

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE GAMBIA

STATEMENT OF THE HON. SPEAKER AT THE TWO-DAY FORUM FOR PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR GLOBAL ACTION ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN PREVENTING THE PROLIFERATION OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION. HELD AT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AUDITORIUM, BANJUL

16TH MAY, 2019

- Her Excellency, British High Commissioner to The Gambia
- His Excellency, Head of EU Delegation to The Gambia
- Her Excellency, UN Resident Coordinator
- Chairperson and Members of the Defence Committee
- Our Colleagues, Hon, Parliamentarians for Global Action
- Members of the Press

Good Morning to you all,

It is indeed an honour to grace the opening of this International Parliamentary Convergence on the Role of Women Parliamentarians in preventing the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. We wish to express our profound appreciation to the Parliamentarians for Global Action for choosing to hold this important seminar in The Gambia. Over the next two days, you will all realise that this country is the embodiment of the sub theme of this Convergence- Gender and Peace. Not only are we Africa's most peaceful country, we have also made tremendous strides in ensuring women participating at all levels of decision though great challenges still persist.

This conference and its theme is an indication that African Parliamentarians are increasingly recognising the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and are stressing the importance of their equal participation, full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regards to conflict prevention and resolution

Hon. Members, Ladies and Gentlemen

Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) non-proliferation efforts are an important part of preventing conflict and achieving international peace and security. Nuclear weapons proliferation and the insecurity of nuclear weapons-related materials constitute a multifaceted problem that requires a multifactorial solution, and gender integration can be one of these factors.

Managing nuclear threats requires a multifaceted, holistic approach to address the full spectrum of human, animal, plant, and environmental health risks. Bringing a diverse group of people to the table, including women, ensures that a range of different experiences and perspectives are heard.

It should not be forgotten that the United Nations (UN) has recognized that women can play an important role in preventing and resolving conflicts and since 2000 has taken deliberate action to integrate women into the security realm.

The commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as well as those contained in the outcome document of the twenty-third Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the twenty-first century" in particular those concerning women and armed conflict, further complement the efforts of the UN.

However, while international commitment has been demonstrated to amplifying the critical role women can play in conflict prevention and mitigation, currently there is no particular emphasis on promoting the participation of women in the fields of arms control, disarmament and WMD non-proliferation.

In international security fora, statistics do show sustained progress toward gender-balanced participation. However, they also paint a clear picture of just how far there is to go to achieve

gender integration. Correcting the current gender imbalance is a worthwhile goal first and foremost because it is a matter of justice.

International security and WMD non-proliferation are issues that concern everyone, and the institutions that manage these risks need to be reflective of society as a whole. Moreover, women add important value to security by leveraging women's networks and building bridges across divided communities. Until women everywhere have the chance to participate equally in such, the international security and WMD non-proliferation fields will be missing an important voice.

Hon. Members, Ladies and Gentlemen

To conclude, I wish to reiterate that bringing gender perspectives to the centre of attention in discussions is important, not only for securing human rights and social justice for both women and men, but also for ensuring the achievement of universal peace and security. Success in non-proliferation of WMD requires that attention is given to all stakeholders, and that their knowledge, experiences, perceptions of security or threats to security, priorities and needs will influence activities on the ground.

I will therefore encourage you to ensure that these two days become very engaging and participatory so that the issues that diminish the capacity of women in taking leading roles for the advancement of society in general are thoroughly discussed and solutions proffered.

On that note, I have the honour to declare this International Parliamentary Convergence on the Role of Women Parliamentarians in preventing the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction officially opened.