



Hon. Members
National Assembly
Banjul

11 August 2020

Dear Hon. Members,

A Call to Duty in the Face of National Disaster

Yesterday, 10th August 2020, the Gambia registered over 1000 COVID 19 infections with more than 20 deaths. Last week, August 3, the infection rate was 671 cases and 14 deaths. A week before that, i.e. July 27, the rate of infection stood at 326 and 8 deaths. What this trend indicates is that COVID 19 is spreading in the Gambia exponentially. This abodes nothing but a national disaster for which each and every citizen of The Gambia must re-commit themselves to confront this virus in a more proactive, innovative, effective and efficient manner.

Hon. Members, it is in light of the contagion effect, and infection explosion, about **1000 Gambians, plus seven prominent CSOs in and outside of the country**, hereby kindly submit this urgent appeal to you for immediate action. We are calling on the National Assembly Members to request for an urgent convening of an extraordinary session of the full house of the Assembly through **Section 98 subsection 1(a)(ii) of the Constitution and Section 11(3)(c) of the Standing Orders**. The country is in crises, and the National Assembly must take urgent steps and perform its oversight duties by bringing order to a fragmented and dangerous situation, where people are needlessly dying, due to the ineffective, and poor COVID-19 response strategy employed by the Executive. We strongly hold that the Gambia Government is not providing the necessary and quality leadership and management for the effective and efficient containment of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Gambia in a transparent and accountable manner. The National Assembly must therefore, request that the Executive apply principles and practice of accountability, efficiency, effectiveness and transparency as to the management of the COVID-19 response.

In essence, we wish appeal for an urgent sitting of the National Assembly to address the following:

1. To request that the Head of State and President of the Republic, Adama Barrow, address the National Assembly on the current health disaster the country faces;
2. To inquire into the reasons and circumstances of the poor quality of leadership from the President and the Cabinet in the fight against COVID 19;
3. To appraise the state of COVID 19 prevalence in The Gambia and determine what steps are required to contain it;
4. To determine if the current response by the Ministry of Health and other sectors is adequate or not to contain COVID 19;
5. To demand transparency and accountability for the financial and material resources approved by the National Assembly, to combat COVID-19, and allocated to various sectors by the Ministry of Finance.
6. To determine if these resources were efficiently, effectively and judiciously utilized;
7. To determine the next steps that the National Assembly should take to ensure that there is effective and efficient response from the Government in the fight against COVID 19.



We are concerned by the unresponsiveness of the Executive arm of the State. The lack of leadership to steer a response that inspires confidence is worrying. At a time when the nation should be looking up to the President of the Republic for leadership, we found him grossly wanting as he remains absent and silent. Furthermore, we have noted that huge amount of financial resources provided to the Government from local and international sources as well as generous donations of health related materials from diverse sources. However, it is evident that the purpose and utility for which these colossal resources were meant, has not been attained, nor benefited their intended targets. Personal Protection Equipment (PPEs) that should be available to frontline workers that need them most to save lives, and help medicate the sick, have been denied such supplies. The provision of allowances to frontline workers are not fully paid; while testing services are severely hampered by lack of constant supply of electricity at the National Public Health Laboratory. In addition, we have recorded many instances where individuals in need of testing, or seeking medical attention do not receive these services on time, while quarantine centers are a mired by poor services.

Hon. Members, what the above scenario indicates is that there is limited efficiency and effectiveness in the leadership and management of the Government response to COVID-19. These issues and concerns are coming against the backdrop of billions of dalasi that have already been disbursed to the Government, under your approval.

We, the citizens, therefore strongly hold that the urgent need for transparency and accountability is long overdue, to make the Government deliver as it should. In this regard, the foremost national institution with the right authority and powers to demand accountability and transparency from the Executive are Honorable Members, through the august body you belong, and with power of the people, you represent. **Both the Constitution and the Standing Orders empower a Member to cause a sitting of the Assembly if a quarter of NAMs endorse the request.** We therefore wish that you would undertake the necessary actions and as well invoke the necessary provisions to for an urgent sitting of the National Assembly.

The rate at which COVID 19 is spreading poses a present and clear danger to the very existence of The Gambia, for which there is an urgent need to mobilize and organize all citizens and institutions to confront this menace. Ultimately, it is the National Assembly, which has the primary responsibility to monitor and support the Executive to ensure that it carries out its functions to address the challenges facing the country. It is precisely for this reason that we are of the view that where the Executive is unable to adequately perform its sacred duty in salvaging the nation, then the National Assembly Members should assume their full responsibilities and powers to support the Assembly save the nation and her peoples.

While we look forward to your positive response, and we wish to inform you that we, the citizens, are prepared and willing to support our National Assembly in its noble task of salvaging the Gambia, our Motherland.

Sincerely,

Democratic Union of Gambian Activists (**DUGA**); Gambia Participates; Gambia Conference of Reforms and Democracy (**GAMCORD**); The Gambia Bar Restaurant and Night Club Association (**G-BRANA**); Right to Know (**R2K**) Gambia; The Association of Non-Governmental Organizations in the Gambia (**TANGO**); Team Gom Sa Borpa (**TGSB**).