

**Your Excellency, Sheikh, Professor,  
Dr. Alh. Yayah A.J.J. Jammeh  
President of the Republic of The Gambia  
Your Excellency, Aja Isatou Njie Saidy  
Vice President of the Republic of The Gambia  
Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly  
My Lord, the Chief Justice  
Honourable Ministers  
Secretary General and Head of the Civil Service  
Honourable National Assembly Members  
Your Excellencies Members of the Diplomatic and  
Consular Corps  
Venerable Religious Leaders  
Paramount Chief and Sefolu here present  
Representatives of Political Parties  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen  
All Protocols respectfully observed**

**The establishment of an Independent Electoral Commission in The Gambia was a great leap forward. The conduct of such elections was not a new phenomenon. Even in colonial times, elections to a legislative council were conducted through restricted franchise. The first general election on universal adult suffrage was held in 1962, after much pressure for the independence of the colony, by**

**political activists. The party that won, in that election, the majority of the seats in the then House of Representatives, formed the government that led the country to independence three years later. Thereafter, general elections have been conducted in this country every five years.**

**Your Excellency**

**Distinguished Guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

**The conduct of all those elections, however, was vested in the Ministry of Local Government, headed by a minister appointed by the President. The Returning Officers were the Commissioners of the respective administrative areas, also appointed by the President, and under the direction of the Minister of Local Government. The Supervisor of elections was the Permanent Secretary who owed his allegiance to both the Minister and the President, the leader of the ruling party.**

**This type of set up encouraged the perpetuation of official positions, as well as the expediency of ensuring that the President, on whom appointments depended, was re-elected into office. The situation was even more compounded by the fact that the**

**Ministers themselves sought election in the same general election they were organizing.**

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**The advent of the Second Republic heralded the birth of the Provisional Independent Electoral Commission, charged with the administration of Elections, Registration of voters and the demarcation of Electoral Boundaries, among other things. The PIEC fitted harmoniously in a democratic transition which has been acknowledged to be exemplary. Its arbitration of elections did not raise any serious challenges and the Gambian politicians all seem to have acknowledged it.**

**The regulatory framework for the conduct of elections during the transition period was provided by the Decree (No. 62), the Provisional Independent Electoral Commission Decree, the Elections Decree (No. 78) and the Political Activities Resumption Decree (No. 89). The Commission in exercising its powers under Sections (93), (127) and (134) of the Elections Decree issued a number of regulations that formed an integral part of the regulatory framework.**

**These were the Referendum Regulations 1996, The Media Rules 1996 as amended, the Code on Election Campaign Ethics, the Qualification and Disqualification Regulations, Rules for Observers and the Rules for Journalist.**

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**Organizing free and fair multi-party elections is an expensive activity. The Government of The Gambia has always provided the IEC with the needed resources to conduct its activities.**

**International assistance to the IEC in the conduct of elections came in many forms such as expertise and materials. Prior to the creation of the IEC, the Government had reached an agreement with international agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), European Union (EU) and the Department for Development Support and Management Services (DDSMS) on the formulation of an umbrella project to channel support to the electoral process.**

**In the past, the IEC had gone through two rounds of electoral cycles in 2001/2002 and 2006/2007**

**respectively comprising of a Presidential, National Assembly and Local Government Elections that were preceded by a Referendum, Presidential and National Assembly Elections in 1996/1997 that ushered in the Second Republic conducted by the then PIEC.**

**In its drive to deliver another credible, free, fair and transparent electoral cycle 2011 – 2013, the IEC has come up with a budgeted programme of activities that will first see the conduct of a general digital registration of voters in the first quarter of 2011. The 2011 Presidential Election will be held in the last quarter of 2011. The first quarter of 2012 will witness the conduct of the National Assembly Elections and the Local Government Elections are scheduled in early 2013.**

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**The significance of international assistance to the electoral process during the transition period was a decisive contribution to The Gambia's return to democracy. It helped to lay important foundation stones for the continued building of the Gambian democratic edifice.**

**In the case of technical implementation, capacity was provided in support of the Commission's effort in delivering quality elections to the Gambian people. The work of the international technical assistance team also prepared the ground for the subsequent elections through the building of local capacity in this very important area.**

**Following the setting up of the PIEC and its temporary housing at State House, the AFPRC Government allotted a building at No 7 Kairaba Avenue for its Headquarters. The building had formerly been used for residential purposes; hence some modifications were made prior to and during, occupation by the Commission.**

**It is based on this premise that the Commission found it fitting to relocate its premises based on the scope of its operations and the creation of a conducive working environment which is an inevitable requirement to enhance the productivity of its staff.**

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**The Government of The Gambia in meeting its obligation towards enhancing the electoral processes in this country allocated a piece of land to the IEC and further provided the necessary financial resources which resulted to the building of this magnificent office complex referred to as The Election House which we are about to officially opened. The total cost of this complex is D12,216,554.17 (Twelve million, Two hundred and sixteen thousand, five hundred and fifty-four Dalasis, seventeen bututs) whilst D2,500,000 (Two million, five hundred thousand Dalasis) was spent on the Banjul Regional Office.**

**Your Excellency Sir  
Distinguished Guest  
Ladies and Gentlemen**

**The IEC lost one of its Commissioners, Imam Alhagie Sajar Fatty and one of its Electoral Officers, Mr Mawdou Susso in March and April 2010 respectively. The unfortunate demises of Imam Sarjar Fatty and Mawdou Susso have created big vacuum in the IEC. Their contributions in the IEC were enormous and they were helpful at all times. We therefore cannot but fervently pray to Allah, the Almighty, to grant their souls eternal rest in Janna.**

**Finally the Commission Members and the Staff of the IEC wish to thank government for its continuing support to the strengthening of the Electoral Process in this country. The Commission would still solicit from government to provide support in the area of Institutional and Capacity Building.**

**Our gratitude also goes to the consultant Mr. Musa Sallah of Horizon Technical Services and the contractor of this project Mr Pa Ebrima Ndure of Jimbill Construction for a job well done. I also wish to register my personal appreciation to the Task Force Members for effectively coordinating all the arrangements leading to this day. Special thanks go to the Commission Members and the IEC staff.**

**May God, the Almighty shower his blessing on this great nation of ours and its people. On that note, I now have the singular honour to call upon His Excellency Sheikh Professor Alhagie Dr. Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh to deliver his statement. Your Excellency.**

**I Thank you all.**