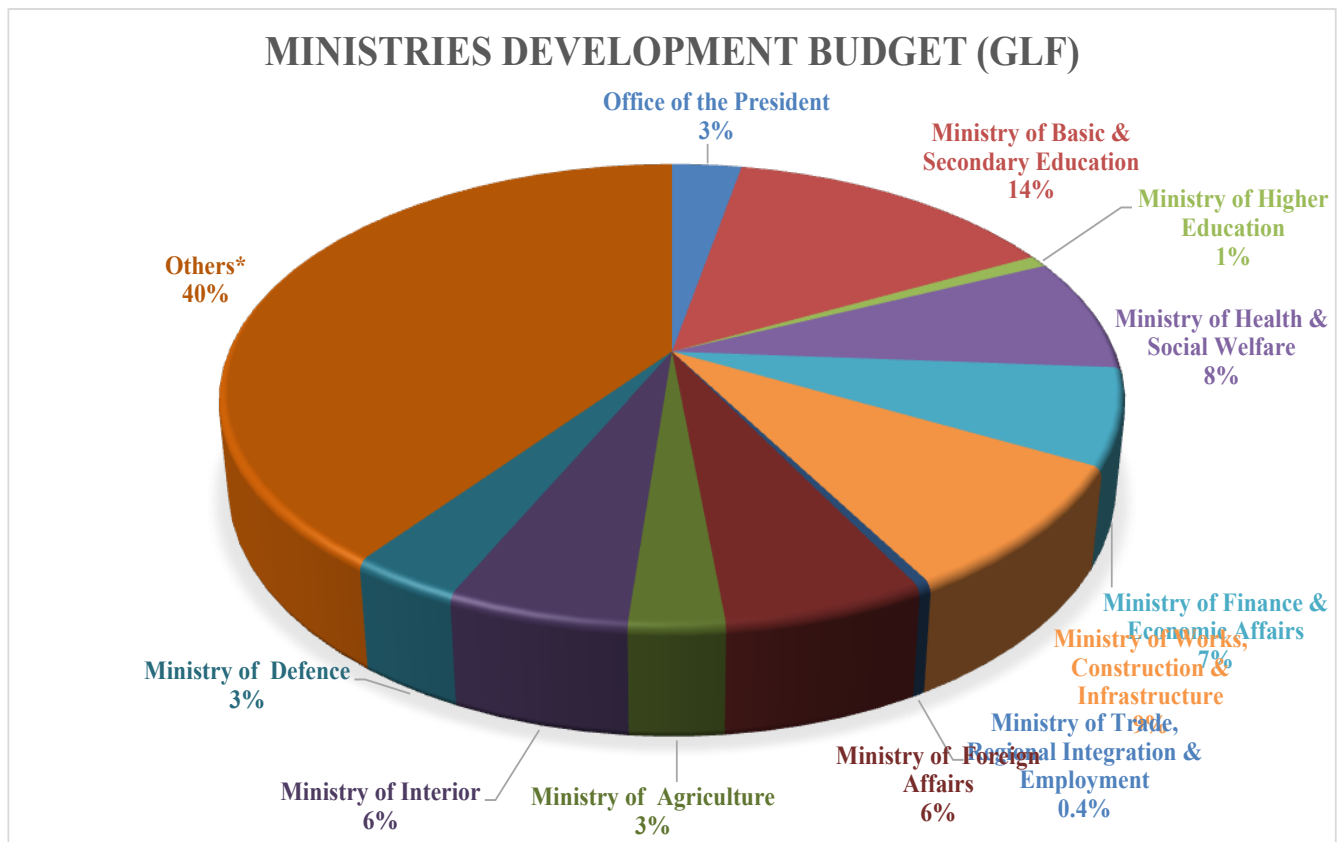


ANNEX 4

MINISTRIES BUDGET ALLOCATION FOR 2024 (GLF)

Ministries Development Budget (GLF)	D' Millions	% of Total
Office of the President	872.07	3.0%
Ministry of Basic & Secondary Education	4,194.85	14.4%
Ministry of Higher Education	240.41	0.8%
Ministry of Health & Social Welfare	2,323.92	8.0%
Ministry of Finance & Economic Affairs	1,968.41	6.7%
Ministry of Works, Construction & Infrastructure	2,637.13	9.0%
Ministry of Trade, Regional Integration & Employment	116.42	0.4%
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	1,793.40	6.1%
Ministry of Agriculture	844.81	2.9%
Ministry of Interior	1,611.40	5.5%
Ministry of Defence	992.92	3.4%
Others*	11,625.44	39.8%
Total	29,221.19	100%

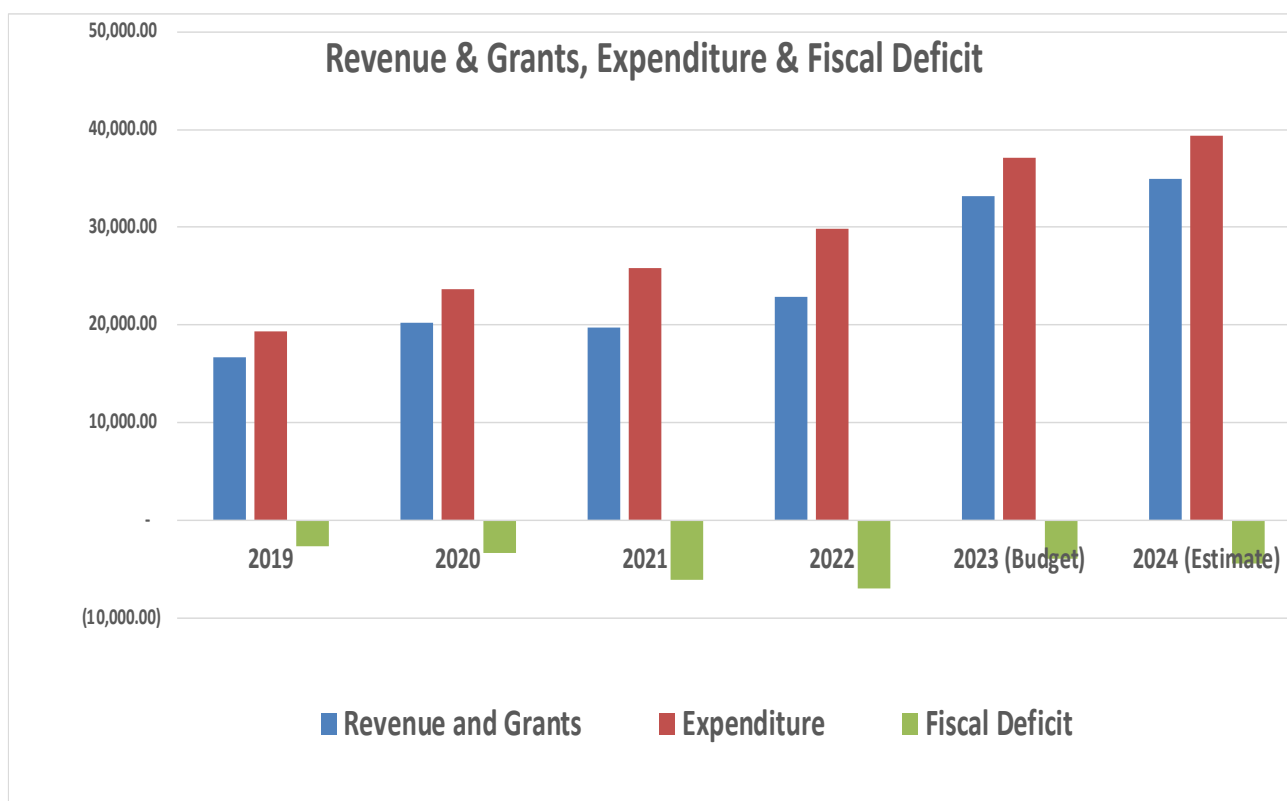
*Others: Ministries not listed above



ANNEX 5

Revenue & Grants, Expenditure and Net Lending and Fiscal Deficit 2019 - 2024

Year	Revenue and Grants	Expenditure	Fiscal Deficit
2019	16,683.00	19,320.00	(2,637.00)
2020	20,266.17	23,635.73	(3,369.56)
2021	19,761.77	25,856.15	(6,094.38)
2022	22,905.14	29,831.39	(6,926.25)
2023 (Budget)	33,217.45	37,150.62	(3,933.17)
2024 (Estimate)	34,932.74	39,382.74	(4,450.00)



ANNEX 6

PUBLIC DEBT (PERCENTAGE OF GDP)

Public Debt	2019	2020	2021 (Preli.)	2022 (Prel.)	2023 (Proj.)	2024 (Proj.)
Domestic	35.8	36.4	35.0	31.8	28.0	25.1
External	47.2	49.5	48.2	51.1	43.8	40.0

