

**ADDRESS BY**

**H. E. ALHAJI DR. YAHYA A.J.J JAMMEH  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA**

**AT THE HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE**

**ON**

**WORLD FOOD SECURITY:  
THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND  
BIOENERGY;**

**ROME ITALY**

**JUNE 3-5, 2008**

- **Your Excellencies, Presidents, Prime Ministers and Royal Highnesses**
- **Your Excellency, Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General, the United Nations**
- **Heads of UN organizations and Agencies**
- **Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps**
- **Distinguished Heads and Representatives of Other International Organizations**
- **Distinguished Heads and Representatives of National and International NGOs**
- **Representatives of Farmer Groups and Platforms**
- **Representatives of Private Sector Organizations**
- **Members of the Press and Media**
- **Distinguished Guests**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen.**

**I have the singular honour to address this important gathering on the challenges of climate change and bio-energy on global food security, on behalf of the President of the Republic of The Gambia, Alhaji Dr. Yahya A J J Jammeh who extends his apologies for not being able to attend due to unavoidable circumstances.**

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

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Before I proceed, permit me Mr. Chairman, to express, on my own behalf and on behalf of my delegation, our sincere gratitude to the FAO through the Director General, Dr. Jacques Diouf, for organising this very important global conference on food security. I also wish to extend similar words of gratitude to the Government and people of Italy for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to my delegation since our arrival in this beautiful city of Rome.

Mr. Chairman

Excellencies, Distinguished colleagues

This Conference is indeed symbolic of FAO's continuing engagement with all member countries in their efforts to promote food security at international, regional and country levels.

This meeting has also come in good time, as the price of food continues to soar and is thereby sending

**shockwaves within the international community. Under the circumstances, our coming here clearly demonstrates our collective resolve to take immediate remedial measures against rising food prices.**

**STAND** Mr. chairman, it is clear that without action, millions of lives would be at added risks of hunger and malnutrition. Yet for this growing number, our voice and call to action brings them hope about the coming of a change that would bring about sustainable improvements in their lives. As we gather here today therefore, to discuss the food security agenda amidst threats of rising prices, climate change and global warming, let us be resolute in our stance and collaborate to further broaden consultations towards urgently restoring global confidence in global food security.

**Mr. Chairman**

**I join the rest of the world to advocate for immediate action to address the growing threats of climate change. Increasingly, climate change is inimical to global ecological balance and biodiversity. It is warming the world to levels that, as we now see, is undermining our efforts to produce more food. Our capacity to produce and make food available in sufficiently abundant quantities now and for the future generation is seriously being eroded as we grapple with the effects of climate change on seed and crop availability, as well as on soil conditions.**

**We in the poorer parts of the world, are uneasy with these threats. We are witnessing unprecedented levels of global warming, that is causing severe floods and depleting our forest cover. The phenomenon is real and a true challenge to food production everywhere. Through climate change, rains have become erratic,**

*Spid* leading to significant reduction in crop yield in our sub-region as is the case in most parts of the world.

**Mr. Chairman**

**As a member of the international community, The Gambia is not left out of the threats of climate change. We have in the past, seen the worst effects happening on our coastal areas with lives and properties at risk of being completely lost to the waves. We have felt, and continue to feel the impact of climate change in poor soil and seed quality as well as in the pattern of rain that has become erratic and irregular for the farming community. The cumulative effect is that our food production capabilities continue to be eroded.**

**Mr. Chairman**

**While the threats of food insecurity continue to hang around us, <sup>the</sup> my Government is doing everything possible**

*to threaten  
5 Our past achievements  
to hang in the  
the ways*

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to mitigate <sup>the</sup> negative impact <sup>of food insecurity</sup> on <sup>the most</sup> vulnerable <sup>for</sup> communities.

**not to give up. We are taking every possible step within our abilities to boost local food production and enhance the prospects for increased agricultural productivity. In this direction, and with the support of our donors, the Government has lined up a wide range of programmes that require support in the provision of vital agricultural inputs such as seeds, machinery, fertilizers as well as provide irrigation facilities to Gambian farmers. Our policy is built around my Government's desire to make agriculture in The Gambia less dependent on rainfall but rather deepening the irrigation systems using both the river Gambia and also our vast underground water resources so as to have a continuous all-year round system of farming and harvesting of food and agricultural produce.**

**Mr. Chairman,**

*Step* **Mindful of the fact that The Gambia's economic prosperity to a great extent depends on how well we**

*slow*  
**manage agriculture and our forest resources as more than 70% of our population is engaged in agriculture. It is also the largest employer of our women folk and be ensuring its development and sustainability we are directly improving rural household food security and incomes and thereby stemming the high rural-urban ~~irrigation~~. Migration.**

**I would like to express our thanks and appreciation to the FAO and other partners that are here present for their continued collaboration in the forms of technical assistance and funding provided to achieve sustainable food security and agricultural development.**

**We have received FAO support particularly in the preparation of the country's Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy and Action Plan, preparation of the Medium Term Plan for agriculture development, and the National Seed Policy. Also worthy of mention is the support provided in the implementation of various**



**telefood programmes and a special programme in supporting food security.**

*We therefore, acknowledge and commend the donors and multilateral funding institutions for the financial commitments made to support poor and vulnerable countries. We hope these commitments*

**Mr. Chairman** *will come into fruition sooner rather than late.* **Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen** *we also look forward*

*to developing strategic alliances not just for realisation of sustainable food security and poverty reduction*

**For our part, I would like to take this opportunity to assure the international community of The Gambia's open-door policy of forging beneficial partnerships with all the relevant organisations involved in food security systems support.**

**I wish to reiterate that the challenge for us as world leaders is to ensure that we do not leave here with empty promises. I therefore urge this august assembly to live up to the declarations and commitments emanating from this Conference. This is especially important as we begin the countdown to the 2015**

**deadline set for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In these trying times, we cannot afford to be complacent. We owe it to ourselves and to posterity by making sure that our actions translate into practical results. This way, we would be contributing to poverty reduction and the improvement of social indicators for the world's poor that we represent here today.**

**I THANK YOU ALL AND MAY ALLAH BLESS US ALL**