



## SENEGAL – GAMBIA - GUINEA BISSAU WOMEN'S FORUM

### PRESS STATEMENT

Concerned about the increasing threats of uncertainty and possible insecurity and instability in The Islamic Republic of The Gambia, six mediators were delegated by The Senegal, Gambia and Guinea Bissau Women's Forum for Peace and Security to make an initial working visit to The Islamic Republic of The Gambia from the 3-4 January, 2017.

The delegation from Guinea Bissau and Senegal was hosted by the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS) which coordinates the Gender Action Team (GAT), a national women's lobby and advocacy group of 22 organisations and associations, established in 2004 and working on gender and women's issues in The Gambia.

The purpose of this visit was to undertake a solidarity mission to The Islamic Republic of The Gambia and to explore possibilities for the contribution of women mediators in the search for a peaceful and non-violent solution to the ongoing negotiations and mediation to resolve the current situation.

Before their arrival, request letters for a courtesy call were dispatched to the Office of the President of the Islamic Republic of The Gambia, His Excellency, Alhaji, Dr. Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh, Babili Mansa as well as to the President-elect, Mr. Adama Barrow. An acknowledgement and response was received from the latter. The delegation, up to the time of writing this statement, is yet to hear from the Office of the President.

Consequently, the six visiting mediators led by the Executive Director of ACDHRS accompanied by some GAT members paid a courtesy call on the President elect, Mr. Adama Barrow on 4<sup>th</sup> January, 2017. While congratulating Mr. Barrow on his recent election success and that of the Coalition for Change, the delegation extended their appreciation for the opportunity and time granted them.

Whereas they raised their concerns at the imminent danger of conflict in the country, they urged him and his team to promote and ensure that the peace and stability for which The Gambia is associated with is preserved. The mediators commended the maturity and restraint demonstrated so far and implored him to jealously guard the safety, security and protection of its citizens to guarantee a tranquil and harmonious Gambia. They insisted that the Constitution and the will of the people of this country reigns supreme.

Finally, the visiting women mediators shared a copy of the Declaration of The Women's Forum made on 27<sup>th</sup> December 2016, calling for a peaceful resolution of the political crisis and reiterated their availability and willingness to offer their expertise and time in the quest for a peaceful resolution to the current challenges. (The full text of their statement as well as the Declaration is available at ACDHRS).

President-elect Barrow appreciated the delegation for the visit, which he referred to as 'very important'. He affirmed that women are the most affected in situations of instability and commended them for the role they are playing. He thanked the visiting mediators and asserted that women, as citizens, have a stake in peace making and peace building.

A press conference was held at the ACDHRS immediately after this audience.

BANJUL, 4<sup>th</sup> January, 2017