

## **CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP ON THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2017- 2020)**

### **A: INTRODUCTION:**

Following a review (mid-term) of the Program for Accelerated Growth and Employment (PAGE), and the completion of the cycle of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a report was produced detailing the main findings of the mid- term review, the challenges, and possible ways forward. The report also highlighted some of the main achievements of the Millennium Development Goals initiative, as well as the pitfalls.

This convergence was organized by the Ministry of Finance, in collaboration with the Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO), to create a forum with civil society organizations to validate the report produced from the review of the PAGE. The forum was also used to solicit the views of CSOs regarding key national development priorities, as well as the development of a National Development Plan – 2017-2020.

As a key player in the Gambian civil society/NGO landscape, the Alliance for Democracy in Africa (ADA) was invited to attend and actively participate in this one day validation exercise together with other CSO /NGO stakeholders.

### **B: OBJECTIVES:**

The main objectives of this one-day synergy are outlined as follows:

- Share the findings of the PAGE mid-term review with development stakeholders
- Draw key lessons from the implementation of the plan
- Suggest modifications and adaptations to the outstanding activities of the plan to make them more realistic and responsive to the need of the Gambian people
- Advance National Development priorities that will constitute Sustainable Development Goals
- Recommend possible ways forward in the national quest for sustainable development.

### **C: WORKSHOP DELIBERATIONS:**

#### **1: MAIN FINDINGS OF THE PAGE MID-TERM REVIEW**

A presentation of the main findings of the PAGE mid-term review was done by officials from the Ministry of Finance, and the following constitutes the main points:

- That some of the targets set were very unrealistic, especially within the prevailing macro, and micro economic situation of the Gambian economy

- The Gambian labor force has chronic problems with low skills and this is affecting the achievement of some key targets
- Some of the institutions that should be responsible for implementing the plan are very weak, hence achieving targets at the planned dates is difficult
- The Gambian economy is essentially tax based, and this seriously affects the economy's competitiveness and effectiveness to be able to support the achievement of planned targets
- Problems with international partners (IMF, the Commonwealth) have also hampered the achievement of some planned targets
- Whereas access to education and some other indicators such as relevance have significantly improved, a lot of work still needs to be done with quality, which is still very much to be desired
- The PAGE plan lacked the visibility that it so much deserves as a national document of so much significance
- The decentralized local government structures have been inadequately utilized
- Lack of an Agricultural Development Bank
- Inadequate engagement of the private sector, as well as civil society organizations.

The workshop then went into the session on the presentation of the MDGs and Sustainable Development Goals, and the following constitutes the main findings of this session.

## **2: MAIN FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MILLENIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

- That, generally speaking, the Gambia as a country has made significant strides in achievement of some key targets - maternal mortality, access to education, immunization coverage.
- That a lot needs to be done in some areas, such as some gender issues, as well as poverty prevalence
- That the Sustainable Development Goals initiative should learn from the mistakes of the Millennium Development Goals
- That issues of inclusiveness should have been given more priority
- That the implementation of the plan was beset with some institutional challenges
- That instead of merely looking and tackling the symptoms of some national challenges, a more holistic approach was required looking at the complex web of the root causes of these challenges.
- An institutional arrangement comprising all the key stakeholders should have been constituted to facilitate implementation of the plan.
- That there was a degree of imposition, especially the prioritization of some targets from outside partners.

### **3: RECOMMENDATIONS/WAY FORWARD**

The convergence then proceeded to the third session, which effectively looked at the recommendations as a way forward in the development of the current National Development Plan (NDP). The following ideas were advanced by the civil society organizations as very vital in the development of this important national document.

- That all stakeholders should be adequately consulted to give the document that much needed national character
- That capacity building should be given priority especially by key institutions responsible for the implementation of the plan
- Careful and responsive arrangements should be crafted with key international development partners
- A realistically practical institutional arrangement should be devised to be charged with the participatory implementation of the plan
- An effective strategy should be rolled out for the effective visibility of the plan nationally and internationally
- Priority should be given to the sustainable creation of employment especially for the youth
- The targets to be set should not be driven by political considerations, but by what is practically feasible within the prevailing socio-economic realities of the country
- Efforts to be intensified for the setting up of an Agricultural Development Bank
- A review of the country's tax regime to make it more investor friendly, and more competitive in both regional and global contexts.
- Concrete strategies should be devised for the effective involvement of both the private sector and civil society organizations in the implementation of the plan.

At the conclusion of the deliberations of the various sessions, the civil society organizations/NGOs reassured officials from both the Ministry of Finance, and the Personnel management office, of the readiness and willingness of NGOs to work hand in glove with the government in the achievement of the various national targets that have been set within the stipulated time periods. The NGO community also committed themselves to move this agenda forward by organizing another forum to further discuss the various agreed action points at an appropriate date to be shared with all the stakeholders.