

REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, BANJUL

**OPENING STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE SPEAKER,
FABAKARY TOMBONG JATTA AT THE TRAINING FOR FEMALE
MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

27th October 2022

@ Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara International Conference Center

- Her Excellency, the Ambassador of the United States of America
- The Governance Advisor, United Nations Development Programme
- Former Honorable Members of the National Assembly
- Resident Director of the International Republican Institute
- Honourable Members of the National Assembly here present
- Members of the Press
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I am deeply honored to be part of this important capacity building engagement for female Members of the National Assembly and Male champions of women issues with a view to enhance women's political participation. The initiative is indeed timely because despite the democratic space ushered by the leadership of President Adama Barrow, women's participation in leadership and decision making is still facing many challenges.

This is evident in the fact that the National Assembly elections conducted early this year returned only three women out of 53. It is therefore essential that the capacity of women particularly those who have broken the glass ceiling are built to ensure that they become active actors in our governance and democratization process. This convergence is therefore a step in the right direction, and I am delighted to be in your midst this morning.

Honorable Members, Ladies and Gentlemen

We should not forget that women in The Gambia constitute almost half of the total population. There is also no shortage of legislation to guarantee the rights of women and recognize the need for their empowerment to take part in decision making. Article 28 of the constitution accorded women equal rights with men. We have also manifest commitment to international conventions on the right of women as

the Convention on All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa are ratified. The 2010-2020 Gender and Women Empowerment Policy focuses on the critical areas of concern outlined by the Beijing Platform for Action, including poverty reduction, women's empowerment, education, and human rights and governance among others. A

Women's Act enacted in 2010 provides for temporary measures in favor of women in accelerating de facto equality between men and women.

However, despite constituting over half of the Gambian population and enormous legislation to promote their rights and empowerment, there remain great challenges about Gambian women's ascendancy into public political leadership positions. This needs to change. The inclusion of women in political processes is a key

element in achieving a truly inclusive democracy, and women must have the chance to exercise their political rights and participate in all decision-making. Besides, there is overwhelming evidence that women's participation in politics is beneficial to both their own communities and societies, and broader peace and stability.

Honorable Members, **Ladies and Gentlemen**

We are aware that the barriers to women's political participation in the

country include structural, economic and institutional challenges. Due to the gender stereotyping, it is usually difficult for women to choose to enter politics, run for office, women's chances of becoming party candidates and their ability to win

Therefore, as we engage each other during these two days, let us acknowledge these challenges and deal with them honestly and thoroughly since they are the critical factors that intersect to diminish the capacity of

women to partake in the making of decisions that affect their lives

Equally, to overcome the gap between the legal and institutional frameworks partnerships between the state, political parties and civil society is essential as it can play an important role in mobilizing for further change.

Such partnerships can enhance knowledge sharing and effective joint planning and implementation of strategies between government, political and public offices and

representatives of civil society
organizations working for gender
equality and empowerment.

Moreover, alliances and networking
for women's political participation can
provide knowledge and solidarity as
well as provide for accountability to
promote gender responsive change.

Strengthening of state civil society
networks through exchange and
dissemination of good practices and
lessons is therefore critical.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Before I take my seat, allow me to commend the International Republican Institute (IRI) for this great initiative. I also wish to thank the former Honorable Members of the National Assembly here present for agreeing to be part of this noble initiative. You came here because you believe in the right of women to political participation and capacity building as the beginning of the process to realize that objective. I am hopeful at the end of the day, the training would

engender resolutions and recommendation which all concern stakeholders would follow up to ensure that we create a real difference regarding women's political participation not only for the forthcoming local government elections but in the overall governance and democratization process of the country.

On that note, I wish to declare this forum opened and wish you successful deliberations.

