

SPEECH BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF MOHERST, ON THE STAKEHOLDERS
WORKSHOP ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GAMBIA RESEARCH AND EDUCATION
NETWORK (GAMREN),

4 SEPTEMBER 2023 BAKADAJI HOTEL

Greetings,

Honourable Ministers

The Permanent Secretary, MoHERST

Distinguished Personalities

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning to you All

It is my honour and privilege to welcome you to this two-day stakeholder workshop on establishing a Gambia Research and Education Network (GAMREN). Establishing a GAMREN sits positively in the Government of The Gambia's development drive towards providing education and research services to Gambians to enhance their capacities towards academic and research excellence and to acquire knowledge of innovative breakthroughs and their utilisation for sustained socio-economic development.

In line with the MoHERST Strategic Plan (2021 – 2025), there is a deliberate policy drive to provide computers, e-libraries & e-journals, video conferencing, internet connectivity, and renewable energy services to training and research institutions. This

GAMREN project is a manifestation that the government, through the help of its partners, is on track.

As a background, a National Research and Education Network (NREN) is a specialised network infrastructure designed to provide high-speed and reliable network connectivity to academic and research institutions within a particular country or region. These are established mainly to support the needs of the research, education, and innovation communities, enabling them to collaborate, share resources and conduct data-intensive research and high-performance computing activities.

In Africa, the emergence of NRENs proved to be a promising option for universities, research Institutions and communities as digital technologies now provide high-speed broadband connectivity creating opportunities for access to resources, advanced research, collaborative research, and networking in an efficient manner.

In The Gambia, the need to leverage these opportunities cannot be overstated, as currently, most of our education, research institutions and communities are yet to fully integrate ICTs in collaborative research, teaching, learning, knowledge sharing and innovations. The lack of efficient connectivity and institutional research collaboration contributed to slow progress in national research outputs. However, the establishment the GAMREN will reverse this situation and provide opportunities for these institutions to have access to connectivity and resource sharing. Specifically, the ACE fibre LTE 10 percent for educational services will be leveraged for lighting and connecting the GAMREN hubs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Realising the urgent need and based on the ongoing conversation with counterpart in the sub-region, The Gambia government decided to institute measures to establish a National Research and Education Network (GAMREN) in the country.

The GAMREN will serve as a platform to foster research, collaboration, and innovation in the country. Education and research communities will be able innovate, share, facilitate open and distance learning opportunities, create repository for large volumes of research data and sustainable research output to attract grants to mention a few.

Specifically, the GAMREN benefits include High Speed Connectivity; Collaboration; Resource Sharing; Support for Research; Access to online resources; Innovation and Education; Security and Privacy; Global connectivity; and Reduced Latency Support.

The establishment of the GAMREN is being supported by the World Bank and coordinated by my Ministry in close collaboration with the Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy (MoCDE). At the technical level, the University of The Gambia has been identified as the Hosting Ground and the Technical Hub of the Project and will connect other training and research institutions in The Gambia.

Already a technical team has been established, chaired by the Permanent Secretary (MOHERST), and includes officials from MoHERST, MoCDE, UTG, and other institutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In facilitating the implementation process, GAMREN through UTG has secured membership with the West and Central Africa Research and Education Network (WACREN).

Additionally, the stakeholders' workshop convened today is one of the milestones of the implementation phase of the project. The two-day workshop is intended to update all stakeholders on the role and objective of GAMREN and the way forward. The convergence will also serve as platform to assess and evaluate the state of existing infrastructure of education and research institutions in the country.

To this end, experts from WACREN and GARNET will guide and support the entire process of implementation from infrastructure, services, human capital need, and sustainable financing of the Project. The outcomes and results from this important workshop will help the experts to determine what model is suitable for The Gambia and, by extension, will help address the identified gaps.

In conclusion, allow me to express appreciation to the World Bank, WACREN, GARNET, and to the local technical team for all the input in setting the GAMREN agenda as well as hosting such an important workshop. I wish to declare this stakeholder workshop on the establishment of the Gambia Education and Research Network (GAMREN) officially open.

I thank you all for the kind attention.